

ARE YOUR EMPLOYEES ASSURED OF A SAFE WORKING ENVIRONMENT?

- Safe and healthy working (at home)
- Practical step-by-step plan to carry out your own RAE
- What SMEs have to say

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**Reducing occupational risks
= reducing sickness absence**

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Keeping your people healthy, safe and happy at work boosts productivity and performance and reduces sickness absence. A healthy and safe organisation begins with an up-to-date Risk Assessment and Evaluation (RAE).

What is an RAE?

An RAE is about detecting, recognising and reporting occupational risks before they lead to accidents, the departure of valuable employees or sickness absence. It is a mandatory tool for employers to promote physical and mental health and safety in the company.

The RAE actually consists of two parts:

1. A list of all the health and safety risks in the company in order of severity.
2. A plan to address those risks.

Every business that employs staff (40 hours minimum) must have an up-to-date RAE. To make it easier for you, tools have been developed to this end, called RAE instruments. If you still cannot figure it out using any of those instruments, we are of course ready to help you. Consultant Ad van Zundert: 'The RAE is indispensable for every business and, in addition to being a good employer, you will also save money on your operating costs.'

If you have any questions after reading the guide, please contact your own contact person



Healthy, safe and motivated working

An estimated 4,100 people die each year from an occupational disease and there are over 200,000 workplace accidents, of which 2,300 serious and an average of 60 fatal. You can reduce the probability of accidents and health complaints significantly if you know the risks that employees run in your company and addresses those risks.

Dutch Working Conditions Act

The occupational risks are mapped out using a Risk Assessment and Evaluation (RAE). If you think: 'No need. I know my business, my people and the risks without one', that sounds nice of course, but

in practice it is not enough. Under the Working Conditions Act, you are obliged to have an up-to-date RAE with an Action Plan.

¹ Source: Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment

² Source: RIVM (National Institute for Public Health and the Environment)

Strict supervision, stiff fines

Despite this statutory obligation, too few SMEs have an RAE. And that is worrying, according to the government. **The Netherlands Labour Authority is therefore keeping a closer eye on compliance with the RAE obligation, also by SMEs.**

In concrete terms, this means that the inspector checks that there is an approved industry RAE or reviewed RAE, including an Action Plan, and that the quality is satisfactory. In other words: whether the RAE accurately reflects what is happening in the company in day-to-day practice. If this is not the case, the Labour Authority may immediately impose a fine.

Issues for SMEs

Former State Secretary Tamara van Ark had an investigation carried out into why more than half of the companies do not have an RAE. It appears that smaller companies are often unaware of this statutory obligation. Moreover, they get bogged down in the practical intricacies of implementing the RAE properly. For example, they find the information about it unclear and fragmented. Or the industry tools are not user-friendly enough.

'Carrying out the RAE and associated follow-up steps takes time, money and energy. I notice that employers put this off. My advice is therefore: make sure your occupational health and safety policy is in order. There are many things you can do yourself and annual 'maintenance' is generally not too bad. If you can't quite work it out, we will be happy to help. For example through our [My prevention expert](#) service.

I see two pitfalls:

- No RAE is carried out because the costs are thought to be too high.
- An RAE is carried out and an Action Plan is drawn up, but these are then shelved, so that a whole new RAE is needed after a few years.

Ultimately, there's no escaping it for you as an employer. What you definitely don't want as an entrepreneur, is to have the Labour Authority visit your premises while your occupational health and safety policy is not in order. Then you'll pay a fine and still have to do all the investigations and follow-up steps.'

Ad van Zundert, ArboNed consultant



Practical experience

A good occupational health and safety policy is **important** for both employer and employees

AG Ems Nederland in Eemshaven does everything it can to promote the health of its employees and to reduce occupational risks. The company will soon start with the Preventive Medical Examination (PME), and its Risk Assessment and Evaluation (RAE) was recently updated. Rolf Bouwman, deputy director whose responsibilities include occupational health and safety, says:

'It's shocking how many companies don't have their RAE and PME in order. If your staff are doing fine, you as a business owner are doing fine. A good occupational health and safety policy is important. I don't think everyone realizes how much a sick employee costs. But as an employer you also have a moral obligation towards your employees. They must be able to carry out their work in good health.

