

Health & Safety 2008

17.4 First aid in the workplace

Even in the least hazardous workplace people can suffer injuries or become ill. Whatever the cause, it is important that they receive prompt and appropriate attention. First aid can prevent minor problems becoming worse, and for more serious events, calling an ambulance and getting the casualty to hospital can save lives.

17.4.1 Making first aid arrangements

As a minimum, any work site must have a suitably stocked first-aid box and an appointed person to take charge of first-aid arrangements. However, the following may require a higher standard of first aid provision:

- People working with hazardous substances, tools, machinery, loads or animals;
- Accidents or cases of ill health experienced in the past;
- A large number of people employed;
- Inexperienced workers and people on work experience;
- Employees with disabilities or special health problems;
- Premises that are spread out;
- Shiftwork or out-of-hours working;
- A workplace remote from emergency medical services;
- Employees who travel or work alone;
- Members of the public visiting premises.

17.4.2 First aid responsibilities

An 'appointed person' is someone who takes charge when someone is injured or falls ill (including calling an ambulance); and looks after the first-aid equipment (e.g. checks and restocks the first-aid box). An appointed person should be available at all times that people are at work on site, which may mean appointing more than one. Appointed persons should not attempt to give first aid for which they have not been trained.

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. HSE approve training organisations. Work sites that are low risk and have relatively few workers may not require a first aider (but do require an appointed person). Higher risk sites and or where more people work may require more than one first aider.

Reference – 'First aid at work - Your questions' available free at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg214.pdf>

17.4.3 Basic principles of first aid

The priorities in an emergency where someone is injured or has fallen ill are:

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1. Assess the situation, without putting yourself in danger;
2. Make the area safe;
3. Assess all casualties to identify any that are unconscious, which would be the highest priority for treatment;
4. Send for help.

When assessing a casualty the first thing to do is to check their consciousness. This can be achieved by seeing how they respond when gently shaken by the shoulders and asked loudly 'Are you all right?' If there is no response the priorities are to:

1. Get help;
2. Open the airway;
3. Check for breathing, and start Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) if required.

Injuries requiring particular attention include severe bleeding, broken bones and spinal injuries, burns and eye injuries.

It is good practice to keep records of any first aid administered. This can assist with any subsequent investigation of the causes of the incident.

Reference – 'Basic advice on first aid at work' available free at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg347.pdf>

17.4.4 First aid regulations

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

The Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981 require employers to provide adequate and appropriate equipment, facilities and personnel to enable first aid to be given to employees if they are injured or become ill at work. These Regulations apply to all workplaces including those with five or fewer employees and to the self-employed.

What is adequate will depend on the circumstances in the workplace. This includes whether trained first aiders are needed, what should be included in a first aid box and if a first aid room is needed. Employers should carry out an assessment of first aid needs to determine this.

The Regulations do not place a legal obligation on employers to make first aid provision for non-employees such as the public or children in schools. However, HSE strongly recommends that non-employees are included in a first aid needs assessment and that provision is made for them.

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Reference – Approved Code of Practice L74 provides guidance for complying with this legislation.

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A note about the text

This is an excerpt from Health and Safety 2008 written by Andy Brazier, which covers all the key elements of health and safety as it stands as a discipline at the end of 2007. The book provides a quick reference, focussing on hazards in the workplace and practical controls of risk. The aim has been to present the health and safety processes so that, if these are understood, appropriate solutions to a very large range of health and safety issues can be developed. It provides links to freely available HSE guidance throughout.

The book has been arranged, to a large extent, around the syllabus of the NEBOSH National General Certificate (NGC). This is because the syllabus appears to provide a very comprehensive overview of all the key issues of health and safety. Also, by doing this it is hoped that the book will be a useful aid to people studying for the certificate, acting as a supplement to training material from course providers or to assist in self-study.

The draft text of the whole book is available at <http://healthandsafetycertificate.blogspot.com/>

If you would like a copy of the book or more information go to Andy's website at <http://www.andybrazier.co.uk/Health&safety/book.htm>