



# FIRST AID

Employers are legally required to provide adequate and appropriate first-aid equipment and facilities, and an adequate number of trained and qualified staff to give first aid.

About 1 million workplace accidents take place every year. People can also fall ill at work. When employees are injured or become ill at work, it is important that they receive immediate attention and that an ambulance is called for the more serious cases.

Employers are legally required to provide adequate and appropriate first-aid equipment and facilities, and an adequate number of trained and qualified staff to give first aid to ill or injured employees at work. Information must be given to all workers about the provision of first aid, and the location of first aid equipment, facilities, and personnel (The Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981).

What is adequate and appropriate will depend on the workplace. The minimum first-aid provision for any work site is:

- a clearly identified and suitably stocked first-aid box,
- an appointed person to look after the first aid arrangements in the workplace,
- information for employees on first-aid arrangements.

## RISK ASSESSMENT

To determine what are adequate and appropriate first aid requirements for a workplace, the employer must carry out a risk assessment. This should consider:

- the workplace hazards and risks of injury and ill health, including: - any specific hazards such as dangerous substances, tools, machinery or objects, and - areas where there are additional risks such as a kitchen or cafeteria within a school or office complex;
- the size of the organisation and whether there are several buildings spread out across the site;
- the size, nature, and distribution of the workforce, including: - whether any of the employees are inexperienced, young, or work experience trainees and therefore at greater risk, - whether any of the workers suffer from a disability or ill-health, - whether there are any shift or out-of-hours workers, - whether any of the workers have language or reading difficulties, - whether any workers travel, or work remotely or alone, and - whether any work in shared or multi-occupied sites, or at the site of another employer (first aid arrangements must cover other site occupiers);

- whether members of the public visit (employers do not have any legal responsibility for non-employees, but the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) strongly recommends that they are considered when making provision for first aid);
- the history of accidents and ill health – their type, frequency, consequence and where they happened;
- whether the workplace is remote from emergency medical services;
- the annual leave and other absences (planned and unplanned) of first-aiders and appointed persons.

## SIGNIFICANT OR UNUSUAL RISKS

If there are significant or more unusual risks at the workplace, the following must also be considered:

- extra training for first-aiders to cover the unusual risks or special procedures which they may need to carry out in the event of an injury or illness (for example, workers in confined spaces),
- extra first aid equipment,
- reviewing the content of the first aid box,
- the precise location of first aid equipment, perhaps in particular areas or at various points throughout a large building or site,
- different levels of provision in different parts of the establishment (for example, the school Kitchen compared to the rest of the school),
- whether local medical services need to be informed of the location of the workplace,
- whether special arrangements need to be made with the emergency services,
- whether to issue personal first aid kits and training staff how to use

them,

- whether to issue personal communicators such as mobile phones or walkie-talkies to employees.

## FIRST AID BOX

A first-aid box must be accessible at all times. The HSE suggests that at the very least, it should contain:

- a leaflet giving general first aid advice (such as the HSE's leaflet, *Basic Advice on First Aid at Work*),
- 20 individually wrapped sterile plasters in various sizes,
- 2 sterile eye pads,
- 4 (preferably sterile) individually wrapped triangular bandages,
- 6 safety pins,
- 6 medium-sized (approximately 12cm x 12cm) individually wrapped sterile unmedicated wound dressings,
- 2 large (18cm x 18cm) sterile individually wrapped unmedicated wound dressings,
- 1 pair of disposable gloves.

Equivalent items are acceptable. The risk assessment may show that other specific items are necessary due to the risk of particular hazards.

## FIRST AID ROOMS

First-aid rooms are usually necessary in high-risk establishments, or at larger premises which are a distance from medical services. The room should contain essential first aid facilities and equipment, should be easily accessible for stretchers, and must be clearly sign-posted and identified. A designated person should be given responsibility for the room.

## APPOINTED PERSONS AND FIRST AIDERS



Where the risk assessment shows that people need to be available to administer first aid to employees, a suitable number of trained and qualified first-aiders and/or appointed persons must be provided.

