

First aid at work

Your questions answered



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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. You should make arrangements 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 kit (see Q4);
- an appointed person to take charge of first-aid arrangements (see Q5);
- information for employees about first-aid arrangements (see Q9).

It is important to remember that accidents and illness can happen at any time. Provision for first aid needs to be available at all times people are at work.

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

Some small workplaces with low-level hazards may need only the minimum provision for first aid. But there are circumstances and factors that will mean you need greater provision. You, as an employer, are well placed to decide the provision you need.

The checklist in Table 1 covers the points you should consider. Case studies are also available on the HSE website (www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid/resources.htm).

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-level hazards, a minimum stock of first-aid items would be:

- a leaflet giving general guidance on first aid (eg HSE's leaflet *Basic advice on first aid at work* – see Q10);
- 20 individually wrapped sterile plasters (of 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;
- at least three pairs of disposable gloves (you can find more advice at www.hse.gov.uk/skin/employ/gloves.htm).

This is a suggested contents list only.

The contents of any first-aid kit should reflect the outcome of your first-aid needs assessment.

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

Q5: What is an appointed person?

Where your assessment of first-aid needs identifies that a trained first-aider is not required in your workplace, you should appoint someone to take charge of first-aid arrangements. This is the minimum requirement.

Even in a small, low-hazard business where first-aiders are not considered necessary, there is always the possibility that an accident or sudden illness may occur. It is therefore important that there is always someone available to take charge of these 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). An appointed person does not need first-aid training.

An appointed person is not necessary where there are an adequate number of appropriately trained first-aiders.

Q6: What is a first-aider?

A first-aider is someone who has done training appropriate to the level identified in the needs assessment. This may be:

- first aid at work (FAW); or
- emergency first aid at work (EFAW); or
- some other first-aid training appropriate to the particular circumstances of your workplace.

The findings of your first-aid needs assessment (see Q3) will identify whether first-aiders should be trained in FAW, EFAW, or some other appropriate level of training. 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 the same content as 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.

Other appropriate levels of training may have specialist or additional content appropriate to your particular circumstances.

To help keep their basic skills up to date, it is strongly recommended that your first-aiders undertake annual refresher training.

Q7: How do I identify and select a competent training provider?

First-aid training is available from a wide range of training providers. These include:

- those offering nationally recognised, regulated qualifications in FAW and EFAW;
- the voluntary aid societies (St John Ambulance, British Red Cross and St Andrew's First Aid);
- those operating under voluntary accreditation schemes;
- those who operate independently.

As an employer, you will need assurance that you have selected an appropriate training provider. You will therefore need to check that they meet the standards in a number of areas (due diligence). All training providers should be prepared to demonstrate that they:

- are competent to deliver first-aid training;
- have qualified trainers;
- teach relevant course content in the correct way;
- have the necessary quality assurance systems in place.

Where you select a training provider offering regulated qualifications you will not need to do any due diligence to satisfy yourself of their competence.

They operate under awarding organisations who are recognised by qualification regulators (Ofqual, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and the Welsh Government) and have dedicated policies and quality assurance processes. The voluntary aid societies employ a similar hierarchy of policies and processes.

Contact details of awarding organisations offering regulated qualifications in FAW and EFAW can be found on HSE's website (www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid/efaw.htm).

You can find more advice in HSE's information sheet GEIS3 *Selecting a first-aid training provider: A guide for employers* (www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/geis3.htm).

Q8: 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 also need to increase your provision to cover for absences.

Q9: What information do I need to provide for employees?

You have to inform your employees of the arrangements you have put in place for first aid. 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.

Q10: Where can I find out more?

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

More detailed practical guidance on complying with your first-aid duties:
First aid at work: The Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981.
Guidance on Regulations L74 (Third edition) HSE Books 2013
ISBN 978 0 7176 6560 0 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l74.htm

You may also find the following publications helpful:

Basic advice on first aid at work Leaflet INDG347(rev2) HSE Books 2011
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg347.htm

Two first aid posters:

Basic advice on first aid at work HSE Books 2011 ISBN 978 0 7176 6432 0
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/first-aid-poster.htm

Electric shock: First aid procedures HSE Books 2011 ISBN 978 0 7176 6433 7
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/electric-shock-poster.htm

Table 1 Checklist for assessment of first-aid needs

Point to consider	Impact on first-aid provision
<p>Hazards (use the findings of your general risk assessment and take account of any parts of your workplace with different work activities/hazards that may require different levels of first-aid provision)</p>	
Does your workplace have low-level hazards, eg the ones you might find in offices and shops?	<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 kit.
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>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 location of first-aid equipment; ● providing a first-aid room; ● informing the emergency services in advance.
<p>Employees</p>	
How many people are employed on site?	<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>Depending on your circumstances, you should consider providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● first-aiders; ● additional first-aid equipment; ● a first-aid room.
Are there inexperienced workers on site (including those on 'work experience'), or employees with disabilities or particular health problems?	<p>You should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● additional training for first-aiders; ● additional first-aid equipment; ● location of first-aid equipment.
<p>Accidents and ill-health records</p>	
What injuries and illness have occurred in your workplace and where did they happen?	<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>

Point to consider	Impact on first-aid provision
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Working arrangements

Do you have employees who travel a lot, work remotely or work alone?	<p>You should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● issuing personal first-aid kits; ● issuing personal communicators/ mobile phones to employees.
Do any of your employees work shifts or work out of hours?	You should ensure there is adequate first-aid provision at all times people are at work.
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?	<p>You should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● inform the emergency services of your location; ● consider special arrangements with the emergency services; ● consider emergency transport requirements.
Do any of your employees work at sites occupied by other employers?	You should make arrangements with other site occupiers to ensure adequate provision of first aid. 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?	<p>You should consider:</p> <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.
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Table 2 Suggested numbers of first-aid personnel to be available at all times people are at work

From your risk assessment, what degree of hazard is associated with your work activities?	How many employees do you have?	What first-aid personnel do you need?
Low-hazard , eg offices, shops, libraries	Fewer 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	Fewer 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)

NB This table refers to FAW and EFAW – but you may choose some other level of training appropriate for your circumstances.

Further information

For information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit www.hse.gov.uk. You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.

This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory, unless specifically stated, and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance.

This leaflet is available at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg214.htm.

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