No urgent matters emerged from the RAE. Fortunately, there have never been any accidents

"If your staff are doing fine, you as a business owner are doing fine. A good occupational health and safety policy is important."

either. New staff is coached very well, we use personal protective equipment, and a certificate is needed to operate a forklift truck. If it's really busy, you know you can count on each other. We make a good team!

Rolf Bouwman, deputy director
AG Ems Nederland

THE TOP 5 OCCUPATIONAL RISKS



The occupational risks differ greatly depending on the sector and the workplace. Based on our years of experience with RAE, we have compiled this top 5 of occupational risks.

1 Work-related psychosocial stress

Bullying, aggression and violence, discrimination or sexual intimidation in the workplace are all forms of work-related psychosocial stress, as is workload. Work-related psychosocial stress is occupational disease #1 and accounts for a quarter of long-term mental sickness absence.

As an employer, you are obliged to prevent inappropriate behaviour and work pressure. You record the approach in a statutory work-related psychosocial stress policy. By paying attention to work-related psychosocial stress, you can prevent psychological sickness absence and that pays off. One day of sickness absence costs an average of 250 euros and someone with burn-out is lost to the company for an average of 290 days. Do the math

2 Hazardous substances

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment estimates that almost 3,000 people die each year from working with hazardous substances. One in three companies works with hazardous substances, but many organisations do not realise that they are dealing with them.

It is not only about the production of hazardous substances, but also about their use, or products containing hazardous substances. Think of oils and greases, cleaning agents, paint, ink, etc. And substances generated by processes, such as wood dust, quartz dust, welding fumes and diesel exhaust fumes or natural substances, such as crude oil or flour.

You also need to have the risks associated with hazardous substances mapped out, so that you can determine how to avoid the risks.

3 Harmful and annoying noise

Approximately 900,000 employees are exposed to

harmful noise every day, as reported by the Dutch Hearing Foundation. For years, hearing damage, or noise-induced hearing loss, has been one of the most frequently reported occupational diseases. This condition cannot be cured, but it can be prevented. Both employer and employee have a role to play here. Working safely is not just a question of silent machines, clear instructions and protective equipment. Safe behaviour is just as important, at work and at home.

Under the Working Conditions Decree, you are required to assess noise levels (periodically). Where necessary, an expert should measure the noise levels. At 80 decibels (dB(A)), you as an employer are required to provide hearing protection. Exposure is not permitted to exceed 87 decibels (dB(A)).

4 Machine safety

Working with machines, equipment, tools and installations entails risks. Machines can be hazardous or can become hazardous due to aging or wear and tear.

You prevent accidents if your employees use the machines safely and the machines comply with all safety and quality marks. It is important to have a Risk Assessment and Evaluation of all work equipment (Work Equipment RAE) used.

5 Workplace design and physical strain

With employees generally spending a third of their time at work, workplace design is very important. Poorly furnished workplaces can lead to health complaints and accidents.

Make sure that your prevention worker or an external expert assesses the posture and workload of your employees and looks at their tools, also in their home office. This concerns both static strain (VDU work) and dynamic strain (for example, lifting, pushing and repetitive operations). This allows you to prevent short- and long-term complaints as well as sickness absence.

MijnCoachlijn for mental pressure

You may have employees who experience additional mental pressure. Employees who are not yet out of work, but do not feel completely comfortable in their own skin and do not know what to do about it. There is now [MijnCoachlijn](#) exclusively for ArboNed clients' employees, aimed at supporting employees quickly and effectively, to prevent their (long-term) sickness absence.

Practical experience

The basis for the occupational health and safety policy

Keeping in touch with each other from a distance plus a business that is continuing at full steam. Karsten Dijkstra, HR manager, explains how they deal with this and how ArboNed helps them.

