

protect your profit
health & safety pays



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Foreword

Small businesses are an important part of Northern Ireland's economy. They provide employment opportunities, develop new ideas and provide essential services on which many larger companies depend.

Research has shown that the majority of small business owners are actually struggling to survive, with the biggest barrier to success being the failure to manage workplace health and safety¹. These failures are costing Northern Ireland's employers between £99 and £370 million each year².

The aim of this pack

This information pack has been produced specifically to help you understand exactly what it is that you need to do in order to effectively manage health and safety. The aim is to provide you with simple advice that can be easily understood and implemented within your business.

¹. 2001 Small Firms Project – Final Report May 2002
Price Waterhouse Coopers

². Health and Safety Executive For Northern Ireland.
The cost of work-related injuries, ill-health and non-injury accidents to the Northern Ireland Economy June 2002.
KMG Consulting

Introduction



Why should health and safety concern me?

It is a huge mistake to believe that accidents will never happen in your business or that health and safety only applies to larger or higher risk workplaces. Research has shown that small businesses are likely to have twice the number of fatal accidents compared to that of larger counterparts. It is a fact that every year in the UK:

- 250 people lose their lives whilst at work;
- 156,000 non-fatal injuries resulting from work activities are reported;
- 2.3 million people suffer from ill health caused or made worse by their work and
- over 40 million working days are lost.

DON'T PANIC, implementing good health and safety measures does not have to be complicated, expensive or time consuming. The majority of safe practices that you implement as a result of good health and safety management. It makes good business sense and can actually save you money, it makes the business not only safer, but one that may develop and thrive well into the future.

Cost of poor health and safety management

Which of the following sums up your attitude to health and safety?

Safety is, without doubt, the most crucial investment we can make and the question is not what will implementing good practices cost us, but what will it save us?

or

Accidents don't cost me anything - that is what insurance is for!

Be honest, the second statement is a more common attitude but in actual fact insurance policies do not cover everything. Your policy may only pay out for a serious injury or illness or your policy excess may be greater than the amount concerned, leaving you to find the money out of your own business profits.

In addition, many of the extra costs associated with an accident or illness are not actually covered by your insurance policy, such as lost production time, sick pay, overtime, loss of a contract, legal costs, damage or loss of product, repairs to plant and equipment etc. These extra costs are often referred to as the hidden or uninsured costs as they are not immediately visible or accountable. It has been estimated that these costs can be between £8 and £36 for every £1 covered by insurance.





Impact on insurance premiums

A poor claims record will affect the amount that your business will pay in insurance premiums. Ultimately your premium will increase or, at worst, cover may actually be refused.

In reality most businesses do not know how much accidents and ill health actually cost them and most are often surprised at the true total.

Example

An employee in a small engineering company was injured when using an unguarded drill, this cost the company a total of £45,000. The company was working on a 3% profit margin and had to increase turnover by £1.5 million just to cover the costs.

Insurance Cover – what do I need?

The law requires you to have Employer's Liability Insurance, when you employ members of staff and motor insurance when you use a company vehicle on a public road.

Confusion often occurs over the three most common types of business insurance policy available.

Employer's Liability Compulsory Insurance:

required by law to ensure that all employees are covered by adequate insurance during the course of their employment. The limit of indemnity required is £5 million. The employer's liability certificate, which is renewed annually, must be kept for a minimum of 40 years. A valid copy must be on display at your workplace.

Public Liability:

covers liability to a third person who is not your employee such as a customer or visitor who is injured as a result of your business's activities, such as tripping on a trailing cable or damaged carpet. Public liability will also cover you if one of your employees, through the course of their work activities, causes damage to a third person or their property. This particular cover is voluntary and you are able to choose the limit of indemnity insurance that you require.

Product Liability:

covers injury or property damage which has arisen from a product that you supplied. This cover is voluntary and you can choose the limit of indemnity insurance that you require.

Further detailed information on the different types of insurance you may need for your business can be obtained from the Business Link website www.businesslink.co.uk

The British Insurance Brokers Association can provide you with names of brokers who can advise you on obtaining insurance, see www.biba.org.uk or contact BIBA on 0870 950 1790.



Managing Health and Safety

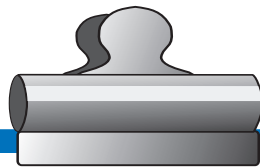
Have I got it under control?

Business owners, Directors and Managers can be held personally responsible for failures to control health and safety.

Ask yourself *can you really afford such failures.*
Do you effectively manage health and safety? If not - why not?

All the other areas of your business require managing, so what is different about health and safety? The answer is nothing! Begin by thinking about how health and safety fits in with all the other important management systems in your business, such as finance, production and sales. Don't try to complicate things – most small businesses will have simple management structures.

REMEMBER: effective health and safety management is no accident- organisation and planning are essential.



CHECK LIST

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do we have a health and safety policy? | <input type="checkbox"/> Is everyone in the workplace involved in hazard spotting and problem solving? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is it up to date and relevant? | <input type="checkbox"/> Is there sufficient written information and advice on health and safety displayed around the workplace? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is it signed by the most senior member of the business and displayed where all employees can see it? | <input type="checkbox"/> Is it available to everyone? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do all staff know their health and safety responsibilities? | <input type="checkbox"/> Do we have a health and safety plan with realistic objectives and standards? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are all staff adequately trained to be able to work safely? | <input type="checkbox"/> Do we carry out any checks, such as workplace inspections to ensure that we are compliant with the standards we set in the policy? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do all staff know the risks and the control measures in place to reduce the risks? | <input type="checkbox"/> Are accidents/incidents reported and thoroughly investigated? |

In order to successfully manage health and safety, there are a number of things that you will need to do:

1. **Carry out a risk assessment** of your business's work activities, record the significant findings, develop an action plan and inform your staff of the outcome.



2. **Develop a written health and safety policy** which outlines how you intend to manage health and safety. This should detail who will be responsible for implementing the policy and outline the health and safety arrangements that you have in place.



3. **Establish user friendly rules and procedures for things such as: -**

- Fire Safety and Emergency Evacuation
- Manual Handling
- Use of Work Equipment
- Use of Hazardous Substances
- Electrical Safety



4. **Decide who is going to co-ordinate and manage your health and safety policy and procedures on a day-to-day basis.** This may be you as the business owner / director or you may want to involve a senior member of staff. It is important to ensure that whoever has been given the responsibility for health and safety, is competent to carry out that role i.e. they have adequate skills, experience and knowledge in both the business and in health and safety. You or your staff may require some further training.

5. **Communicate with your staff** to ensure that they are informed about the health and safety policy and the arrangements that have been put in place to ensure their health and safety whilst at work. In addition, the findings of your risk assessments and the controls that have been established must be fully communicated to all those staff that may be affected. Remember that not all staff may come into contact with the same hazards. Staff meetings are an ideal place for such communication. Feedback from your employees on any health and safety improvements that could be made should be welcomed and encouraged.



6. **Monitor the standards you have set in your policy** such as monthly workplace or equipment inspections, weekly fire equipment inspections etc. This is to identify and deal with potential hazards before they become a problem and cause injury or ill health.



7. **Carry out thorough accident or near miss investigations** in order to learn from the experience and make policy or procedural changes where necessary.



8. **Regularly review your health and safety arrangements** i.e. your policy, procedures and risk assessments, to ensure they are still effective and understood by all staff – not left on a shelf to collect dust! Reviews should take place at least every 6 to 12 months unless something significant changes in the meantime.

How do I carry out a risk assessment?



In order to effectively manage health and safety within the business, you need to know what the main hazards and risks are so that you can build in the appropriate control measures. The first thing you need to do whether you are reviewing your systems or setting them up for the first time is to carry out a risk assessment.

Risk assessment, whilst sounding complex, is in actual fact quite simple.

See the 5 steps to risk assessment.

Each of us makes an assessment of risk on a daily basis, for example when crossing the road. Every time we cross the road, we make our own split second assessment as to whether it is safe or not based on:

- the speed and proximity of oncoming traffic;
- whether or not there is a gap in the traffic;
- the width of road we need to get across; and
- our own physical ability and the physical ability of others who may be with us, to cross the road in time.

If we decide that the risk is too great, we will decide to wait and use a pedestrian crossing which is a dedicated control measure to stop the traffic, allowing us to safely cross the road.

RISK ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

- Set up a small working group of key members of staff who are experienced and knowledgeable in all or some of the working areas within the business.
- provide all those members of staff with some basic risk assessment training.
See 5 steps to Risk Assessment:
- identify all of the main work areas or activities within the business (such as the warehouse, office, housekeeping, maintenance etc) where you require a risk assessment to be carried out;
- draw up a timetable of when you want the assessments completed by;
- discuss, review and record the significant findings of the assessments as a working group, making sure that employees and managers from each area are included and agree to the further action required;
- provide all staff with their own copy of the assessment or a summary of the significant findings, making sure that they understand what is required of them; and
- continually review your assessments and update as necessary, repeating the whole process at least every 12 months.

