

HEALTH & SAFETY AT WORK

Preventing Accidents

As far as possible accidents at work should be reduced by the use of safe systems of work, safe equipment and the proper training and supervision of staff. This handbook explains some of the ways in which you can do this.

When accidents do occur, the arrangements for first aid and summoning of medical assistance should be clear. Proper accident investigation should be carried out immediately in order to prevent similar accidents recurring.

If investigation is to be successful it must look beyond the immediate to the underlying causes and must avoid simply placing blame. Your safety inspector can advise on internal accident investigation procedures.

Reporting Accidents And Disease

All injuries should be recorded in a suitable book. In addition, the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR) require some events to be reported to the enforcing authority. A summary of the Regulations is given here.

The following events must be reported to the enforcing authority (HSE or Council inspector) as quickly as possible (normally by telephone or fax) and then confirmed in writing using the appropriate form within ten days:-

A death or major injury to an employee (for example the fracture of a bone - other than to the thumbs, fingers or toes), a dangerous occurrence (for example the collapse of a lift or hoist) resulting from your work or an injury resulting in admission to hospital for more than 24 hours.

An accident connected with your work where a member of the public is killed or taken to hospital.

An accident resulting in a person being off work, or unable to do their normal work, for more than three days or a case of a specified occupational disease certified by a doctor resulting from your work.

First Aid

All employers must make adequate arrangements for first aid treatment under the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981. The level of provision required is determined by the number of employees, the location of the workplace (whether it is remote or close to proper medical facilities) and the potential gravity of the hazards likely to be encountered.

A low hazard workplace such as a bank or library should normally provide at least one trained first-aider for every 50 workers; a more hazardous environment would require more. First-aiders must hold a valid first-aid certificate approved by the HSE.

Guidance on appropriate courses is available from EMAS (see the introduction at the front of the book for contact details).

In a small, low-hazard workplace it may be sufficient to provide an 'appointed person' instead of a first-aider. An appointed person is someone who is authorised to take charge of the situation in the event of an accident and to take responsibility for the first aid equipment. They should be provided with emergency first aid training. First aid boxes and kits must be kept adequately stocked but should not contain medication of any kind. A notice should be displayed to clearly indicate the location of the first aid boxes and the names of the first aiders or appointed persons.

Accidents and first aid - a checklist

- Are all reasonable measures taken to prevent accidents?
 - Are accidents properly recorded and reported?
 - Are accidents investigated internally?
 - Is appropriate provision made for first aid?
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Think about.....

Are safe systems of work in place?

Is the accident book up to date and readily accessible?

Are you aware of who the appropriate first aiders/appointed persons are?

Manual Handling

Manual handling should be reduced as far as possible by the use of mechanical or other means. Workers should be instructed in safe lifting techniques and should be provided with protective clothing where necessary, particularly for hands and feet. The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 and require employers to identify, examine and assess all manual handling operations occurring in the work place. The assessment should identify where there may be a risk of injury and determine measures to reduce the risk of injury to the lowest level reasonably practicable.

Checklist for Safe Lifting

- Before attempting to lift a load assess its size and shape, obtain assistance if required. Check there is sufficient space to make the lift and space to reposition the load as required.
- Stand correctly, with a straight back and your chin tucked in, close to the load you are to lift. Your feet should be apart with one foot in front of the other facing in the intended direction of travel.
- Lift with your knees bent and use your legs, not your back, as the lifting power. Make sure you have a good grip on the load before lifting and don't change your grip once carrying.
- Don't allow the load to obstruct your field of view - if it is too large seek assistance.
- Set the load down gently - again keep your back straight and knees bent.

Mechanical Lifting

Mechanical lifting aids reduce the need for manual handling but pose their own hazards in use. The two most common types are fork lift trucks and cranes, and some of the safety precautions to be followed are given below.

- 1) All lifting equipment must be clearly marked with its safe working load that must never be exceeded.
- 2) A competent person, usually a representative of your insurance company who will provide you with a certificate of inspection, must regularly examine lifting equipment. Where serious safety defects are found a copy of the inspection certificate is sent to the health and safety enforcing authority responsible for your premises who may then contact you to make sure corrective action is taken
- 3) Ensure workers carry out visual safety checks prior to using any lifting equipment. Implement proper defect-reporting, maintenance and inspection systems for all lifting equipment.
- 4) Ensure that only trained and competent personnel use lifting equipment. Specified levels of training are required for some workers such as forklift truck operators. Training records must be kept up to date and readily available.

Transport

If you operate any vehicle as part of your work activity or if other vehicles visit your work place you should:

- 1) Ensure roadways are clearly marked, properly maintained and well lit.
 - 2) Supervise vehicles' movements particularly at blind corners and when reversing. Ensure the safety of banksmen and loading personnel.
 - 3) Separate vehicles and pedestrians whenever possible by providing separate, clearly marked walkways and crossing points.
 - 4) Ensure drivers are properly trained before they are authorised to drive.
 - 5) Check vehicles are in good order before use and rectify faults promptly. Implement maintenance schedules and defect reporting systems.
 - 6) Check that vehicle loads are stable and secure.
- Vehicle maintenance work has its own risks; consult some of the guidance literature below for further information.