'We think it's important that everyone is happy in their work and we make an effort to do that. The idea for new premises arose five years ago after the employee satisfaction survey. In the middle of corona time, the new premises have opened. There are no open-plan offices here; everyone has their own workplace. There is a lot of green, there are informal settings where you can meet and catch up, but we have also created concentration areas to work undisturbed. The new distribution centre is also equipped with all modern conveniences and has the latest systems for order picking.

Work pressure and work-related stress are additional concerns. We've seen our employees work even longer and harder at home. This is a challenge, because we also have more work to be dispatched. Managers now pay extra attention to their teams.

Hanzestrohm has an up-to-date Risk Assessment and Evaluation (RAE) and offered the Preventive Medical Examination (PME); important instruments under the Working Conditions Act. ArboNed was involved in the implementation, because for us it is more than fulfilling a statutory obligation. The trick is to take advantage of it. The RAE is for us a basis for the occupational health and safety policy.'



Karsten Dijkstra,
HR manager Hanzestrohm



'For us, it's more than fulfilling a statutory obligation. The trick is to take advantage of it.'



Create your own RAE in 5 steps

Every employee deserves a safe and healthy working environment. This often leads to lower sickness absence, higher productivity and greater job satisfaction. All this begins with an RAE. Discover how you can get started with your RAE in 5 steps.

RAE tools

You can use a tool to draw up your RAE: a so-called RAE instrument. There are general RAE instruments (for SMEs or offices), but also industry-specific RAE instruments, developed by trade organisations, the advantage being: if you have 25 or fewer employees and use a recognised industry-specific RAE instrument, you do not need to have your RAE reviewed. If you employ staff for a maximum of 40 hours per week, the Health Risk Checklist is sufficient and the RAE does not have to be reviewed. The RAE instruments can be found at www.rie.nl.

Step 1: Assessment of the risks

The first objective of the RAE is to gain insight into all the risks in your company. This concerns not only safety risks or environmental risks, but also psychosocial and physical risks or ergonomics. For example, you will look at:

- Are there an occupational health and safety management policy and a sickness absence policy in place?
- Has a prevention officer been appointed?
- What is the level of the general facilities?
- Is the company emergency response (BHV) properly organised?
- Do your people work with hazardous substances or biological agents?
- What is the physical strain on the shop floor?
- What about machine safety?
- How clean and tidy is the workplace?
- How is the climate? How are lighting and noise?
- Is the work equipment in good condition and is it used properly?
- Do your people use the personal protective equipment?
- Is the visual information (such as meters, displays, printed materials, safety signals and informative communications) clearly visible and understandable to everyone?
- Do you take a critical look at the job content and work pressure within your company? How is the work performed? Is the work monotonous or repetitive? Or is the level of difficulty actually very high?
- What about undesirable behaviour such as aggression, violence, bullying, intimidation and work pressure that can cause stress (work-related psychosocial stress)?
- What are the working and rest times within the company?

It is therefore important that you list all possible risks, even if they do not seem to apply to you, thus demonstrating that you have fully completed the RAE and that the end result can be considered reliable. The RAE then complies with the Netherlands Labour Authority.

Step 2: Evaluation of the established risks

The risk assessment is followed by the risk evaluation. The tools mentioned earlier can also help you with this. This evaluation gives you insight into which priority belongs to which risk. The evaluation includes factors such as:

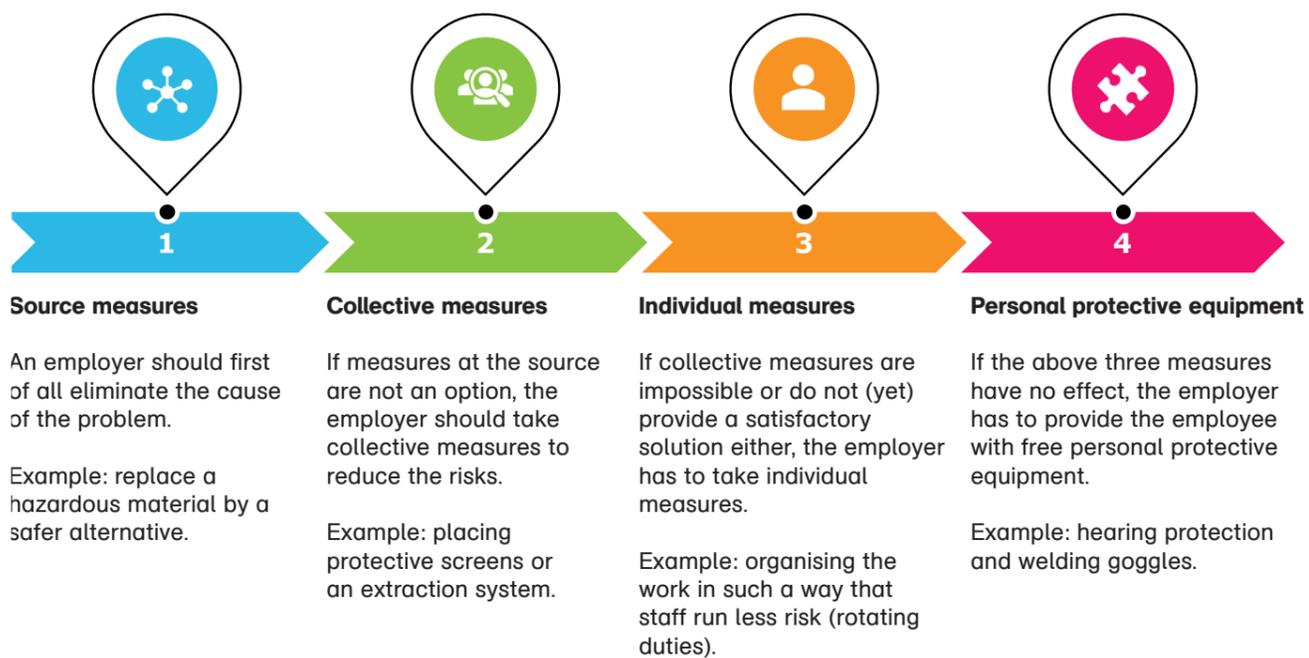
- What is the probability of the risk?
- How many employees are affected?
- How often do employees face this risk?
- What are the possible consequences?

In some RAEs, the level of risk is determined by a pre-formulated weighting method: The probability of the risk occurring, the effect of a given risk and the degree of exposure to a risk.

Step 3: Action plan

Once you have assessed and evaluated all the risks in your organisation, you draw up an Action Plan. That Action Plan is in fact a practical 'to do list'. A list of concrete actions, including when and by whom the actions are to be performed and (possibly) the budget for them. This allows you to steer towards enhancing the quality and safety of the working conditions. The responsible person within the organisation is also identified. Key points for attention:

- Address the risks at the source. After all, prevention is better than cure. See also the infographic below.
- Your RAE is not complete without an Action Plan!



Step 4: Review of your RAE

If you have 25 or fewer employees and have used a recognised industry RAE, you do not need to have the RAE reviewed. Have you used a non-recognised RAE instrument? Then you must have your RAE reviewed by a certified key expert or certified service. If you have more than 25 employees, a review is always mandatory. ArboNed can help you.

Step 5: Let's go!

Yes! You have your RAE in order and the Action Plan is ready. Now it is time to start on the 'to do list' from the Action Plan. The prevention officer within your organisation will ensure that this happens. In small businesses, this may be the manager. Read more about the prevention officer in the next chapter.

Employee participation

One final tip: prepare the RAE in collaboration with your employees. They know what is going on in the workplace and know the possible risks. It is also a good way to involve your employees. By discussing it with them, safe working becomes a common topic within your company.

'As an employer, I'm not the one who can make sure everyone is working and living healthily. It's something you do together. But we do everything we can to make sure our employees can do their work safely. We want to avoid accidents at all times.'

- Ab Barendrecht, Financial Director at Barendrecht-Elektra b.v.

In summary:

1 Assess

You list all occupational risks; the safety or environmental risks, the psychosocial risks and the health risks. And you note whether you have a company emergency response service, an occupational health and safety policy and a prevention officer. The available RAE tools can be found at www.rie.nl.