5 Steps to Risk Assessment

STEP 1 Identify the hazards

A 'hazard' - is anything that cause harm, e.g. sharp equipment, damaged electrical equipment, boxes stored in front of the fire exit.

This involves walking around your business, observing the work activities being undertaken and talking to your employees. Your employees are the ones doing the job ask them about any injuries or near misses they have experienced. They may also have suggestions as to how to improve the workplace. Including your employees from the beginning will also increase the chance of the control measures that are introduced being effective, as they will understand how they came about and why they are needed.

STEP 2 Decide who might be harmed and how

Consider all those who could come into contact with the hazard, such as:

- employees including any temporary staff, agency staff and student placements;
- visitors;
- contractors;
- members of the public;
- vulnerable members of staff such as young people or new and expectant mothers;
- customers; and
- maintenance staff.

STEP 3 Evaluate the risk

The 'risk' is the chance (**high, medium or low**) that somebody may be injured or made ill by the hazard.

When deciding upon the risk, there are two factors that you need to consider:

Severity - what would be the realistic outcome if the harm from the hazard was actually realised.

- **killed or very badly injured**, e.g. broken bones or amputation; or



- **very seriously hurt** causing the injured person to be off work for more than three days, e.g. a bad back or sprained ankle; or
- **a minor injury**, e.g. a simple paper cut which needs only a plaster.

Likelihood - what is the likelihood that the harm will actually be realised, is it **highly likely, likely or unlikely** based on:

- the existing controls that you have already in place;
- the number and type of people involved i.e. experienced/ inexperienced;
- the frequency of the task - several times a day/rarely.

In addition, if you want a way to be able to prioritise your risk so that you can dedicate your resources to those that pose the highest risk, then you can add a numerical value to the severity and the likelihood. See below:

RISK SCORE	
SEVERITY	LIKELIHOOD
Major = 3	Highly likely = 3
Serious = 2	Likely = 2
Minor = 1	Unlikely = 1
RISK = Severity x Likelihood	

It is then suggested that those hazards that come out 9 and 6 are your highest risk; those at 4 and 3 are your medium risk and finally 2 and 1 are your lowest.

STEP 4 Control the hazard and the risk

Hierarchy of Control:

1. Eliminate
2. Substitute
3. Control

1. Ideally, wherever possible, hazards should be **eliminated** by removing the hazardous activity at source, e.g. buy wood cut to size rather than using a circular saw or instead of using a meat slicer buy in pre-sliced cooked meat.
2. If elimination of a hazard is not possible then could it be **substituted** for a less hazardous activity such as buying pre-diluted bleach solution instead of concentrated bleach.
3. Where elimination or substitution is not realistic given the nature of the hazard or the cost involved, then you will need to look at ways of controlling the risk so far as is reasonably practicable, using a mixture of the other forms of control such as:
 - **enclosing** hazards at source, i.e. fitting a sound absorbing enclosure around noisy machines;
 - **a physical barrier or guarding** to stop people getting close to the hazard, e.g. fence around the gas bottle store or blade cover on the meat slicer;
 - **safe systems of work, written procedures, training and supervision** to ensure that staff are made aware of the hazards and how to stop themselves from being injured or made ill, such as “lock out” systems for machinery, manual handling training or erecting a fire notice and practising evacuations etc.

- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** such as gloves to provide protection against chemicals or hot food.

Note: Personal Protective Equipment as a control measure is regarded as the ‘last resort’ and must never be used as the only control measure.

STEP 5 Review & Revise

The whole idea of a risk assessment is that it allows you to make a reasoned judgment as to whether an activity will cause harm or not. Therefore, every time you change a significant part of your business you will need to review your risk assessment to identify if the change brings about any new hazards or to see if it increases the risk of an existing hazard.

As a general rule you should always review your assessments:

- after an accident or near miss has occurred;
- before a young or inexperienced employee commences work;
- once a female member of staff notifies you that they are pregnant or when a new mother returns to work; and
- during the work carried out by a specialist contractor such as asbestos removal, re-wiring, etc

Even if nothing changes, it is still important to **review your risk assessments on a yearly basis** as your staff may become complacent or may be doing something that you were unaware of. It will also act as a check to ensure that your existing controls are still working as effectively as you think they are.

Recording your assessment

Where an organisation has 5 or more employees you must record the significant findings of your assessments, usually within the arrangements section of your company's safety policy.

Regardless of the number of employees you may have, it is good practice to record the findings of your assessments as it will become much easier to explain the hazards and risks that exist to your staff and what action you expect them to take. It also demonstrates to your enforcement officer that you have taken your health and safety responsibilities seriously. See *"Hazard Identification and Risk Evaluation" Template*.

Once you have completed your assessments and decided upon the further control measures that you are going to put in place, it is good practice to record them in an action plan together with details of who will be responsible and a time limit for completion. See the *"action plan"* template.

Hazard Identification Risk Evaluation

Company Name:

Hazard Identification and Risk Evaluation

Date:

Next Review Date:

Completed by:

Page: of

ACTIVITY	HAZARDS	PERSONS EXPOSED	SEVERITY	LIKELIHOOD	RISK

Action Plan

Company Name:

Action Plan Completed by:

Date:

Next Review Date:

Page: of

ACTIVITY	HAZARDS	EXISTING CONTROLS	ADDITIONAL CONTROLS REQUIRED	BY WHOM	BY WHEN



How do I develop and implement a safety policy?

Now that you have carried out your risk assessments you can develop your safety policy.

Regardless of the size of your company, you will have certain arrangements, procedures or rules in place to ensure that accidents are prevented during the course of your day-to-day business.

It is good practice to record all of these details in the form of a policy document.

A documented safety policy is a legal requirement where you employ five or more people.

Its main aim is to:

- demonstrate to your employees and others your commitment to their health, safety and wellbeing;
- identify those who are responsible for ensuring that health and safety matters are attended to; and
- explain in detail the arrangements that are in place to control the main hazards identified in your risk assessments.

The format of your policy should include:

1. General Health and Safety Statement signed and dated by the owner/director in the business.

There is no standard wording for this section. It is your opportunity to express your commitment to health and safety.

2. Details of the business's organisational structure and health and safety responsibilities.

In this section, you should explain who does what within the business to ensure that your health and safety rules are implemented and adhered to. An organisational chart is a useful aid for this section. Start with the most senior person, and identify those people with specific health and safety tasks.

3. Details of the business's health and safety arrangements.

This part of your policy should describe in detail how you control the risks associated with your business activities. The policy must cover all of your work locations and activities, describing the procedures that you have developed in order to reduce the risk of injury.

You must be as specific as possible; for example, there is no point in describing your safety rules for dealing with chemicals if you don't use chemicals.

The sample policy given is only an example. The amount of detail required in your policy will depend on the complexity of your business and your activities.

Example Safety Policy

General Statement

AN Other Ltd aims to act as a good employer and to conduct its business activities in a way which will achieve the highest possible standard of health and safety for its employees, visitors and members of the public.

The Company regards the successful management of health and safety as central to all its other business activities. All levels of management, including the Managing Director, consider it as important as sales and quality control.

The co-operation of all employees is vital for the promotion of health and safety within the Company. This may involve carrying out safety inspections or attending safety committees, etc.

The company intends to comply with all legal statutory requirements and relevant codes of good practice. In particular we will:

- carry out an assessment of risks to all employees whilst at work;
- provide and maintain safe working conditions and equipment;
- provide instruction, information, training and supervision;
- provide suitable protective equipment where necessary;
- provide adequate resources and
- keep training records.

Each employee has a duty to co-operate by:

- taking reasonable care of their own and others' health and safety;
- adhering to company rules;
- reporting incidents or hazards which could lead to injury or damage;
- not interfering with anything provided to safeguard their health and safety and
- using personal protective equipment provided.

Signed by Business Owner/Managing Director/Chief Executive:

Name:

Date: Review date:

Organisational Responsibilities

Business Owner/Managing Director/Chief Executive

Has overall responsibility for health and safety.

General Manager/Assistant Manager

Is responsible for ensuring that the health and safety policy is fully implemented within the business's day-to-day activities.

Supervisor

Is responsible for looking after the first-aid box and carrying out the weekly health and safety inspections.

All Employees

Are required to:

- report faulty or damaged equipment, potential hazards and accidents or near misses;
- use protective equipment provided and
- adhere to company rules.

Arrangements

Consultation with Employees

Management will have regular health and safety meetings with employee representatives to consult on health and safety issues.

Training

All employees will receive training to enable them to understand and adhere to company policy and procedures. (A separate training manual has been produced to ensure that adequate training is delivered to all members of staff).

First Aid

The first-aid box is located in the supervisor's office and the appointed first aider is Jo Smith. In the event of an accident, call the first aider. Do not move the injured person until examined by a first aider.

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to keep the first-aid box stocked.

Accident Reporting

An accident book is provided and must be fully completed by the manager when an accident occurs to staff, visitors or members of the public. A copy of the report form must be kept on an individual's personnel record.

