CONSTRUCTION RISK CHECKLIST > Pre-construction > Site Risk Assessment Completed

The Cheapest Site Inspection You'll Ever Do

Most construction projects don't go wrong because of what was planned.

They go wrong because of what wasn't identified before work started.

A pre-start site risk assessment is one of the simplest and most effective ways to reduce the likelihood of delays, damage, disputes, injuries and unexpected costs. Yet on many residential projects, the site visit focuses primarily on measuring and pricing the work rather than identifying the risks that could affect the project.

The purpose of a site risk assessment is simple: identify potential problems before they become actual problems.

Many of the issues that create the biggest headaches during a project are visible from day one if someone takes the time to look for them.

Pre-Start Site Risk Assessment Checklist

Before work starts, make sure you can answer "Yes" to the following:

1. **Have adjacent buildings, structures and property been assessed for potential damage risks?**
2. **Have underground services been identified and checked, eg. through Dial Before You Dig?**
3. **Have overhead power lines and electrical hazards been assessed?**
4. **Have site access and vehicle movements been considered?**
5. **Have neighbouring properties and potential neighbour issues been identified?**
6. **Have weather, flood, erosion or other natural hazards been assessed?**
7. **Has site security and the risk of theft or vandalism been considered?**
8. **Have existing structures been inspected and documented with photographs?**

9. **Have hazardous materials such as asbestos been considered?**
10. **Has a project-specific health and safety assessment been completed?**
11. **Have emergency access and evacuation requirements been considered?**
12. **Have significant site risks been documented and communicated to the project team?**

One of the most important checks is identifying underground services before any excavation begins. Damaging power, gas, water, telecommunications or drainage infrastructure can result in significant repair costs, project delays and safety risks. A Dial Before You Dig enquiry should be a standard part of the pre-start process, not an afterthought.

Builders should also pay close attention to adjacent property. Excavation, piling, demolition, retaining work and heavy vehicle movements can all create risks for neighbouring structures. Taking photographs before work starts can provide valuable evidence if damage is later alleged.

Natural hazards should not be overlooked either. Flood-prone sites, unstable slopes, high-wind locations and poor drainage can all affect construction methods, programme timing and project costs. Understanding these risks early allows them to be managed proactively.

Security is another commonly overlooked issue. Tools, materials and equipment are attractive targets for theft, particularly on vacant sites or during the framing stage. Considering fencing, lighting, storage and monitoring arrangements before work begins can significantly reduce losses.

While health and safety is a topic in its own right, a site-specific assessment should identify key hazards and ensure appropriate controls are in place before work commences.

A thorough pre-start site assessment may take only a few hours, but it can prevent weeks of delays, thousands of dollars in unexpected costs and disputes later.