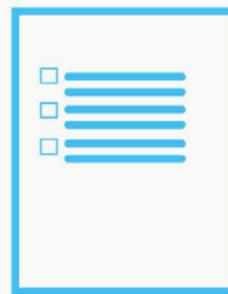
2 Evaluate and organise

The risk assessment is followed by the risk evaluation. What is the probability of the risk? How many employees are affected? What are the possible consequences? You sort and prioritise the outcomes.



3 Formulate Action Plan

Ask your employees for feedback and create a 'to do list', the Action Plan. This is an overview of concrete actions, stating when you will take it up, who is responsible for it and what the budget is.



4 Review

If you employ more than 25 people or have used a non-recognised RAE instrument, you must have your RAE reviewed by a certified key expert.



5 Let's go!

All set? Then you can get started with the actions from the Action Plan. The prevention officer in your organisation is responsible for ensuring that this happens. If you can tick off the points in the Action Plan, then you have done well!



Excellent, you have completed your RAE. Keep track of the progress of your Action Plan and make sure your RAE is always up to date. Are you, for example, going to move, sell a completely different product or change the way you work (as a result of the coronavirus measures)? Then reassess and re-evaluate the risks.

The prevention officer

The prevention officer is the driving force behind formulating and improving the occupational health and safety policy; 'the in-house occupational health and safety service'. One of its statutory tasks is to (help) draw up and carry out the Risk Assessment and Evaluation (RAE). Every company is obliged to have a prevention officer. It is usually someone who does this in addition to their 'normal' job. In the case of smaller companies (maximum 25 employees), the manager/owner may also carry out the prevention tasks themselves.

Statutory tasks and responsibilities

- (Co-)drafting and implementing the RAE.
- Advising and working closely with the works council/employee representation body on the measures to be taken for a good working conditions policy.
- (Co-)implementing these measures.
- Advising and collaborating with the company doctor and other occupational health and safety service professionals.

To stand firmly on your feet as a prevention officer, it may be a good idea for you to gain more in-depth knowledge of this role. You can, for example register, for our one-day online Prevention Officer training course. Or start working on the RAE yourself via the Creating your own RAE training course.

Who qualifies for this position?

Any employee involved who has an affinity with occupational health and safety matters can apply for this position. A precondition is that the prevention officer has sufficient knowledge about the company to be able to carry out prevention tasks properly. It is an official position, with a contract stating how many hours may be spent on the tasks and specifying the duties and responsibilities of the prevention officer.

The role requires a strong personality. As a linchpin, you need specific skills in the field of communication, cooperation and decisiveness, in addition to substantive expertise.

'I'm proud that the director and management team have actually appointed a dedicated prevention officer, even though it's not required by law. After all, the manager could have taken on this role himself. By doing so, they show that working conditions and good employment practice are paramount. My tip for other prevention officers is especially: stay true to yourself and make time for these tasks. It's very easy to forget the prevention part in your day-to-day activities, because it's often considered less important. But it's actually important to keep it alive!'

[Sandra Ramakers, customer service representative and prevention officer at Ventinova Medical.](#)

If you do not find a solution, we are here for you



If you start working with the tips in this guide, you will put the importance of safety on the map within your company. Do you want to go the extra mile and really reap the benefits of a healthy and safe work environment? Then, of course, the professionals at ArboNed are always ready to help you. If you could use some coaching and concrete advice on the RAE in your company, simply call in an experienced occupational health and safety expert: [My prevention expert](#). A safety expert, an occupational hygienist or an ergonomist will help you (by telephone if desired) with any occupational health and safety question you may have. Call 030 299 62 77 for more information.

Our consultants work all over the country, so there is always an expert near you. Someone who understands you. Someone who understands how things work in your sector and who knows what is going on around you. Who speaks your language and whose knowledge and experience prove that they are there for you. Someone who takes care of things for you. Things that sometimes seem small, but can have a big impact. Things that keep your business healthy. One way is by keeping the people in your company healthy. ArboNed helps you with all your – preventive – occupational health and safety issues. So that you can continue to do what you do best: business!

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