Fatalities and serious accidents must also be reported immediately by the manager to the enforcing authority and an NI2508 form completed and sent to the enforcing authority within 10 days of the incident.

Accidents likely to result in an absence from work of more than three days must be reported to the appropriate enforcing authority by the manager using the NI2508 form. This must be completed within 10 days of the incident occurring.

Fire Safety

The manager will ensure that fire evacuation drills take place once a quarter.

In addition, they will ensure that:

- fire exits are kept clear at all times;
- fire extinguishers are kept in their designated positions;
- fire extinguishers, fire alarms and emergency lighting are checked weekly;
- all fire notices are displayed.

All Employees should remove and report any obstructions to the emergency escape routes.

Arrangements

Electrical Safety

All electrical equipment will be regularly maintained and will be checked by an electrical engineer on a yearly basis. Employees should report any defective equipment and remove it from use. In particular looking out for:

- loose wires;
- trailing cables;
- signs of overheating, eg blackening around the plugs and socket outlets.

Manual Handling

All employees will be trained in lifting techniques. The following rules should be observed:

- stand close to the load;
- bend your knees and keep your back straight;
- grasp the load firmly;
- lift with your legs and not your back;
- never lift a load that is too heavy – GET HELP!

A risk assessment has been undertaken for all manual handling tasks.

Safe Storage

The following rules should be observed:

- inspect shelving regularly for damage;
- do not climb on shelves;
- do not exceed the safe loading of the shelving;
- store heavy items at low levels.

Step Ladders

All step ladders will be inspected by the assistant manager on a monthly basis. All staff will be trained in the correct use of ladders.

DO NOT:

- use faulty ladders;
- over reach whilst using a ladder;
- stand a stepladder on a box or other unsteady base.

Make sure that the ladder is fully extended and locked in position. Use a ladder which enables you to gain access safely.

Good Housekeeping

Good housekeeping is essential to an effective safety programme and everyone has a responsibility to keep workplaces and toilets clean and tidy. Gangways should be kept clear at all times.

Drugs and Alcohol

The company's drugs and alcohol policy aims to protect and promote the health, wellbeing and safety of all staff and visitors by:

- Making staff aware of how drugs and alcohol can affect them and their work performance;
- Enabling staff to recognise a problem at it's earliest stage;
- Identifying sources of help and support for colleagues with a drug and / or alcohol problem and
- Encouraging staff with a problem to seek help.

This is only a summary of a policy; the above examples are by no means exhaustive. You may need to include separate detailed procedures for each area.

Vulnerable Groups



There are many groups of people at work who merit special attention to ensure that high standards of health and safety are maintained at all times, these include:

New and Expectant Mothers

There are specific laws that require employers to protect the health, safety and welfare of new and expectant mothers as there are many risks that may affect their health and safety and that of their unborn child. Working conditions considered acceptable beforehand may no longer be so during pregnancy and while breast-feeding. These risks will vary depending on the employee's health and at different stages of their pregnancy.

As an employer you should carry out a specific risk assessment, taking account of any advice the employee has been given via their GP or midwife. Some of the more common hazards might be:

- lifting/carrying of heavy loads;
- standing or sitting for long periods of time;
- exposure to infectious diseases;
- work-related stress;
- workstations and posture;
- other people's smoke in the workplace;
- long working hours; and
- working with chemicals.

Wherever possible, these hazards should be removed; if this is not possible, the working conditions such as hours of work, or the duties of the employee should be adjusted.

Disabled Workers

As an employer you can make "reasonable adjustments" within the workplace for disabled workers. Some adjustments which could be considered reasonable are:

- providing suitable fire evacuation procedures;
- allowing time off for rehabilitation, assessment or treatment;
- acquiring or modifying equipment;
- adjusting the premises or workstations; or
- providing a reader or interpreter;
- providing appropriate toilet facilities.

In addition, you must ensure that the services you provide are accessible to all and that any physical features of the building do not make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to access, eg. steps at the entrance of a building.

Further information can be found in the publication *Balancing Disability Rights & Health & Safety Requirements – A guide for employers* available through:

***The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, 7-9 Shaftsbury Square, Belfast BT2 7DP
Tel: 028 9050 0600 or via website www.equalityni.org***

***or Disability Action, Portside Business Park, 189 Airport Road, Belfast, BT3 9ED
Tel: 028 9029 7880 or via website www.disabilityaction.org***

or HSENI, 83 Ladas Drive, Belfast. BT6 9FR.

Helpline: 0800 0320121 or via Website: www.hseni.gov.uk



Young Workers

A **Young Person** is anyone above minimum school leaving age and under 18 years.

A “child” is anyone under the minimum school leaving age and there are restrictions on the type and duration of work they may undertake. Further information can be obtained from your local Education & Library Board.

As an employer you must assess and control the risks to young workers prior to them starting work. Taking into account the fact that young workers are inexperienced, unaware of health and safety risks and may be physically or mentally immature.

You may need additional control measures put in place to ensure that the hazards are removed or reduced to the lowest possible level.

A structured training programme with close supervision is very important for young workers whilst they are developing and learning new skills.

Keep a record of the findings of the risk assessment and provide a copy to the parents/guardians of any students and employees below minimum school leaving age.

Young workers should be protected from work which is beyond their physical and mental capacity or work which involves exposure to hazardous substances, extreme hot or cold, noise or vibration unless it is part of their training.

People with Communication Difficulties

Migrant workers or people with learning disabilities or literacy issues may be vulnerable at work due to language difficulties. This can impact on all areas of health and safety including training, instruction and in the development and implementation of safe systems of work.

It is important to ensure that:

- employees can understand all health and safety messages that are being communicated to them. This may require a translator or a clearly spoken trainer to communicate the message;
- all warning signs/posters have pictures to communicate the message rather than depending on written warning signs;
- simple plain English is used where written instructions are required; and
- appropriate supervision is provided.



Temporary Workers

Temporary workers, e.g. agency workers or staff on short-term contracts are employed for a variety of reasons, for example, to cover for permanent employees who are off sick or on holiday, or to cope with seasonal increases in workload. Temporary workers are an important safety management issue because they are unfamiliar with the workplace and company rules, and are on site for a limited time period.

As an employer who uses temporary staff you must:

- provide all temporary staff with information with regard to the risks to their health and safety, the measures taken to prevent or control these risks and the action that should be taken in the event of emergencies.
- ensure that all temporary staff have the appropriate experience, skills and competencies to carry out the job safely; and
- provide appropriate training and keep appropriate records.

illustration of security guard etc for lone worker sitting in hut with moon

Lone Workers

Lone workers are those employees who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. These employees more vulnerable and unable to seek assistance if an accident were to occur. Examples of situations where people may work by themselves include:

- working in separate or isolated areas of a larger premises, e.g. factories, warehouses, cold stores;
- working outside normal working hours, e.g. security staff, cleaners;
- service workers, e.g. postal staff, home helps, estate agents, sales reps; and
- driving whilst at work, e.g. sales reps and delivery personnel.

It is the employer's duty to assess risks to lone workers and take steps to avoid or control the risk where necessary, for example:

- eliminate the need to work alone;
- identify potential situations where lone working is not appropriate, e.g. entering confined spaces;
- where lone working cannot be avoided, reduce the risk by introducing a "Lone Working" policy which should provide information, instruction and training to employees. This may include:
 - personal safety training;
 - a programmed schedule of work or "check-in" system throughout the day;
 - a mobile phone and charger to ensure they are contactable at all times; and
 - first aid kit and basic first aid training.



Managing Accidents and Emergencies

Accident Prevention

Accidents don't just happen; there is always a reason for them. You need to plan and control everything that is done in the workplace so that accidents don't occur. It is in your own interest: remember that one serious accident could cost you your business!

Accidents mainly happen due to:

- poor management;
- poor working practices;
- dangerous machinery and equipment;
- lack of training;
- poor attitude of employers and employees.

The first step to accident prevention is to carry out a risk assessment as described earlier in this pack. You will then need to take action to control the risks that have been identified, for example:

- adding a guard to a dangerous machine;
- using a less hazardous chemical;
- devising a safe system of work;
- training staff; or as a last resort
- providing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Monitoring and Investigating Accidents

It is essential that you are made aware of all accidents and "near misses" (non injury accident which had the potential to cause harm) so that you can identify the hazard and take the necessary steps to prevent it from happening again.

Make employees aware of whom accidents and near misses should be reported to. Ensure that this person records the details in an accident book. Investigate the circumstances and recommend appropriate action to be taken.

Accident books can be purchased from:

The Stationery Office,
16 Arthur Street,
Belfast
BT1 4GD

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www.tsoshop.co.uk



Research shows that for every accident resulting in a major injury, there were 29 resulting in minor injuries and 300 with no injuries.



Reporting of Accidents, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences

It is good practice to record, in your accident book, the details of all work-related accidents but not all of these will need to be reported to your local enforcement officer.

