

# HEALTH AND SAFETY

Health and safety should be part of how you operate – you have a ‘duty of care’ to your volunteers, members of the public and any staff that you employ. That duty means protecting people against any risks to their health and safety as a result of your work. By law, if you employ five or more employees, you must have a health and safety policy.

Health and safety is a complex issue. This factsheet acts as a starting point and covers some of the basic things that your health and safety policy might cover:

## **Step 1: Registering your premises**

You must register any existing premises and its activities, with the environmental health department in your local authority or the Health and Safety Executive, if:

- You have paid staff
- You prepare, supply, store or sell food or
- You are carrying out a dangerous process or event (such as a fireworks display)

## **Step 2: Fire certificate**

Every organisation is required to register with the Fire Service who will issue a fire certificate or exemption certificate, which you should keep in a safe place. If your premises are only partly leased by your organisation, it is the landlord’s responsibility to contact the Fire Service. However, if you are concerned that you do not have a fire certificate, you can contact them yourself. The fire certificate outlines:

- Details of the use of the premises
- Any firefighting equipment required
- Fire escape routes
- Fire drills and other fire precautions

Make sure you have clear guidelines for your staff, volunteers and visitors about procedures in the event of a fire. Everyone should know where the nearest fire exit is, how the alarm will be raised (not all premises have a fire alarm), where to assemble, how the roll call will be done and who will do it. If you hold an event, you should make these procedures clear before you start.

### **Step 3: Risk Assessment**

All organisations should assess any potential risks or hazards to staff, volunteers and members of the public in a structured way. A risk assessment is one way of demonstrating that you have considered any potential hazards and actively worked to reduce the likelihood of them happening.

A risk assessment might include:

- Identifying potential risks and hazards
- Evaluating these risks and hazards (who does it affect, what is the likelihood of them happening and how serious is the risk of it happening?)
- How you might prevent these risks or take adequate precautions
- How these risks and precautions are monitored, managed and reviewed
- External influences and any procedures for dealing with risks if they occur

Some particular risks that you could cover in your risk assessment include:

- Safety checks and records (e.g. for Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) and gas)
- Manual handling for staff involved in moving any heavy objects
- Asbestos – particularly for premises that haven't been used for a while
- Noise and air pollution
- Stress and mental health at work

### **Step 4: Hazardous substances**

If your organisation deals with any substances which are 'hazardous to health', such as chemicals (which include some cleaning agents), you must complete an assessment. You must also ensure that anyone who uses the substance is aware of how to store it, how to deal with any spillages, and any potential hazards to skin, hair, eyes etc.

## **Step 5: First aid**

Depending on the size of your organisation, the activities you are involved in, and the level of risk that applies (based on your risk assessment), you will need to decide on an appropriate number of first-aiders (and of what type).

As a minimum, you should have at least one 'appointed person' with a basic level of first aid knowledge and who is available to take charge in an emergency. You should also have a first aid box and a notice to indicate where the first aid box is, the name of your appointed person for first aid and where they can be found.

## **Step 6: Accident / Incident file**

By law, any workplace that has more than ten employees must have an accident book. But it is a good idea for any sized organisation to document accidents or incidents (this can also be used to document any safeguarding concerns). A folder of forms / sheets of paper is often easier as sensitive information can be filed separately. The accident / incident book should record any accidents / incidents that occur on your premises or at any events you have organisation, any illness that may be caused through activities and any 'near-miss' accidents.

Serious injuries must be reported to the environmental health department of your local authority or the Health and Safety Executive, depending on who you are registered with. A serious injury includes: death or major injury (including assault), an injury that causes a person to be off work for three days or more, a work-related disease or any dangerous occurrences.

## **Step 7: Food hygiene**

If your organisation prepares and serves food on your premises (whether it is for sale or not), then food safety regulations apply. These regulations mean that people who handle food must be properly trained and properly supervised. There are also specific requirements regarding clean work areas and equipment, suitable premises, suitable arrangements for food waste and so on. You can visit the Food Standards Agency website for more information or contact your local authority.

## **Step 8: Insurance**

Insurance is crucial in ensuring that your organisation is covered in the event of an accident. See the Insurance factsheet for more information.

## 7 health and safety tips for your centre

- 1. Ensure fire exits are clearly marked, kept unlocked and not obstructed in any way**
- 2. Send your staff / volunteers on any relevant training (such as hazard perception or fire safety)**
- 3. Ensure that you have appropriate desks and chairs for your workstations**
- 4. Don't leave any trails of wires from electrical equipment and computers**
- 5. Bend at the knees when lifting and use a trolley for moving heavy objects**
- 6. Don't keep lots of your paper for recycling piled up where it could be a fire risk**
- 7. Ensure your office is at an ambient temperature**

### Further links and support:

- To register your premise under the Health and Safety Executive – [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)
- Greater Manchester Hazards Centre – [www.gmhazards.org.uk](http://www.gmhazards.org.uk)
- The Food Standards Agency offers guidance on food safety and hygiene – [www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/sfbb](http://www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/sfbb)



The Gateway – 89 Sankey Street – Warrington – WA1 1SR  
01925 246880 – [info@warringtonva.org.uk](mailto:info@warringtonva.org.uk)

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