Prevention Of Fire

Fire prevention measures centre upon the removal or control of available fuel and ignition sources. Typical fuel sources include waste and debris, flammable gases and liquids. Waste and debris should be controlled by efficient housekeeping and waste disposal; provide proper bins and avoid accumulations. Minimum supplies of flammable materials should be kept on premises and safe storage procedures must be followed to minimise fire risk.

Electrical installations and portable appliances must be inspected and maintained regularly to avoid the risk of an electrical fire.

Special care must be taken with portable heaters, which should be strictly controlled, provided with suitable guards and not placed near flammable materials, or in escape routes. Finally, the use and disposal of smoking materials, including ashtrays, must be controlled, and the risk of arson, one of the common causes of fire, should be addressed through proper security and alarm measures.

Raising the alarm and means of escape

There are many different types of fire alarm systems, from a simple manually operated one to the very sophisticated. Advice on appropriate systems for individual premises is available from the fire authority. Whatever system is chosen, regular testing, inspection and maintenance is vital. In addition you must ensure that everyone on your premises is familiar with the sound of the alarm, and that it can be heard throughout the premises at all times.

There must be adequate means of escape in all work premises. Again, the fire authority can advise. Escape routes must be kept clear at all times and must be clearly marked. Escape routes must not, under any circumstances, be used for storage and fire doors must not be blocked or wedged open. Ensure that everyone knows the procedure in case of fire by holding regular fire drills and clearly displaying fire instructions.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require that all employers have procedures for dealing with serious and imminent danger. As an extension to this the Fire Precautions (Workplace) (Amendment) Regs 1999 require that a specific fire risk assessment is carried out.

Fire Fighting Equipment

It can be very dangerous to use the wrong extinguisher.

Types of fire extinguishers

Water

Use on: general fires such as burning paper, cloth or wood

Foam

Use on: burning liquids, chip pan fires, petrol fires

Fire Blanket

Use on: pan fires, when a person's clothes are on fire

Power Standard

Use on: burning liquids, electrical fires, pan fires

Carbon Dioxide (CO₂)

Use on: burning liquids, electrical fires, pan fires

Halon

Use on: electrical fires, burning liquids

Fire fighting equipment must also be provided in all work premises. Ensure that there are sufficient fire extinguishers of the appropriate type for your workplace, suitably located to deal with any small outbreaks of fire. Provide fire blankets at locations such as kitchens. Fire fighting equipment must be regularly inspected and checked; this is usually carried out by the contracted supplier. It is important that staff who might be expected to use fire equipment have had some training in its use and are aware of its location.

Since January 1997, all new fire extinguishers must have 95% of their body painted red. To show what medium they contain, extinguishers will have a small coloured panel corresponding to the colours in use now ie black for carbon dioxide, cream for foam, blue for powder, green for vaporising liquids, all red for water based. Existing extinguishers and those in company liveries will be phased out.

Extinguisher identification signs will also have to be changed to take account of the new standards. Education programmes to re-train staff will be vitally important.

Relevant Fire Safety Legislation

The Fire Precautions Regulations 1971

These require that the following premises must have a Fire Certificate issued by the Fire Authority:

a) Hotels and Boarding Houses which provide sleeping accommodation for more than 6 people, or which provide sleeping accommodation above the first floor or below the ground floor.

b) Work Places (Factories, Offices, Shops and Railway Premises) where:

(i) more than 20 people are employed to work at any one time, or

(ii) more than 10 people are employed to work at any one time elsewhere than on the ground floor, or

(iii) the premises are part of a larger building which meets conditions (i) or (ii), or

(iv) explosive or highly flammable materials are stored or used.

A copy of the fire certificates, which deal with matters such as means of escape and fire fighting must be kept on the premises. The local fire authority will advise on requirements (see reference section at the back of the book for contact details).

These require that a fire risk assessment is carried out in all places of work where one or more people are employed. Where 5 or more are employed the significant findings of the assessment must be recorded. Guidance is available on what the assessment should cover and how to carry out the assessment.

Fire Safety - A Checklist

- Are all reasonable measures taken to prevent fire?
- Are there adequate arrangements to control fire?
- Would you be able to escape safely in the event of a fire?

Think About.....

Is a good standard of housekeeping maintained to prevent the accumulation of waste and debris?

Is fire fighting equipment checked and inspected?

Has consideration been given to the use of fire resistant fittings, furnishings and building materials in the premises?

Are fire doors kept closed?

Have you been properly trained in the fire drill

Are escape routes clearly marked and kept free from obstruction at all times?