You are legally required to:

Report immediately, by telephone, any accident or incident which results in:

- a fatality or major injury (see examples below) to your employee or visitor working on your premises;
- a member of the public being taken to hospital directly from your premises;
- a dangerous occurrence, e.g.
 - collapse of part of a building;
 - explosion of gas storage containers or failure of a pressure system;
 - a dangerous occurrence such as a fire or electrical short circuit which stops work for more than 24 hours;
 - collapse of a lift or other lifting equipment (eg. A fork lift truck).

Telephone
illustration

Report in writing, within 10 days of the incident on a NI2508 form (which can be downloaded from www.hseni.gov.uk) in order to:

- confirm any telephone report made;
- notify an accident which results in a member of staff being absent from work for more than 3 days (see below for further explanation);
- report diseases arising from specific types of work (see examples below).

Note Pad

Major Injury

- Broken bone (except fingers and toes)
- Dislocation of the shoulder, hip, knee or spine
- Loss of sight or serious injury to eye
- Loss of consciousness due to electric shock, lack of oxygen or exposure to a hazardous substance
- Electric shock requiring immediate medical attention
- Amputation
- Immediate hospitalisation for more than 24 hours or where a member of the public is taken to hospital.
- Where a person needs to be resuscitated.
- Acute illness due to exposure to a biological agent or its toxin.

Over 3-day injury

- Is one that results in the injured person being away from work or unable to do their normal work for more than three days (including non work days) such as strains and sprains. It also includes acts of physical violence.

Occupational Disease

- Hand arm vibration syndrome
- Asthma
- Dermatitis
- Legionellosis



First Aid and Emergencies

Emergency Plans

Employers need to plan for emergency situations such as accidents, fires, bomb alerts, chemical spillages, etc.

Once in place, the emergency plan must be communicated to all staff via training on the correct procedures to be followed, i.e:

- how to raise the alarm;
- what to do, e.g. how to call the emergency services;
- how to leave the building safely;
- evacuate visitors safely
- where to assemble in the event of an emergency;
- the names of first aiders and persons in control;
- essential actions such as emergency plant shut down.

First Aid

It is important that first aid provision is made available at all times to people who are at work as accidents or ill health such as cardiac arrest can happen at any time.

First aid treatment can save lives and can also help a casualty to recover more quickly after an accident.

The minimum first aid provision in any workplace should be:

- **an appointed person** whose responsibility it is to take charge of the first aid arrangements, e.g. to call an ambulance and to look after first aid equipment; and
- **a suitably stocked first aid box.** It is important to inform your staff of:
 - the locations of all first aid equipment;
 - the name and location of the appointed person or first aider and to display this information at suitable locations throughout the premises.

It is important to record the details of all first aid treatments given.

This information can help to identify accident trends and possible areas for improvement in the control of health and safety risks. It can also be used to help with future first aid assessments.

There is no set list of contents for a first aid box as the contents should be based on an assessment of first aid needs. The following list suggests a minimum stock of first aid items:

- a leaflet giving general guidance on first aid at work;
- 20 individually wrapped sterile adhesive dressings (assorted sizes);
- 4 individually wrapped triangular adhesive dressings;
- 2 sterile eye pads;
- 6 safety pins;
- 6 medium sized (12cm x 12cm approx.) individually wrapped sterile unmedicated sterile wound dressings;
- 2 large sized (18cm x 18 cm approx.) individually wrapped unmedicated sterile wound dressings;
- sterile water (where mains tap water is not readily available);
- 1 pair of disposable gloves.

Note You should not keep tablets or medicines in the first aid box.

Other items may be required depending on your first aid assessment, e.g. where there is a risk of chemicals coming into contact with a person, facilities such as an eyebath, face wash or shower may be necessary.



Level of Provision

An assessment of first aid needs is required in order to establish what first aid equipment facilities and personnel are needed. It will depend upon the type of business you are in and the hazards that exist; all businesses including the self employed require first aid provision. The number of trained first aiders will depend upon the nature of the work, the number of employees and the size and location of the workplace.

- In small, lower risk environments such as offices and shops, **the minimum first aid provision stated above** may be all that is necessary.
- For larger or high risk premises it may be necessary to provide suitably trained first aiders.

The table below gives some guidance on the number of trained first aiders that would be needed.

Workplace Type & No. of Employees	Suggested numbers of first aid personnel
Lower risk , e.g. shops, offices, libraries etc	
Fewer than 50	At least one appointed person
50-100	At least one first aider
More than 100	One additional first aider for every 100 employed
Medium risk , e.g. light engineering, assembly work, food processing, warehousing	
Fewer than 20	At least one appointed person
20-100	At least one first aider for every 50 employed
More than 100	One additional first aider for every 100 employed
Higher risk , e.g. construction, manufacture, extensive work with dangerous machinery or sharp instruments	
Fewer than five	At least one appointed person
5-50	At least one first aider
More than 50	One additional first aider for every 50 employed
Note There may need to be more first aid personnel than set out above. Increased provision may be required to cover staff absences or special circumstances such as remoteness from emergency medical services, shift work or sites with several separate buildings.	

Training of appointed persons

In small firms where the assessment indicates a fully qualified first aider is not required, it makes sense to train the "appointed person" in the basics of first aid, e.g. resuscitation, control of bleeding and treatment of an unconscious patient.

Additional Information

A list of all first aid training providers registered with the Employment Medical Advisory Service (EMAS) can be obtained from the HSENI website www.hseni.gov.uk or via telephone 028 9040 8004.

What to do in an emergency

Priorities

- assess the situation – do not put yourself in danger;
- make the area safe;
- assess all casualties and attend first to any unconscious casualties;
- send for help – do not delay;
- follow the advice given below.

Check for consciousness

If there is no response to gentle shaking of the shoulders and shouting, the casualty may be unconscious. The priority is then to check the Airway, Breathing and Circulation. This is the ABC of resuscitation.

A Airway

To open the airway:

- place one hand on the casualty's forehead and gently tilt the head back;
- remove any obvious obstruction from the casualty's mouth;
- lift the chin with two fingertips.



B Breathing

Look along the chest, listen and feel at the mouth, for signs of normal breathing, for no more than 10 seconds.

If the casualty is breathing:

- place in the recovery position and ensure the airway remains open;
- send for help and monitor the casualty until help arrives.



If the casualty is not breathing:

- send for help;
- keep the airway open by maintaining the head tilt and chin lift;
- pinch the casualty's nose closed and allow the mouth to open;
- take a full breath and place your mouth around the casualty's mouth, making a good seal;
- blow slowly into the mouth until the chest rises;
- remove your mouth from the casualty and let the chest fall fully;
- give a second slow breath, then look for signs of a circulation (see opposite);
- if signs of a circulation are present, continue breathing for the casualty and recheck for signs of a circulation about every 10 breaths;

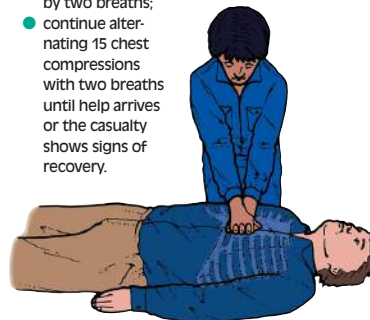
- if the casualty starts to breathe but remains unconscious, put them in the recovery position, ensure the airway remains open and monitor until help arrives.

C Circulation

Look, listen and feel for normal breathing, coughing or movement by the casualty, for no more than 10 seconds.

If there are no signs of a circulation, or you are at all unsure, immediately start chest compressions:

- lean over the casualty and with straight arms, press vertically down 4–5 cm on the breastbone, then release the pressure;
- give 15 rapid chest compressions (a rate of about 100 per minute) followed by two breaths;
- continue alternating 15 chest compressions with two breaths until help arrives or the casualty shows signs of recovery.



Severe bleeding

- apply direct pressure to the wound;
- raise and support the injured part (unless broken);
- apply a dressing and bandage firmly in place.

Broken bones and spinal injuries

If a broken bone or spinal injury is suspected, obtain expert help. Do not move casualties unless they are in immediate danger.

Burns

Burns can be serious so if in doubt, seek medical help. Cool the part of the body affected with cold water until pain is relieved. Thorough cooling may take 10 minutes or more, but this must not delay taking the casualty to hospital.

Certain chemicals may seriously irritate or damage the skin. Avoid contaminating yourself with the chemical. Treat in the same way as for other burns but flood the affected area with water for 20 minutes. Continue treatment even on the way to hospital, if necessary. Remove any contaminated clothing which is not stuck to the skin.

Eye injuries

All eye injuries are potentially serious. If there is something in the eye, wash out the eye with clean water or sterile fluid from a sealed

container, to remove loose material. Do not attempt to remove anything that is embedded in the eye.

If chemicals are involved, flush the eye with water or sterile fluid for at least 10 minutes, while gently holding the eyelids open. Ask the casualty to hold a pad over the injured eye and send them to hospital.

Record keeping

It is good practice to record in a book any incidents involving injuries or illness which have been attended. Include the following information in your entry:

- date, time and place of incident;
- name and job of injured or ill person;
- details of injury/illness and any first aid given;
- what happened to the casualty immediately afterwards (for example went back to work, went home, went to hospital);
- name and signature of the person dealing with the incident.

