

Fact sheet

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First aid at work

INTRODUCTION

People who suffer injuries or become ill at work need to receive immediate attention or even receive help from the emergency services.

The Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations require employers to provide adequate and appropriate first-aid equipment, facilities and personnel.

What is adequate and appropriate will depend on many circumstances relevant to the workplace, and organisations are required to make an assessment to determine what first-aid arrangements are needed. A first-aid provision assessment template is located in your Health and Safety stationery pack to assist in carrying out this assessment.

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

- An suitably stocked first-aid box and
- An appointed person to take charge of your first-aid arrangements.

Organisations with a low risk to health and safety may only need to supply the minimum first-aid provision. However, there are certain points that should be considered by all employers in their assessment to establish what provisions are necessary, and the following table illustrates the points that should be considered and their impact on first-aid provision.

TABLE 1 – points to consider and their impact on first-aid provision

Considerations	Impact on first-aid provision
Are there any specific risks e.g. working with hazardous substances, dangerous tools, dangerous machinery, dangerous loads or animals?	<i>You will need to consider: specific training for first-aiders, additional first-aid equipment, precise siting of first-aid equipment or a first-aid room.</i>
Are there parts of your premises where different levels of risk can be identified e.g. a machine shop and an office area?	<i>You will probably need to make different levels of provision in different parts of the premises.</i>

Considerations	Impact on first-aid provision
Consider the number, type, frequency and consequences of previous accidents and cases of ill-health in your workplace.	<i>You may need to locate provision in certain areas and review the contents of your first-aid boxes and number of first-aid personnel.</i>
How many people are employed on site?	<i>You may need to employ first-aiders to deal with a higher risk of accident.</i>
Consider the needs of employees who may be at greater risk, e.g. young workers, those with disabilities or with particular health problems.	<i>You may need to consider providing special equipment at specific sites around the workplace.</i>
What is the size of the workplace and does it incorporate many separate buildings or those with numerous floors?	<i>You may need to consider provision of first-aid in each building or on several floors.</i>
Do employees work shifts or outside of normal working hours?	<i>Remember first-aid provision must be available at all times people are at work. Cover should be available for first-aid personnel on holiday or other planned or unplanned absence.</i>
Is your workplace remote from emergency medical services?	<i>You may need to inform local emergency services of your location and any particular circumstances, including specific hazards. (This information should be in writing).</i>
Do you have employees who work away from the main site, travel regularly on work-related business or who work alone?	<i>You will need to consider issuing personal first-aid kits and training employees in their use. You must also consider issuing mobile phones or alternative methods of communication, to employees so that they are able to summon help.</i>
Do any of your employees work at sites occupied by other employers?	<i>You will need to co-ordinate first-aid provision with the other site occupiers and, preferably, have a written agreement in place to avoid misunderstandings.</i>
Do you have any work experience trainees?	<i>Your first-aid provision must cover them.</i>
Do members of the public visit your premises?	<i>You have no legal obligation to provide first-aid cover for non-employees, but the HSE strongly recommends that you include them in your assessment of first-aid provision.</i>

WHERE SHOULD FIRST-AID BOXES BE LOCATED AND WHAT SHOULD THEY CONTAIN?

First-aid boxes should be easy to access and, where possible, be placed near to hand washing facilities. In addition, the boxes must be identified by a white cross on a green background.

There is no mandatory list of items that should be included in first-aid boxes; it depends on your assessment. However, where there is no special risk, a suggested minimum stock of first-aid items is as follows: -

- A leaflet giving general guidance on first-aid.
- 20 individually wrapped sterile adhesive dressings of assorted sizes, appropriate to the type of work carried out.

- Two sterile eye pads.
- Four individually wrapped triangular bandages (preferably sterile).
- Six safety pins.
- Six medium sized (approx 12cm x 12cm) and two large size (approx 18cm x 18cm) individually wrapped sterile unmedicated wound dressings.
- One pair of disposable gloves.

A nominated person(s) should regularly check the contents of first-aid boxes to ensure that they are fully stocked and contain no items that are out of date.

For 'travelling' first-aid kits, provided to those who travel or who work in remote areas away from the main site, a suggested minimum content is as follows: -

- A leaflet giving general guidance on first-aid.
- Six individually wrapped sterile adhesive dressings.
- One large size (approx 18cm x 18cm).
- Two individually wrapped triangular bandages (preferably sterile).
- Two safety pins.
- Individually wrapped moist cleansing wipes.
- One pair of disposable gloves.

As with first-aid boxes, the content of travelling first-aid kits should be maintained from back-up stock kept at the employer's premises.

No tablets or medicines should be kept in a first-aid box or travelling first-aid kit.

FIRST-AID PERSONNEL

Your assessment of first-aid needs should enable you to establish the appropriate level of first-aid personnel require for your workplace.

These are generally categorised into two types: appointed persons and first-aiders.

What is an appointed person?

An appointed person is someone you choose to take charge of first-aid when someone is injured or falls ill. This includes calling an ambulance, if required. Appointed persons should also look after first-aid equipment e.g. re-stocking first-aid boxes.

Although, appointed persons should not attempt to give first-aid for which they have not been trained, employers should consider emergency first-aid training for them. An appointed person should be available at all times whilst people are at work on site – this may mean appointing more than one.

What is a first-aider?

A first-aider is someone who has undergone training in administering first-aid at work and holds a current first-aid at work certificate issued by an HSE approved training organisation.

When arranging first-aider training you should advise the training organisation of any particular hazards applicable to the workplace so that training can be tailored appropriately. A first-aider can undertake the duties of an appointed person.

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

After working through the checklist in Table 1 you should refer to the following table, which offers suggestions on the number and type of first-aid personnel required for your workplace.

Where there are special circumstances, such as remoteness from emergency medical services, shift work, or sites with several large buildings, there may be a need to provide additional first-aid personnel to that suggested in the table.

TABLE 2 – suggested number of first-aid personnel

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

You must inform your employees of the first-aid arrangements you have in place, i.e. display notices telling employees who and where first-aiders or appointed persons are, and where first-aid boxes are to be found. In addition, you may have to make special arrangements to provide first-aid information to employees with reading difficulties or for those who do not speak English.

This Fact Sheet is only intended as a general statement and no action should be taken in reliance on it without specific Helpline advice.