

First aid at work

Your questions answered



This is a web-friendly version of leaflet INDG214(rev1), revised 10/09

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

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

Q1: What is first aid at work?

People at work can suffer injuries or be taken ill. It doesn't matter whether the injury or illness is caused by the work they do or not, it is important to give them immediate attention and call an ambulance in serious cases. First aid at work covers the arrangements you should make to ensure this happens. It can save lives and prevent minor injuries becoming major ones.

Q2: What do I need to do?

The Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981 require you to provide adequate and appropriate first-aid equipment, facilities and people so your employees can be given immediate help if they are injured or taken 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);
- information for employees about first-aid arrangements (see Q8).

It is important to remember that accidents and illness 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?

Some small workplaces may only need the minimum provision. But, there are factors that might mean you need greater provision. The checklist in Table 1 covers the points you should consider.

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

There is no mandatory list of items to put in a first-aid box. It depends on what you assess your needs to be. As a guide, where work activities involve low hazards, a minimum stock of first-aid items might be:

- a leaflet giving general guidance on first aid (eg HSE's leaflet: *Basic advice on first aid at work* - see Q9);

- 20 individually wrapped sterile plasters (assorted sizes), appropriate to the type of work (you can provide hypoallergenic plasters, if necessary);
- two sterile eye pads;
- four individually wrapped triangular bandages, preferably sterile;
- six safety pins;
- two large, individually wrapped, sterile, unmedicated wound dressings;
- six medium-sized, individually wrapped, sterile, unmedicated wound dressings;
- a pair of disposable gloves (see HSE's free leaflet: *Latex and you* – Q9).

This is a suggested contents list only.

It is recommended that you don't keep tablets and medicines in the first-aid box.

Q5: What is an appointed person?

If you decide you don't need a first-aider in your workplace, you should appoint someone to take charge of first-aid arrangements. The role of this appointed person includes looking after first-aid equipment and facilities and calling the emergency services when required. They can also provide emergency cover where a first-aider is absent due to unforeseen circumstances (annual leave does not count). Appointed persons do not need first-aid training, though emergency first-aid courses are available.

Even if you decide first-aiders are unnecessary, there is still the possibility of an accident or illness, so you may wish to consider providing qualified first-aiders. Appointed persons are not necessary where there is an adequate number of first-aiders.

Q6: What is a first-aider?

A first-aider is someone who has undertaken training and has a qualification that HSE approves. This means that they must hold a valid certificate of competence in either:

- first aid at work (FAW), issued by a training organisation approved by HSE; or
- emergency first aid at work (EFAW), issued by a training organisation approved by HSE or a recognised Awarding Body of Ofqual/Scottish Qualifications Authority.

You can obtain lists of suitable training providers and Awarding Bodies from HSE's Infoline (see Q9 for contact details).

Use the findings of your first-aid needs assessment (see Q3) to decide whether first-aiders should be trained in FAW or EFAW. EFAW training enables a first-aider to give emergency first aid to someone who is injured or becomes ill while at work. FAW training includes EFAW and also equips the first-aider to apply first aid to a range of specific injuries and illness. As a guide, Table 2 suggests the first-aid personnel to provide under different circumstances.

To help keep their basic skills up to date, it is strongly recommended that your first-aiders undertake annual refresher training. The training organisations referred to above can run these courses.

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

There are no hard and fast rules on exact numbers. It will depend on the circumstances of your workplace. After working through the checklist in Table 1, refer to Table 2 which provides a general guide on how many appointed persons or first-aiders you might need. **The numbers given in Table 2 are suggestions only.** You should assess your first-aid needs in the light of your particular circumstances.

Where there are special circumstances, such as shift work or sites with several buildings, there may need to be more first-aid personnel than set out in Table 2. You will need increased provision to cover for absences.

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 enough. You will need to make special arrangements to give first-aid information to employees with reading or language difficulties.

Q9: Where can I get further information?

Lists of first-aid training organisations and Awarding Bodies are available from HSE's Infoline (see below).

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

More detailed practical guidance on complying with your first-aid duties is available in *First aid at work. The Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981. Approved Code of Practice and guidance* L74 HSE Books 2009 ISBN 978 0 7176 6260 9.

