

Health and safety made simple

The basics for your business



How can this guide help you?

If you think health and safety has to be complicated – it doesn't. This guide will make it easier for you to comply with the law and manage health and safety in your business.

For many businesses, all that's required is a basic series of tasks. The guide will take you through the steps and help you make sure you have done what you need to – and no more.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for employers and those who want some basic information on what they must do to make sure their businesses comply with health and safety law.

In general, the laws apply to all businesses, no matter how small. As an employer, or a self-employed person, **you** are responsible for health and safety in your business. You need to take the right precautions to reduce the risks of workplace dangers and provide a safe working environment.

How the guide can help you

There are health and safety laws to protect you, your employees and the public from workplace dangers.

This guide makes life easier for you by providing the basic information on what you need to do in one place. It will help you get started in managing health and safety in your business.

For some work activities there may be extra things you need to do to make sure you are complying with the law.

Stop check!

This guide includes 'Stop check!' boxes – they tell you when you may need to take extra steps and provide signposts to more detailed guidance and industry-specific advice.



Decide who will help you with your duties

As an employer, you must appoint someone competent to help you meet your health and safety duties. A competent person is someone with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to manage health and safety.

You could appoint (one or a combination of):

- yourself;
- one or more of your workers;
- someone from outside your business.

You probably manage most aspects of your business yourself, or with the help of your staff. But if you are not confident of your ability to manage all health and safety in-house, you may need some external help or advice.

Deciding what help you need is very important. Unless you are clear about what you want, you probably won't get the help you need. Use the website links below to help you ask the right questions:

- Get competent advice (www.hse.gov.uk/business/competent-advice.htm)
- HSE leaflet: *Getting specialist help with health and safety* (www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg420.pdf)



Write a health and safety policy for your business

Describing how you will manage health and safety in your business will let your staff and others know about your commitment to health and safety. This will be your health and safety policy. It should clearly say who does what, when and how.

If you have five or more employees, you must have a written policy.

The policy does not need to be complicated or time-consuming. To help you, we have created a template that you can download and complete. The template also includes a section for your risk assessment so that you can record everything in one document. You can find it online (www.hse.gov.uk/risk/risk-assessment-and-policy-template.doc).

We also provide an example health and safety policy to give you an idea of what to include when writing your own. You can find it online (www.hse.gov.uk/risk/health-and-safety-policy-example.doc).

A policy will only be effective if you and your staff follow it and review it regularly.



Manage the risks in your business

You must manage the health and safety risks in your workplace. To do this you need to think about what, in your business, might cause harm to people and decide whether you are doing enough to prevent that harm. This is known as a risk assessment. Once you have identified the risks, you need to decide how to control them and put the appropriate measures in place.

A risk assessment is not about creating huge amounts of paperwork, but rather about identifying sensible measures to control the risks in your workplace. The law does not expect you to remove all risks, but to protect people by putting in place measures to control those risks. You are probably already taking steps to protect your employees, but your risk assessment will tell you whether you should be doing more.

How do I assess the risks in my workplace?

A good starting point is to walk around your workplace and look for any hazards – a **hazard** is anything that may cause harm.

Then think about the risks – a **risk** is the chance, high or low, of somebody being harmed by the hazard, and how serious the harm could be.

Think about how accidents could happen and who might be harmed. Ask your employees what they think the hazards are, as they may notice things that are not obvious to you and may have some good ideas on how to control the risks. Concentrate on the real risks – those that are most likely to cause harm.

Consider the measures you are already taking to control the risks and ask if there is anything you should do to make your workplace safer.

Once you have identified the risks and what you need to do to control them, you should put the appropriate measures in place.

Then record your findings. If you have fewer than five employees you don't have to write anything down but it is good practice to keep a record. An easy way to record your findings is to use the risk assessment template. This template also includes a section for your health and safety policy so you can record everything in one place. You can find a copy of the template on our website (www.hse.gov.uk/risk/risk-assessment-and-policy-template.doc).

Take a look at our selection of example risk assessments (www.hse.gov.uk/risk/casestudies). They show you what a completed risk assessment might look like for your type of business. You can use these as a guide when doing your own. We are also developing online risk assessment tools, which will help some businesses complete and print off their own records (www.hse.gov.uk/risk/assessment.htm).