The Working Environment

Guidance On The Welfare Provisions Regulations

Cleanliness - premises and fittings are to be kept clean and good standards of housekeeping to be maintained (refuse to be removed regularly for example).

Hygiene **Sufficient toilet accommodation** to be provided; usually separate provision to be made for each sex. Toilets to be easily accessible and kept clean, well lit, ventilated and in good repair. **Washing facilities with hot and cold water**,

soap and provisions for hand drying are to be provided. Nail brushes, barrier creams, skin cleansers and conditioners may be required.

Drinking water - Clearly marked supply of wholesome drinking water to be provided.

Temperature - A comfortable working temperature to be provided, usually above 16°C (60°F). Legislation does not specifically provide for a maximum working temperature but action must be taken to avoid discomfort. Where low temperatures prevail (a cold store for example) workers should be provided with protective clothing and have access to heated rest rooms where necessary.

Space - Each employee must have sufficient working space to enable them to do their work safely and without risks to their health.

Lighting - A good standard of general illumination should be provided and sustained by regular cleaning and maintenance. Certain work activities such as work with display screens (VDU's), machinery and very close work require special attention to lighting.

Floors and Gangways - Floors to be kept clean, dry and in good repair. Floor openings to be kept properly covered and guarded and hazards and obstructions to be clearly marked. Floor loading capacities should not be exceeded. Gangways should be well marked and kept clear. Handrails must be fitted to staircases providing they do not cause an obstruction.

Ventilation - Premises to be properly ventilated for comfort and impurity/odour removal. Heating systems should not give off fumes into the workplace.

The Workplace Regulations and the Approved Code of Practice lay down revised welfare standards and introduce some new requirements covering:

- 1) Maintenance of workplace and of equipment, devices and systems.
- 2) Falls or falling objects.
- 3) Safety of windows, and transparent or translucent doors, gates and walls.
- 4) Safety of skylights and ventilators.
- 5) Ability to clean windows etc safely (safe access and safety devices).
- 6) Organisation of traffic routes to ensure safety (including safety in loading bays).
- 7) Safety of doors and gates.
- 8) Safety of escalators and moving walkways.
- 9) Provision of changing facilities where protective clothing is worn.
- 10) Provision of facilities for rest and eating meals. (Rest rooms and rest areas to include suitable arrangements to protect non-smokers from discomfort caused by tobacco smoke).

Visual display units

Visual display units (VDU's) have become extremely common in all types of workplaces in the last decade. The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 require employers to analyse work stations of employees who habitually use VDU's for a significant part of their normal work with a view to assessing and reducing risks. Areas like the hardware, the environment and factors specific to the individuals using the equipment need to be looked at including eyesight testing for operators.

Noise - A Checklist

Has the risk of hearing damage been reduced as far as reasonably practicable?

Has the noise exposure been properly assessed where necessary?

Have staff been provided with adequate information and training?

Is ear protection provided where necessary?

Safe Uses Of Substances At Work

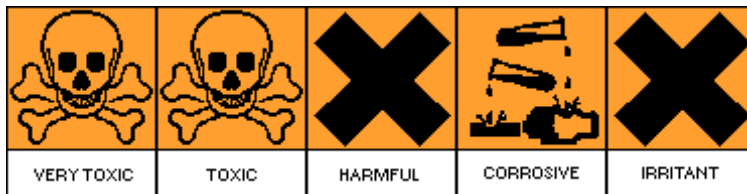
Many products and substances used or generated at work are hazardous. Working practices must aim to minimise the risk of using such substances and minimise the consequences of any accidents. Certain hazardous substances are covered by the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) 1999 which require an assessment of likely health risks to be carried out.

COSHH regulations
legionnaires' disease

COSHH regulations

The Regulations cover:

- 1) Substances labelled as 'very toxic', 'toxic', 'harmful', 'corrosive', or 'irritant'.



- 2) Substances with maximum exposure limits or occupational exposure standards.
- 3) Substantial quantities of dust.
- 4) Harmful microorganisms including legionella.
- 5) Any other substance that creates a comparable health hazard.

This would include cleaning chemicals, paints, photocopier toner, adhesives, wood dust, vehicle exhaust gases and metal fume for example. The COSHH Regulations apply to all workplaces but the effort involved in complying with them will depend upon the substances and process in use. In their fullest form the Regulations require employers and the self-employed to:

- 1) Make a written assessment of the health risks of substances used at work.
- 2) Implement appropriate control measures for those risks.
- 3) Inform anyone who might be at risk from substances at work.
- 4) Carry out monitoring and health surveillance where necessary

Safe Use of Substances at Work - A Checklist

- 1) What hazardous substances are in use?
- 2) Have the risks of those substances been properly assessed?
- 3) Have the risks been properly controlled?
- 4) Has adequate information and training been provided for staff?
- 5) Have monitoring and surveillance procedures been implemented where appropriate?