This information can help identify accident trends and possible areas for improvement in the control of health and safety risks.

This leaflet is available in priced packs of 20 from HSE Books, ISBN 0 7176 2261 4. Single free copies are also available from HSE Books.

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For information about health and safety ring HSE's Infoline Tel: 0845 345 0055 Fax: 0845 408 9566 Textphone: 0845 408 9577 e-mail: hse.infoline@natbrit.com or write to HSE Information Services, Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly CF83 3GG.

This leaflet contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

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This leaflet contains basic advice on first aid for use in an emergency. It is not a substitute for effective training.



Basic advice on first aid at work



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The Working Environment



There are many different types of workplaces including factories, offices, shops, vehicles and the outdoors. In general, compliance with the following guidance would normally be considered sufficient to comply with the law; however, each workplace should be subjected to its own assessment.

Temperature Inside workplaces a comfortable working temperature of at least 16°C should be provided or 13°C if the job involves physical effort.

- If people work outside or in a cold environment, such as cold stores and suitable working temperatures cannot be achieved, then it is the employer's responsibility to provide suitable protective clothing such as thermal clothing, waterproof coats etc.
- If people work in a hot environment such as a bakery then steps should be taken to try to achieve a reasonable working temperature. Where this is not possible adequate breaks, wholesome drinking water and suitable personal protective clothing such as light cotton overalls should be provided.

Lighting There must be sufficient lighting to allow work to be carried out safely and without risk of eyestrain. Natural light is recommended, if possible, but may need to be supplemented with artificial lighting where necessary. All lighting must be maintained.

Types of artificial lighting that can be used are:

- general – e.g. strip lighting which can cover large work areas;
- localised – e.g. up lighters in smaller work areas;
- specific – e.g. spotlight required to shine directly onto a machine part or for close, detailed work;
- outdoor lighting – may be required, e.g. traffic routes used by pedestrians need to be adequately lit after dark for both safety and security reasons.

Emergency Lighting

Emergency lighting must be provided on fire evacuation routes and if a person would be exposed to danger in the event of artificial light failing, e.g. at a dangerous machine.

Ventilation Every enclosed workplace must be able to be ventilated by a sufficient supply of fresh or purified air. This can be achieved by:

- **natural ventilation** – such as through windows or openings. Where this is not possible or natural ventilation needs to be supplemented consider;
- **general mechanical ventilation** – such as fans or air conditioning systems; or
- **specific ventilation** – consideration also needs to be given to specific extraction systems in workplaces where there is a need to reduce dust, e.g. woodworking dust, flour dust or fumes, e.g. welding fumes. All specific ventilation systems must be maintained on a regular basis (i.e. minimum of every 14 months) by a competent person.



Housekeeping Premises, furniture, floors, steps, walkways and equipment must be regularly cleaned, kept well maintained and tidy to help prevent common accidents such as slips, trips and falls and to reduce the risk of fire.

- provide suitable bins and clear waste and refuse regularly;
- Provide suitable cleaning equipment and cleaning materials. Ensure that spillages are cleaned up immediately and warning notices during cleaning operations used; and
- Provide sufficient storage areas for cleaning materials. Those that are hazardous to health, e.g. bleach should be stored in a well-ventilated and locked store with clear signage.

Floors and Gangways

A major proportion of workplace accidents are attributed to slips, trips and falls (75% of all reported injuries at work). The following precautions are recommended:

- keep floors clear, clean, dry and maintained;
- have gangways/walkways well marked, lit and edging defined;
- steps, corners and fixed obstacles should be clearly marked
e.g. with black and yellow diagonal stripes;
- floor openings e.g. vehicle examination pits and trap doors kept covered
when not in use and the edges clearly marked;
- salting/sanding and sweeping of outdoor routes during icy or frosty conditions;
- good drainage in wet processes;
- keep electrical cables and trailing leads tidy, covered or taped down;
- provide proper footwear if necessary.



Work At Height

Work at height should be carried out from a platform with suitable edge protection. Occasionally this may not be possible and a ladder may have to be used. However, ladders are best used as a means of getting to a workplace. They should only be used as a workplace for light work of short duration.

When deciding what equipment to use think about what the job includes, how long it will last and where it needs to be done. It is tempting to use a ladder for all sorts of work but you should always consider a working platform first, for example, a properly erected mobile scaffold tower or a mobile elevated working platform (MEWP).

Jobs such as removing or installing guttering, installing replacement windows, or painting should usually be carried out from scaffolds or mobile access equipment.

Noise Exposure to high levels of noise such as jack hammer or loud music can cause permanent hearing damage. Noise from machines and radios playing can also cause distractions and make communicating difficult. **Employers must decide if there is a noise problem** – Do people have to shout to be heard when standing less than 2 metres away? If the answer is yes then you will need to have the noise levels assessed by a competent person. Appropriate action must be taken to reduce the levels and keep a record of the results.



Transport The movement of delivery vehicles and forklift trucks around premises and buildings accounts for a large proportion of accidents, e.g. collision with people, other vehicles and overturning. The following precautions are recommended:

- separate vehicles and people, e.g. by using clearly marked, well planned pedestrian and vehicle traffic routes both indoors and outdoors;
- devise one-way traffic systems where possible;
- Try to eliminate the need for large vehicles to reverse;
- employ banksmen to supervise the safe movement of vehicles;
- display appropriate signage, e.g. speed limits, customer parking, travel direction etc;
- fit warning lights and audible warning signals to vehicles where appropriate;
- ensure only trained and authorised drivers use forklift trucks and other works vehicles;
- do not leave keys in the ignition of vehicles when unattended;
- restrict access to dangerous areas such as loading/unloading bays;
- ensure surfaces over which vehicles are driven are even;
- check vehicles regularly and ensure they are properly maintained;
- issue information and instructions to visitors e.g. parking arrangements, signing in at reception;
- provide suitable high visibility clothing for people working in high risk areas.

Mobile Phones Mobile phones are often used at work. They can have benefits for safety, efficiency and convenience of employers and staff. It is illegal under Road Traffic legislation to use a hand-held mobile phone whilst driving. Employers should inform employees of the company's policy on the use of hands-free kits and the use of mobile phones whilst driving at work.

Welfare Facilities

- Toilet facilities should be provided for all staff including disabled people. These should be kept well ventilated, clean, and in working order. A wash hand basin must be provided close to every toilet and supplied with hot and cold (or warm) running water, soap and towels.
- Provide an area for eating/drinking with means to prepare or obtain a hot drink, e.g. the provision of a kettle or a vending machine.
- Where it is not possible to purchase hot food, on or nearby the premises, there should be a means of heating food, for example, a microwave oven.
- Provide changing areas with lockers or hanging space for work/casual clothing.
- Provide wholesome drinking water either tap or bottled.
- Enclosed rest areas or rooms must include arrangements to protect non-smokers from tobacco smoke.
- Rest facilities should also be provided for pregnant and nursing mothers.

Electricity

Electricity is used daily in all workplaces; however, when it is uncontrolled, misused, or not maintained properly it can severely burn, injure, kill or cause devastating fires.

Electricity has its own particular risks, the two main hazards are:

Electric Shocks – When electricity passes through the body it causes shocks, burns and can kill.

Fires and Explosions – Approximately 22% of all workplace fires are started by electrical appliances.

How can I prevent electrical accidents from occurring?

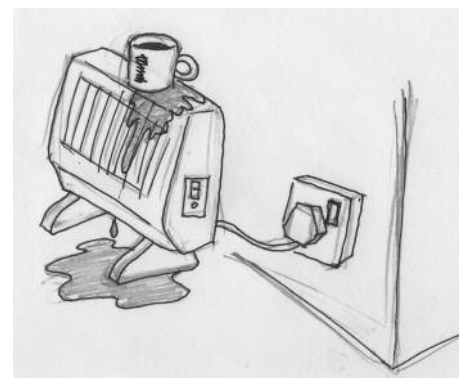
- General Safety**
- Know the age, condition, operating voltage and suitability of the electrical system in your premises; ensure it is soundly constructed and that it has been properly installed. It should be checked by a competent person, such as a qualified electrician on a regular basis (at least every 5 years or at shorter intervals as recommended by the Institute of Electrical Engineers).
 - Secure switchboards, fuse boards and other dangerous parts of the system in a locked room or cupboard. Ensure that a responsible person holds the key to prevent unauthorised access.
 - Ensure fuses are properly identified, rated and clearly labeled.
 - Provide an adequate number of socket outlets to prevent over-loading and the need to use adaptors. Use suitably fused multi-plug 'gang' extensions where additional sockets cannot be provided.
 - Select equipment, including portable electrical appliances, which are suited to the working environment, especially if it is subject to impact damage or a wet, corrosive or potentially explosive environment.
 - When using an electrical supply outside, ensure that external cables are properly rated and protected against damage and the environment. Protect against the risk of shock by fitting a 30 milliamp residual current device (RCD) to the external supply.
 - Highlight to staff the hazards associated with using electricity in the workplace and show them how to switch the power off in case of an emergency.