You can get more help and ideas on ways to control your risks by going to the risk management pages on our website (www.hse.gov.uk/risk).

Few workplaces stay the same and sooner or later you will bring in new equipment, substances or procedures that could lead to new hazards. It makes sense to review your risk assessment on a regular basis. If anything significant changes, check your risk assessment and update it.

Stop check!

Don't forget to consider everyone who could be harmed

- Some workers may have particular requirements, for example new and young workers, new or expectant mothers, and people with disabilities. You can get more help on our diversity pages (www.hse.gov.uk/diversity).
- Think about people who might not be in the workplace all the time, such as visitors, contractors and maintenance workers.
- Take members of the public into account, if they could be hurt by your work activities.
- If you share a workplace with another business, you will need to consider how your work affects others and how their work affects you and your staff. Talk to each other and work together to make sure controls are in place.

Specific risks

- For some risks there are particular control measures that are required by law. The HSE website homepage (www.hse.gov.uk) has information on topics and industries to help you decide what you need to do about many common types of risk.
- A few examples of activities that carry a recognised risk of harm are working at height, working with chemicals, machinery, gas, electricity and asbestos. Depending on the type of work you do, there may be other risks that are relevant to your business.
- If you carry out a high-risk activity, check whether you need to obtain a licence or notify someone before you start work. See our website for further information and all the necessary notification forms (www.hse.gov.uk/forms/notification/index.htm).



Consult your employees

You have to consult all your employees on health and safety. This does not need to be complicated. You can do this by listening and talking to them about:

- health and safety and the work they do;
- how risks are controlled;
- the best ways of providing information and training.

Consultation is a two-way process, allowing staff to raise concerns and influence decisions on the management of health and safety. Your employees are often the best people to understand risks in the workplace and involving them in making decisions shows them that you take their health and safety seriously.

In a very small business, you might choose to consult your employees directly. Alternatively, you might consult through a health and safety representative, chosen by your employees or selected by a trade union. As an employer, you cannot decide who will be the representative.

See the 'do your bit' pages on our website for more information on consulting with your employees (www.hse.gov.uk/involvement/doyourbit). These pages include:

- advice on what you should be doing;
- a step-by-step guide;
- case studies.



Provide training and information

Everyone who works for you needs to know how to work safely and without risks to health. You must provide clear instructions, information and adequate training for your employees.

Don't forget contractors and self-employed people who may be working for you and make sure everyone has information on:

- hazards and risks they may face;
- measures in place to deal with those hazards and risks;
- how to follow any emergency procedures.

Ask your employees what they think about training to make sure it's relevant and effective. Keeping training records will help you to identify when refresher training might be needed.

The information and training you provide should be in a form that is easy to understand. Everyone working for you should know what they are expected to do.

Health and safety training should take place during working hours and it must not be paid for by employees. There are many external trainers who will be able to help you with your training needs but effective training can often be done 'in house'.

For more advice, see HSE's leaflet *Health and safety training: What you need to know* (www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg345.pdf).

Stop check!

Some of your staff may have particular training needs, for example:

- new recruits;
- people changing jobs or taking on extra responsibilities;
- young employees, who are particularly vulnerable to accidents;
- health and safety representatives.

Our website provides more information on laws relating to the protection of young people at work (www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople) and the functions and training of health and safety representatives (www.hse.gov.uk/involvement/training.htm).

Remember that staff will need extra training if you get new equipment or working practices change.



Provide the right workplace facilities

You must protect the safety and health of everyone in your workplace, including people with disabilities, and provide welfare facilities for your employees.

Basic things you need to consider are outlined below.

Welfare facilities

For your employees' well-being you need to provide:

- toilets and hand basins, with soap and towels or a hand-dryer;
- drinking water;
- a place to store clothing (and somewhere to change if special clothing is worn for work);
- somewhere to rest and eat meals.

Health issues

To have a healthy working environment, make sure there is:

- good ventilation – a supply of fresh, clean air drawn from outside or a ventilation system;
- a reasonable working temperature (usually at least 16°C, or 13°C for strenuous work, unless other laws require lower temperatures);

- lighting suitable for the work being carried out;
- enough room space and suitable workstations and seating;
- a clean workplace with appropriate waste containers.