First-aiders are trained and must have a current first aid at work certificate to show that they are capable of giving first aid. First aid training is available from organisations recognised by the HSE, including St. John's Ambulance and the British Red Cross. Courses usually last 4 days and are valid for 3 years, although a one-day refresher or booster course is recommended each year. Renewal courses tend to last for 2 days. First-aiders may need additional training where there are specific and unusual hazards, such as work in confined spaces. The training and experience of qualified medical doctors and nurses may qualify them to administer first aid. If the risk assessment identifies that first-aiders are necessary, they must be available whenever people are at work, except for exceptional, unforeseen, and temporary circumstances; when an appointed person must be available.

An appointed person will also be the minimum requirement in a workplace where the risk assessment concluded that a first-aidер was not necessary. There must always be at least one appointed person available whenever there are people at work.

An appointed person will be responsible for anyone injured or ill, for calling an ambulance where necessary, and for looking after the first aid equipment. Appointed persons are not first-aiders and therefore should not give first aid for which they have not been trained, although ideally they should receive training in emergency first aid.

## NUMBER OF FIRST AIDERS/ APPOINTED PERSONS

### Risk Category

Number of employees at any location.

Suggested number of first aid personnel.

#### Lower risk - offices and libraries

- Less than 50

At least 1 appointed person

- 50-100

At least 1 first-aidер

- Over 100

At least one additional first-aidер for every 100 employed

#### Medium risk - food processing and warehousing

- Less than 20

At least 1 appointed person

- 20-100

At least 1 first-aidер for every 50 employed (or part thereof)

- Over 100

One additional first-aidер for every 100 employed

#### High risk - dangerous machinery, and sharp instruments

- Less than 5

At least 1 appointed person

- 5-50

At least 1 first-aidер

- Over 50

At least 1 first-aidер for every 50 employed

Where there are hazards for which additional first aid skills are necessary

In addition, at least 1 first-aidер trained in the specific emergency action



How many first-aiders and/or appointed persons will be a suitable amount will depend on the risks, the hazards, and other circumstances of the workplace as should be considered in the risk assessment. The table above gives a guide. Extra first-aiders/appointed persons will be needed to cover absences.

## **PAYMENTS OF ALLOWANCES TO FIRST-AIDERS AND APPOINTED PERSONS**

The results of a survey of UNISON branches conducted in 2001 showed that most employers (61%) paid first-aiders an allowance to encourage staff to take on this responsibility. Some even paid appointed persons.

In the UNISON survey all appointed persons were paid, although less than 4% of employers had appointed persons, and all those that did also had first-aiders. The average allowance for first-aiders was £128.61 per year, £10.72 per month, or £2.47 per week. The range of payments varied from £30 to £404 per year.

Most of the employers who did not pay first-aiders were in the healthcare sector. This may be due to the mistaken belief by employers that the workforce tends not to need any training in first aid.

If employers in the healthcare sector who do not pay an allowance are excluded, only 12% of employers surveyed did not pay their first-aiders for the additional services they provide.

Branches negotiating the payment of an allowance for first-aiders need to check that there is not a better national agreement. If not, they should aim for about £5 per week/£250 per year as a minimum.

First-aiders are volunteers and willingly accept the duty and responsibility that the post involves. A minimum allowance of £5 per week/£250 per year is not much for an employer to pay in comparison.

UNISON's First Aid Payments Survey Report (HS/06/01) gives full details of

the survey breakdown and has been sent out to all branch secretaries and all branch health and safety officers. It is available to download from our health and safety website at: <http://www.unison.org.uk/safety/> Alternatively, telephone the Health and Safety Unit on: 020 7551 1446, or email: [healthandsafety@unison.co.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@unison.co.uk)

## **INFORMING EMPLOYEES**

Employers must inform employees about the provision of first aid, and the location of equipment, facilities, and first aid personnel. This information should be part of the induction training for new employees.

In addition, there must be at least one notice in the workplace giving the above details. Whether any workers have language or reading difficulties must be taken account of.