User Checks

Carrying out regular visual inspections of portable electrical equipment before it is used can detect 95% of faults and damage. Train your staff to disconnect equipment at the switch and look for the following signs:-

- damage, e.g. cuts, splits or severe abrasion to the outer casing (sheath) of the cable;
- damage to the plug, e.g. the casing is cracked or the pins are bent;
- make-do repairs and connections, e.g. taped joints in the cable;
- damage to the casing of the equipment or obviously loose parts or screws;
- overheating i.e. burning smell or burn marks on the casing, cable, plug or the socket from which the equipment was disconnected;
- the cable not being properly gripped where it enters the plug or equipment. Look to see if the coloured insulation of the internal wires is showing.

Where faults or damage are found or reported – disable or remove the faulty item from use and clearly label it **“Do Not Use”** until it has been properly disposed of or repaired and inspected by a competent person.



Combined Inspection and Testing, Portable Appliance Testing Programme. (PAT) testing

Not all faults will be picked up during a visual inspection and some portable equipment will require a further inspection and test (PAT) carried out by someone who has been adequately trained and competent to do so, such as a qualified electrician.

The time frame for carrying out PAT testing will depend on the equipment, the wear and tear it receives and where it is used. For example, an angle grinder with a metal body, which is used outdoors and is frequently dropped or damaged requires more frequent testing than a plastic bodied, double insulated computer that is rarely moved from its office environment.

The following table gives **suggested** initial intervals for user and PAT checks.

Suggested initial maintenance intervals

Type of business	User checks	Formal Visual Inspection	Combined inspection and test
Equipment Hire	N/A	Before issue/ after return	Before issue
Construction	110V - Weekly 230V Mains – Daily / every shift	110V - Monthly 230V Mains - Weekly	110V - Before first use on site the 3 monthly 3 Monthly 230V Mains - Before first use on site then monthly
Light industrial	Yes	Before initial use then 6-monthly	6 - 12 Monthly
Heavy industrial high risk of equipment damage	Daily	Weekly	6 - 12 Monthly
Office information technology, e.g. desktop computer, photocopies, fax machines	No	1 - 2 Years	None if double insulated otherwise up to 5 years
Double insulated equipment not hand-held e.g. fans, table lamps	No	2 - 3 Years	No
Hand-held, double-insulated (Class II)	Yes	6 monthly - 1 year	No
Earthed (Class I) equipment, electric kettles, some floor cleaners	Yes	6 monthly - 1 year	1 - 2 Years
Equipment used by the public e.g. in hotels	By member of staff	3 months	1Year
Cables and plugs, extension leads	Yes	1 Year	2 Year

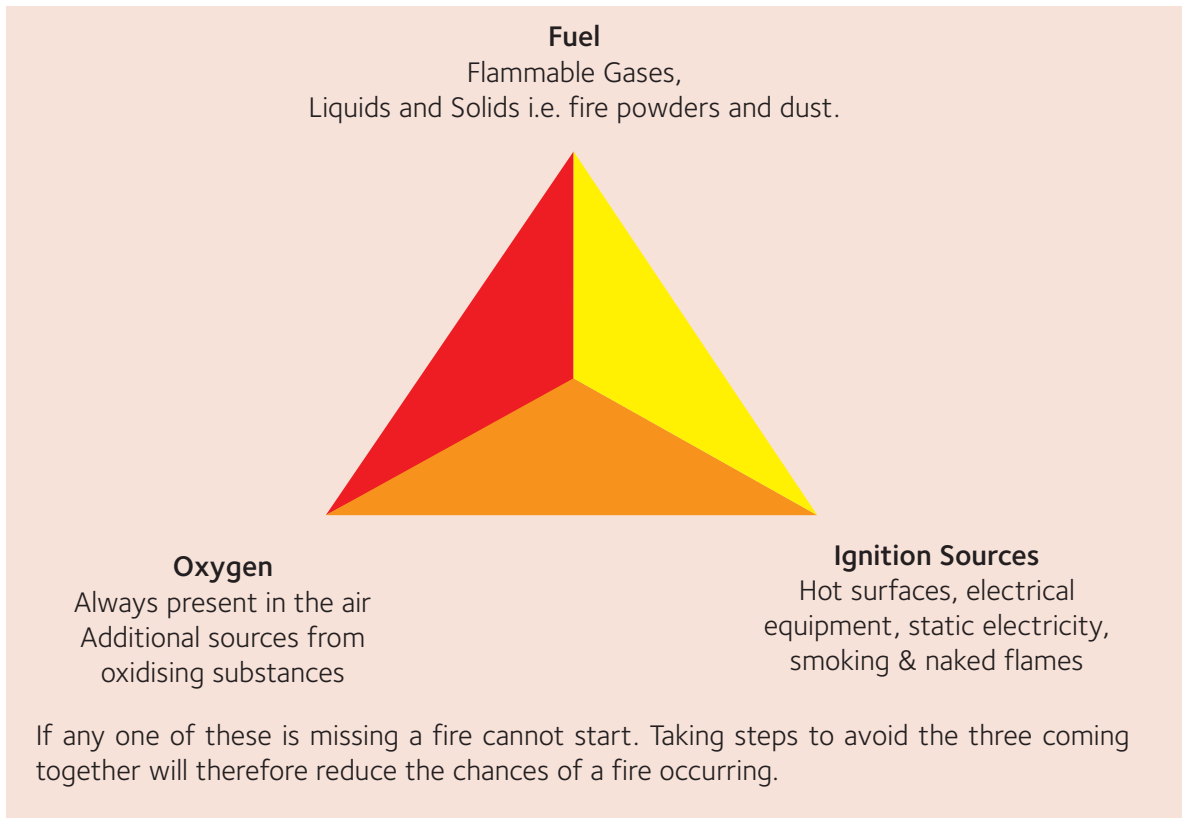
Records of all maintenance and inspections should be kept on file.



Fire

The Fire Triangle

For a fire to start the three things in the triangle below are needed.



