

First aid at work

Your questions answered



This is a web-friendly version of leaflet INDG214 reprinted 03/08

This leaflet answers some basic questions about first-aid provision at work.

It is aimed at employers in small and medium-sized enterprises, but may be useful to all employers, managers and others involved in first aid.

Q1: What is first aid at work?

People at work can suffer injuries or fall ill. It doesn't matter whether the injury or the illness is caused by the work they do or not. What is important is that they receive immediate attention and that an ambulance is called in serious cases. First aid at work covers the arrangements you must make to ensure this happens. It can save lives and prevent minor injuries becoming major ones.

Q2: So what do I need to do?

The Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981 require you to provide adequate and appropriate equipment, facilities and personnel to enable first aid to be given to your employees if they are injured or become ill at work.

What is adequate and appropriate will depend on the circumstances in your workplace *and you should assess what your first aid needs are* (see Q3).

The minimum first-aid provision on any work site is:

- a suitably stocked first-aid box (see Q4);
- an appointed person to take charge of first-aid arrangements (see Q5).

It is also important to remember that accidents can happen at any time. *First-aid provision needs to be available at all times people are at work.*

Q3: What should I consider when assessing first-aid needs?

Many small firms will only need to make the minimum first-aid provision. However, there are factors which might make greater provision necessary. The checklist in Table 1 covers the points you should consider.

Table 1 Checklist

Aspects to consider	Impact on first-aid provision
1 You are required by law to make an assessment of significant risks in your workplace. What are the risks of injury and ill health identified in this risk assessment?	If the risks are significant you may need to employ first aiders (see Q6 and Q7).
2 Are there any specific risks, eg working with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ hazardous substances; ■ dangerous tools; ■ dangerous machinery; ■ dangerous loads or animals? 	You will need to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ specific training for first aiders; ■ extra first-aid equipment; ■ precise siting of first-aid equipment.
3 Are there parts of your establishment where different levels of risk can be identified (eg in a University with research laboratories)?	You will probably need to make different levels of provision in different parts of the establishment.
4 What is your record of accidents and cases of ill health? What type are they and where did they happen?	You may need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ locate your provision in certain areas; ■ review the contents of the first-aid box (see Q4).
5 How many people are employed on site?	You may need to employ first aiders (see Q6 and Q7).
6 Are there inexperienced workers on site, or employees with disabilities or special health problems?	You will need to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ special equipment; ■ local siting of equipment.
7 Are the premises spread out, eg are there several buildings on the site or multi-floor buildings?	You will need to consider provision in each building or on several floors.
8 Is there shiftwork or out-of-hours working?	Remember that there needs to be first-aid provision at all times people are at work.
9 Is your workplace remote from emergency medical services?	You will need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ inform local medical services of your location; ■ consider special arrangements with the emergency services.
10 Do you have employees who travel a lot or work alone?	You will need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ consider issuing personal first-aid kits and training staff in their use; ■ consider issuing personal communicators to employees.
11 Do any of your employees work at sites occupied by other employers?	You will need to make arrangements with the other site occupiers.
12 Do you have any work experience trainees?	Your first-aid provision must cover them.

Aspects to consider	Impact on first-aid provision
13 Do members of the public visit your premises?	You have no legal responsibilities for non-employees, but HSE strongly recommends you include them in your first-aid provision.

Q4: What should I put in the first-aid box?

There is no standard list of items to put in a first-aid box. It depends on what you assess the needs are. However, as a guide, and where there is no special risk in the workplace, a minimum stock of first-aid items would be:

- a leaflet giving general guidance on first aid, eg HSE leaflet *Basic advice on first aid at work* (see 'Where can I get further information?');
- 20 individually wrapped sterile adhesive dressings (assorted sizes);
- two sterile eye pads;
- four individually wrapped triangular bandages (preferably sterile);
- six safety pins;
- six medium-sized (approximately 12 cm x 12 cm) individually wrapped sterile unmedicated wound dressings;
- two large (approximately 18 cm x 18 cm) sterile individually wrapped unmedicated wound dressings;
- one pair of disposable gloves.

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

The above is a suggested contents list only; equivalent but different items will be considered acceptable.

Q5: What is an appointed person?

An appointed person is someone you choose to:

- take charge when someone is injured or falls ill, including calling an ambulance if required;
- look after the first-aid equipment, eg restocking the first-aid box.

Appointed persons should not attempt to give first aid for which they have not been trained, though short emergency first-aid training courses are available. Remember that an appointed person should be available at all times people are at work on site - this may mean appointing more than one.

Q6: What is a first aider?

A first aider is someone who has undergone a training course in administering first aid at work and holds a current first aid at work certificate. **Training organisations running first aid at work courses should be approved by HSE.** Lists of first-aid training organisations in your area are available from HSE. You may decide, following your first-aid assessment, that you need one or more first aiders. A first aider can undertake the duties of an appointed person.

Q7: How many first aiders or appointed persons do I need?

It is not possible to give hard and fast rules on when or how many first aiders or appointed persons might be needed. This will depend on the circumstances of each particular organisation or worksite. Refer to Table 2 after working through the assessment checklist in Table 1. It offers suggestions on how many first aiders or appointed persons might be needed in relation to categories of risk and number of employees. The details in Table 2 are suggestions only - they are not definitive nor

are they a legal requirement. It is for you to assess your first-aid needs in the light of your particular circumstances.

Where there are special circumstances, such as remoteness from emergency medical services, shiftwork, or sites with several separate buildings, there may need to be more first-aid personnel than set out in Table 2. Increased provision will be necessary to cover for absences. First-aid personnel should be available at all times people are at work.

Q8: Do I have to do anything else?

You have to inform your employees of the first aid arrangements. Putting up notices telling staff who and where the first aiders or appointed persons are and where the first-aid box is will usually be sufficient. But don't forget that you will need to make special arrangements to give first-aid information to employees with reading or language difficulties.

Table 2 Suggested numbers of first-aid personnel

Category of risk	Numbers employed at any location	Suggested number of first-aid personnel
Lower risk eg shops and offices, libraries	Fewer than 50 50-100 More than 100	At least one appointed person At least one first aider One additional first aider for every 100 employed
Medium risk eg light engineering and assembly work, food processing, warehousing	Fewer than 20 20-100 More than 100	At least one appointed person At least one first aider for every 50 employed (or part thereof) One additional first aider for every 100 employed
Higher risk eg most construction, slaughterhouses, chemical manufacture, extensive work with dangerous machinery or sharp instruments	Fewer than 5 5-50 More than 50	At least one appointed person At least one first aider One additional first aider for every 50 employed

Q9: Where can I get further information?

Lists of first aid training organisations are available from: HSE's Infoline (see back cover for details).

The free leaflet *Basic advice on first aid at work* (INDG347(rev1), 2006) is published by HSE Books. It is also available in priced packs of 20, ISBN 978 0 7176 6193 0.

More detailed practical guidance on complying with your first aid at work duties has been published by the Health and Safety Commission *First aid at work. The Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981. Approved Code of Practice and guidance* L74 HSE Books 1997 ISBN 978 0 7176 1050 1.

HSE Books publishes two first aid posters: *Basic advice on first aid at work* HSE Books 2006 ISBN 978 0 7176 6195 4 and *Electric shock: First aid procedures* HSE Books 2006 ISBN 978 0 7176 6203 6.

Information on all aspects of first aid at work is available on the first aid web pages of HSE's website at www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid/index.htm.

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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.

This leaflet is available in priced packs of 15 from HSE Books, ISBN 978 0 7176 1074 7. Single free copies are also available from HSE Books and it is available online at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg214.pdf.

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