You may also find the following publications helpful:

The free leaflet *Basic advice on first aid at work* INDG347(rev1) HSE Books 2006 (single copy free or priced packs of 20 ISBN 978 0 7176 6193 0) www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg347.pdf.

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.

The free leaflet *Latex and you* Leaflet INDG320 HSE Books 2000 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg320.pdf.

Table 1 Checklist for assessment of first-aid needs

Point to consider	Impact on first-aid provision
<p>■ Hazards (use the findings of your risk assessment and take account of any parts of your workplace that have different work activities/hazards which may require different levels of first-aid provision)</p>	
<p>Does your workplace have low-level hazards, like you might find in offices and shops?</p>	<p>The minimum provision is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ an appointed person to take charge of first-aid arrangements; ■ a suitably stocked first-aid box.
<p>Does your workplace have higher level hazards, such as chemicals or dangerous machinery? Do your work activities involve special hazards, such as hydrofluoric acid or confined spaces?</p>	<p>You should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ providing first-aiders; ■ additional training for first-aiders to deal with injuries caused by special hazards; ■ additional first-aid equipment; ■ precise siting of first-aid equipment; ■ providing a first-aid room; ■ informing the emergency services.
<p>■ Employees</p>	
<p>How many people are employed on site?</p>	<p>Where there are small numbers of employees, the minimum provision is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ an appointed person to take charge of first-aid arrangements; ■ a suitably stocked first-aid box. <p>Where there are large numbers of employees you should consider providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ first-aiders; ■ additional first-aid equipment; ■ a first-aid room.
<p>Are there inexperienced workers on site, or employees with disabilities or particular health problems?</p>	<p>You should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ additional training for first-aiders; ■ additional first-aid equipment; ■ local siting of first-aid equipment. <p>Your first-aid provision should cover work experience trainees.</p>
<p>■ Accidents and ill-health record</p>	
<p>What injuries and illness have occurred in your workplace and where did they happen?</p>	<p>Make sure your first-aid provision caters for the type of injuries and illness that might occur in your workplace. Monitor accidents and ill health and review your first-aid provision as appropriate.</p>
<p>■ Working arrangements</p>	
<p>Do you have employees who travel a lot, work remotely or work alone?</p>	<p>You should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ issuing personal first-aid kits; ■ issuing personal communicators/mobile phones to employees.
<p>Do any of your employees work shifts or work out of hours?</p>	<p>You should ensure there is adequate first-aid provision at all times people are at work.</p>

Point to consider	Impact on first-aid provision
Are the premises spread out, eg are there several buildings on the site or multi-floor buildings?	You should consider provision in each building or on each floor.
Is your workplace remote from emergency medical services?	You should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> inform the emergency services of your location; consider special arrangements with the emergency services.
Do any of your employees work at sites occupied by other employers?	You should make arrangements with other site occupiers to ensure adequate first-aid provision. A written agreement between employers is strongly recommended.
Do you have enough provision to cover for your first-aiders or appointed persons when they are absent?	You should consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> what cover is needed for annual leave and other planned absences; what cover is needed for unplanned and exceptional absences.
■ Non-employees	
Do members of the public visit your premises?	Under the Regulations, you have no legal duty to provide first aid for non-employees, but HSE strongly recommends that you include them in your first-aid provision.

Table 2 Suggested numbers of first-aid personnel to be available at all times people are at work

1 From your risk assessment, what degree of hazard is associated with your work activities?	2 How many employees do you have?	3 What first-aid personnel do you need?
Low hazard eg offices, shops, libraries	Less than 25	At least one appointed person
	25-50	At least one first-aider trained in EFAW
	More than 50	At least one first-aider trained in FAW for every 100 employed (or part thereof)
Higher hazard eg light engineering and assembly work, food processing, warehousing, extensive work with dangerous machinery or sharp instruments, construction, chemical manufacture	Less than 5	At least one appointed person
	5-50	At least one first-aider trained in EFAW or FAW depending on the type of injuries that might occur
	More than 50	At least one first-aider trained in FAW for every 50 employed (or part thereof)

Further information

HSE priced and free publications can be viewed online or ordered from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA Tel: 01787 881165 Fax: 01787 313995. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.

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 6372 9. Single copies are free and a web version can be found at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg214.pdf.

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