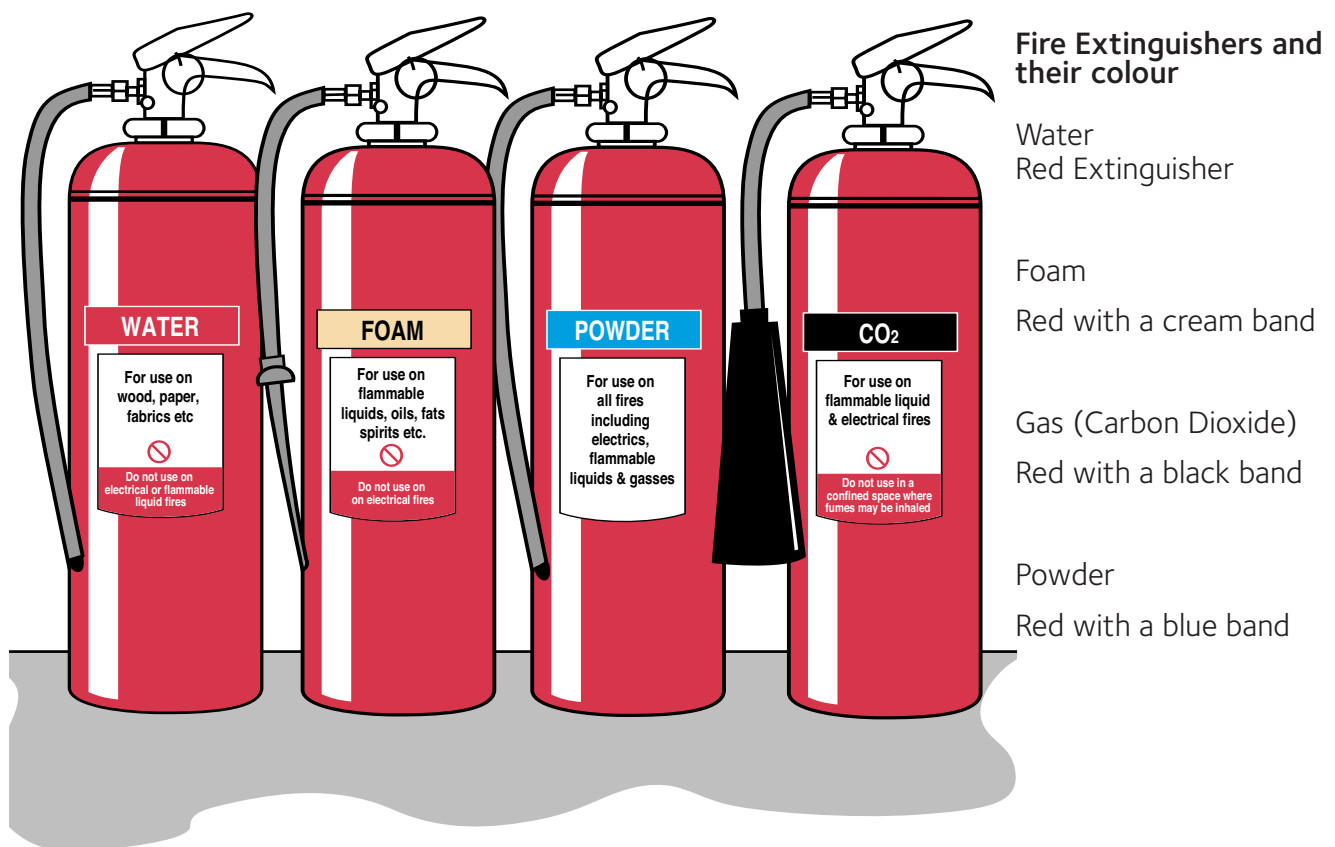
1. Stop a fire starting

- Keep work areas clean and tidy.
- Dispose of waste regularly.
- Store goods and equipment tidily.
- Keep electric lamps and light bulbs away from combustibles (e.g. by not stacking goods too high).
- Regularly inspect and repair any worn or damaged electrical equipment or wiring. Periodic examinations and checks should be carried out by a qualified electrical contractor.
- Secure any portable electrical heaters so that they cannot fall over.
- Never put items such as books, papers or clothing over heaters or ventilation openings on equipment.
- Develop a system for checking work areas at the end of the day, e.g. equipment is switched off.
- Devise a smoking policy. Ensure that smoking is not permitted in areas where flammable material is stored.
- Prevent build-up of dust, grease or oil around equipment.
- If flammable substances are used, keep them in their proper storage containers and store these in a fire resisting cabinet or a fire resisting store for larger quantities.
- Make sure that Liquefied Petroleum Gas appliances are serviced regularly and that cylinders are stored/installed outside in a well ventilated area.
- Ensure good ventilation to areas where flammable vapours or dust may be created, e.g. during welding or battery charging operations.



2. Stop a fire spreading

- Keep fire doors closed – if fire doors are on automatic door release units, ensure they are not obstructed.
- Make sure that any smoke detectors, sprinkler systems etc. are well maintained.
- Check that fire dampers in ducting and hoods operate efficiently.
- Think before carrying out any alterations to fire resisting structures (inform your local Building Control Service).
- Have enough fire extinguishers of the right type to deal promptly with small outbreaks of fire.
- Have them serviced annually and keep them in prominent positions and at high risk activities, e.g. welding.



3. Make sure everyone can get out safely

- Everyone must know what to do in the case of fire. Devise an emergency procedure and have drills regularly.
- Display “fire action” instructions.
- Make sure staff know how to raise the alarm.
- Make sure fire escape routes and doors are clearly marked and are kept unobstructed at all times.
- Ensure emergency lighting is provided and maintained.
- Fire escape doors must be capable of being opened easily from inside whenever anyone is on the premises.
- Ensure fire alarm systems are checked and maintained.

Never underestimate the potential of any fire, what may appear to be a small fire can spread rapidly throughout the building, producing intense heat, smoke and toxic fumes which can kill in minutes. Even if nobody is injured, the extent of fire damage can close a business.



Workplace Health

Drugs and Alcohol

Any business, however small, can take practical steps to minimise the risks associated with inappropriate drinking or drug misuse.

You should have a drugs/alcohol section within your Health and Safety Policy, clearly defining the rules regarding drugs/alcohol use in the workplace. You also need to think about disciplinary procedures if the problem persists or interferes with the health and safety of your employees or anyone or anything within the workplace.

Failure to manage drug and alcohol misuse can affect your business through:

- loss of productivity;
- lateness and absenteeism;
- safety concerns;
- effect on team morale and employee relations;
- bad behaviour or poor discipline; or
- adverse effects on company image and customer relations.

Signs of substance misuse may include:

- sudden mood changes;
- unusual irritability or aggression;
- impaired job performance;
- poor timekeeping;
- increased short-term sickness absence; or
- absence after having been paid.

Think about communication and training:

- How will current staff and any recruited in the future know the company's rules about use of alcohol and substance misuse?
- Does anyone need more information or training?

Supervisors and other managers need to be clear about company rules and what to do if they suspect an employee's drinking or substance misuse is affecting their work. You may think about encouraging those with a problem to seek further help.

For further information contact the *Employment Medical Advisory Service (EMAS)*, Avenue House, Rosemary Street, Belfast BT1 1QE. Tel: 028 9040 8004.

Smoking

All employees have a general duty to provide a safe and healthy workplace. An employer who has not assessed the risk posed by smoking in the workplace and formulated a policy to deal with it would find it difficult to prove that they had fulfilled that duty.

A specific policy on smoking in the workplace should be written down and made available to all staff and visitors. (It is best to draft this policy in consultation with employees and to give a suitable lead-in time for the implementation of the policy).

If designated smoking areas are identified in your policy, they should be situated well away from flammable materials and be easily identified for use. Fire resistant waste bins or sand bins should be provided in the smoking area.

All employees should be informed of the company rules with regard to smoking in the workplace and the consequences of smoking in unauthorised areas.

For further information contact *The Health Promotion Agency*, 18 Ormeau Avenue, Belfast BT2 8HS. Tel: 028 9031 1611.





Hazardous Substances

Hazardous substances are used in virtually all businesses across all industry sectors, eg catering, construction, hairdressing, engineering etc.

As an employer you should identify all substances used and found within the workplace such as dust, liquids or fumes and assess them to see if they could cause ill health, for example, dermatitis, asthma, cancer, etc. You may find information that can help you on the safety data sheet or you may need to seek specialist advice. (Safety data sheets should be available from your supplier; keep a copy on file).

Hazardous substances are normally labelled, eg. Toxic, Very Toxic, Corrosive, Irritant Harmful.

Where practical you should stop using the product. If this is not possible then consider:

- change the process or activity so that the hazardous substance is not required or generated;
- replace it with a safer alternative; or
- use it in a safer form, e.g. pellet instead of powder.

Adequately control exposure

If prevention is not reasonably practicable, you must adequately control exposure. You should consider and put in place measures appropriate to the activity and consistent with the risk assessment, including, in order of priority, one or more of the following:

- use appropriate work processes, systems and engineering controls, and provide suitable work equipment and materials e.g. use processes which minimise the amount of material used or produced, or equipment which totally encloses the process;
- control exposure at source (e.g. local exhaust ventilation), and reduce the number of employees exposed to a minimum, the level and duration of their exposure, and the quantity of hazardous substances used or produced in the workplace;
- provide personal protective equipment (e.g. face masks, respirators, protective clothing), but only as a last resort and never as a replacement for other control measures which are required.

Hazard Warning Signs



Oxidising substance



Non-flammable compressed gas



Organic peroxide



Substance which in contact with water emits flammable gas



Spontaneously combustible substance



Corrosive substance



Flammable solid



Toxic Gas



Toxic substance



Harmful substance keep away from food



Other hazardous substance or multi-of substances of different hazards



Flammable liquid



Flammable gas



Stress

Stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them. Individuals differ in their ability to cope with pressure. However, stress can affect anyone, no matter what type of job they are in. It is not, therefore, confined to any occupational group and can occur in all types of workplace.

There is an important difference between pressure and stress. Pressure can be a motivating factor, encouraging improved performance. However, stress can lead to reduced performance, absenteeism and poor morale. While stress itself is not an illness, prolonged exposure to excess pressure can cause mental and physical health problems such as anxiety, insomnia, depression and high blood pressure. Resultant lapses in concentration can also lead to accidents.

Research indicates that the significant causes of workplace stress relate to organisational issues. It is your responsibility as an employer to carry out a five step risk assessment to identify hazards and assess who might be harmed.

Step 1 – Identify the hazards. The main types of hazards can be grouped into six key areas; see following table. If these are not managed effectively in your business then your staff are at risk of suffering from work-related stress. There are several different ways of helping you identify if there is a problem with work-related stress in your workplace, such as informal talks to staff, performance appraisals, sickness/absence data and staff turnover. Whilst doing this remember to respect staff confidentially.

Step 2 – Decide who might be harmed and how. At particular times, your staff may be more vulnerable to work-related stress. For example, those who have a domestic crisis such as a bereavement.

Step 3 – Evaluate the risk; see following table.

Step 4 – If you employ five or more employees you must record the significant findings of the assessment and share them with employees.