Safety issues

To keep your workplace safe you must:

- properly maintain your premises and work equipment;
- keep floors and traffic routes free from obstruction;
- have windows that can be opened and also cleaned safely;
- make sure that any transparent (eg glass) doors or walls are protected or made of safety material.

You can find more detailed information in *Workplace health, safety and welfare: A short guide for managers* (www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg244.pdf).

Stop check!

- There are specific laws relating to some higher-risk workplaces, such as construction sites. For more information, select your workplace from HSE's industries page (www.hse.gov.uk/guidance/industries.htm).



Make arrangements for first aid, accidents and ill health

First aid

You must have first-aid arrangements in your workplace.

You are responsible for making sure that your employees receive immediate attention if they are taken ill or are injured at work. Accidents and illness can happen at any time and first aid can save lives and prevent minor injuries from becoming major ones.

Your arrangements will depend on the particular circumstances in your workplace and you need to assess what your first-aid needs are.

As a minimum, you must have:

- a suitably stocked first-aid box;
- an appointed person to take charge of first-aid arrangements;
- information for all employees giving details of first-aid arrangements.

You might decide that you need a first-aider. This is someone who has been trained by an approved organisation and holds a qualification in first aid at work or emergency first aid at work.

More detailed information can be found on the first-aid pages on our website (www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid) and in our leaflet *First aid at work: Your questions answered* (www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg214.pdf).

Accidents and ill health

Under health and safety law, you must report and keep a record of certain injuries, incidents and cases of work-related disease.

You can find out which ones must be reported and how to report them on our website (www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/index.htm).

Keeping records will help you to identify patterns of accidents and injuries, and will help when completing your risk assessment. Your insurance company may also want to see your records if there is a work-related claim.

Stop check!

- Make sure you protect people's personal details by storing records confidentially in a secure place.
- If you have more than 10 employees, or own or occupy a mine, quarry or factory, you must keep an accident book under social security law.
- You can buy an accident book from HSE Books (<http://books.hse.gov.uk>) or record the details in your own record system.



Display the health and safety law poster

If you employ anyone, you must display the health and safety law poster, or provide each worker with a copy of the equivalent pocket card. You must display the poster where your workers can easily read it.

The poster outlines British health and safety laws and includes a straightforward list that tells workers what they and their employers need to do.

You can also add details of any employee safety representatives or health and safety contacts if you wish to do so.

You can get copies of the poster and pocket card from HSE Books (www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/lawposter.htm).

Stop check!

The new version of the health and safety law poster was published in 2009. If you have a copy of the 1999 version, you can continue to display it or give workers the equivalent leaflet until 5 April 2014, as long as it is readable and contains up-to-date contact details. After this date, you must use the new versions.



Get insurance for your business

If your business has employees you will probably need employers' liability insurance.

If an employee is injured or becomes ill as a result of the work they do for you, they may claim compensation from you. Employers' liability insurance will enable you to meet the cost of any compensation for your employees' injuries or illness.

Only a few businesses are not required to have employers' liability insurance. If you have no employees, or are a family business and all employees are closely related to you, you may not need it. For further details see our leaflet *Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969: A guide for employers* (www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/hse40.pdf).

How do you get employers' liability insurance?

You can buy employers' liability insurance through insurers or intermediaries like brokers or trade associations. You may find that it often comes as part of an insurance package designed to cover a range of business needs.

Your policy must be with an authorised insurer and the Financial Services Authority (FSA) has a list of these. You can check their register on the FSA website (www.fsa.gov.uk) or phone the FSA consumer helpline on 0845 606 1234.

You can find information on other insurance on the Business Link website (www.businesslink.gov.uk).



Keep up to date

Following news and events in your industry will help you keep your health and safety policies and risk assessments up to date. You can access HSE news in the way that suits you best.

- RSS news feeds to your computer or mobile (www.hse.gov.uk/news/rss/)
- Free ebulletins (www.hse.gov.uk/news/subscribe/)
- Podcasts (www.hse.gov.uk/podcasts/)
- SMS text alerts to your mobile (www.hse.gov.uk/sms/)

Where can you go for help?

We've organised our website (www.hse.gov.uk) by industry and topic to help you find what's relevant to you.

Help is also available through trade unions, employers' organisations, Business Link (www.businesslink.gov.uk) and trade associations.

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 or order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.

This guide can be found on HSE's website: (www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety).

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