Step 5 – Review the assessment at appropriate intervals



Key stressors	Principles of management standards
<p>Demands – such as workload and the work environment.</p>	<p>Ensure there are sufficient resources to do the work Strike a balance and ensure that employees are not overloaded or underloaded. Provide your staff with suitable and sufficient training to do their jobs. Assess the risk of physical violence and verbal abuse and take appropriate steps to deal with it.</p>
<p>Control – how much say the person has in the way they do their work.</p>	<p>Give more control to staff by enabling them to have a say in planning their own work and breaks. Encourage employees to develop their skills and help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work.</p>
<p>Support, - Includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.</p>	<p>Give support and encouragement to staff, even when things go wrong. Offer internal support such as coaching or emotional support. Listen to your staff and agree a course of action for tackling any problems. Involve your staff. Encourage a healthy 'work-life balance'.</p>
<p>Relationships – covering issues such as bullying and harassment.</p>	<p>Work in partnership with staff to ensure that bullying and harassment never emerge as an issue. Have disciplinary and grievance procedures in place to deal with unacceptable behaviour. Value diversity – don't discriminate against people on grounds of race, sex or disability.</p>
<p>Role – whether the individual understands their role in the organisation, and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles.</p>	<p>Make sure your staff have a clearly defined role. Make sure that new members of staff receive a comprehensive induction to your organisation. If your organisation has gone through change, check with staff to make sure they understand their new roles.</p>
<p>Change – how organisational change is managed and communicated in the organisation.</p>	<p>Explain what the organisation wants to achieve and why it is essential that the change takes place. Communicate new developments quickly to staff. Give staff the opportunity to comment and ask questions.</p>

Further information on Management Standards and guidelines on work-related stress is available on HSE's website www.hse.gov.uk.



Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs)

MSDs are the most common workplace illness in Northern Ireland affecting around 31,400 people every year. Work-related upper limb disorders (WRULDs) and manual handling injuries are two specific classes of MSDs experienced by workers. They affect the muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves and other soft tissues and joints with the back, neck and upper limbs being at most risk.

Work-related upper limb disorders (WRULDs)

Many employees including assemblers, supermarket checkout assistants and keyboard operators are affected by upper limb disorders at some point in their working lives. The term covers a number of related medical conditions, e.g. tennis elbow, which affects the arms, particularly the hands and forearms. The symptoms of upper limb disorders include pain or soreness and limited movement of affected parts. Typical causes are incorrect posture, too great a workload, over-forceful movements and inadequate rest breaks.

Injury can be prevented by improved design of working areas (position of keyboard and VDU screens, heights of workbenches and chairs, lighting) adjustments of workloads and rest periods, provision of special tools and better training and supervision (see section on Workstations for further information).

Manual Handling

Manual handling is not just about lifting. It includes the use of the hands or bodily force to push, pull, carry, move or support any object, person or animal. As nearly every job involves manual handling to some extent, it has become the most common cause of "Over 3-day" accidents in the workplace.

Most injuries involve pains in the back, but the hands and feet are also vulnerable. In many cases, the damage builds up gradually over time rather than being caused by a single handling incident. Such damage can be very debilitating, making everyday activities painful and causing lengthy absences from work. It is not only the movement of heavy loads that can harm people; other factors include:

- restricted space for movement;
- awkward postures; or
- unstable loads.

Managing the risk from manual handling is based on the principles of **Avoid, Assess** and **Reduce**. In the first instance, identify all the activities in your workplace that involve staff moving materials.

Avoid

The best solution is to avoid the need for any manual handling. It may be possible to achieve this by redesigning tasks or the layout of the workplace so that hazardous manual handling is not necessary. Handling tasks can be mechanized through the introduction of equipment such as lift trucks, conveyors and sack trolleys. Such equipment must also be suitable for the task and maintained in good working condition. Where it is not reasonably practicable to do this you need to assess the risk of harm.

Assess

The assessment must take account of a number of risk factors:

- the load;
- the task;
- the working environment; and
- individual capability.

Do not forget that the introduction of handling aids and mechanical equipment, such as roll cages and fork lift trucks, may create new hazards and these will need to be assessed, eg. vehicle movement.



Consider the following:

Reduce Solutions to common problems

The load:

- heavy loads can be broken up or ordered in smaller packages;
- loads that are difficult to grasp or that could shift during transport can be placed in a container for carrying or bound together before moving;
- if loads are awkward, assistance can be sought or a trolley used.

The task:

- stooping and reaching can be reduced by storing items at waist height or by the use of scissor lifts or by the use of suitable stepladders or platforms for access to higher shelves;
- minimise long distance carrying by arranging delivery and storage to be as near as possible to the point of use or use conveyor belts;
- vary work activities to avoid repetitive tasks.

The working environment:

- remove any obstructions that restrict movement or create tripping hazards;
- ensure that lighting levels are adequate;
- if possible, avoid steep steps and ramps; otherwise make use of team lifting or the use of chutes, hoists or conveyors;
- where possible, provide a warm environment.

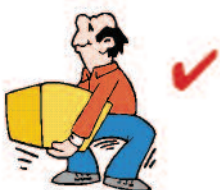
The individual capability of your staff:

- ensure that staff are capable of performing the tasks allocated to them – pay particular attention to those who are either pregnant or who have a known physical weakness;
- train all staff in the safe lifting technique and in the safe procedures you have identified for moving materials;
- instruct staff on the correct clothing and footwear to use;
- provide protective shoes, hats and gloves where necessary.

The Safe Lifting Technique

Stop and Think

Do I need help?
Where is the load going?
Are there any aids to help me?



The Lift

Feet apart
Leading leg forward
Bend the knees
Lift in stages
Keep back straight
Keep load close to body
Lean forward a little for good grip
Keep shoulders level
Get a firm grip
Put down first, then adjust

Don't

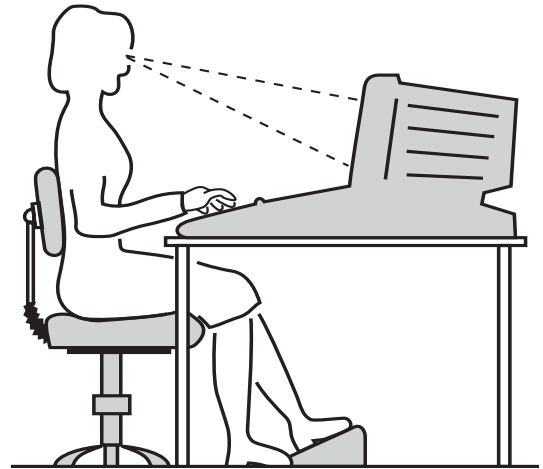
Jerk
Overstretch
Twist
Lift loads which are too heavy





Workstations

The modern workplace contains an array of workstations often including computers and other display screen equipment (DSE). Most workstations are generally safe, but incorrect use can give rise to a variety of health complaints including back pain, upper limb disorders, headaches, fatigue and stress, resulting in reduced work efficiency and lost working days. However, with suitable workstation design, adequate training, proper work planning and selection of appropriate software, such problems can be prevented. As an employer you should:



- Carry out an assessment of all workstations.
- Take steps to minimise any problems identified by your assessment.
- Encourage staff to report any discomfort, aches or pains they may be experiencing.

Workstations

A workstation may consist of a chair and a table but may also include a computer. Consider the following when setting up your workstation:



Table

- Is the table large enough for the task, eg. a computer and room for paperwork?
- Is there sufficient leg room under the table?
- If working with a computer, is the desk surface anti-reflective?

Chair

- Is the chair easy to move?
- Is the seat height adjustable?
- Is the seat back adjustable for height and does the back tilt to support the small of the back?
- Do arms on the chair prevent the user sitting close to the table?
- Is a foot rest required?
- Is there a weight limit specified on the chair?



If using a computer or display screen equipment then consider the screen keyboard and mouse.

Screen

- Arrange workstations to avoid any glare or reflections on the screen.
- Position the screen at right angles to windows or between rows of fluorescent lights, making use of window blinds and desktop lamps to avoid problems with unwanted light.
- The monitor should swivel and tilt, be adjustable for brightness and contrast, clean and large enough to see the characters clearly.
- When sitting tall and looking straight ahead is the user looking at the top edge of the screen?
- Is the screen at a comfortable reading distance?

Keyboard and Mouse

- Is the keyboard separate from the monitor? (Note: Laptops are not designed for extended daily use in the office.)
- Is it possible to tilt the keyboard?
- Is it possible to rest the forearms on the chair or desk while using the keyboard or mouse without over-stretching or bending the wrists?
- Is the keyboard in good condition and the keys easy to read and use?
- Is the mouse suitable for left or right-handed people to use?

Software

Provide user-friendly software. Software selected should be suitable for the task, easy to use and adaptable. Adequate training should be given on its operation.

Eye tests

Organise an eye examination and eyesight test at regular intervals for those employees classed as habitual users of DSE. You are only required to pay for spectacles if special ones are needed for this type of work and normal glasses cannot be used.

Work Environment

Maintain a comfortable working environment, ensuring adequate levels of temperature and humidity and minimising distracting noise.

Training

Inform staff about the hazards associated with using incorrectly positioned equipment. Provide them with training on the precautions that can be taken including the adjustment of the workstation to meet individual needs. Emphasise the need to take frequent breaks from the workstation or to change their position often, especially if using DSE over long periods of the day.

Daily work routines

Plan work to allow for sufficient breaks away from the screen or changes of activity, such as filing. This is particularly important for staff who use DSE for prolonged periods. Short, frequent breaks are more effective than less frequent, longer breaks. It is desirable that staff have individual discretion over the timing of their breaks.

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