

Suite 704**HEALTH & SAFETY**

Minimum Standards
Risk Assessment
Fire Protection
Working at home
Country Links

The following information is basic to all Commonwealth Countries and the United States. It follows laws of most countries and good common sense and is meant to help with your basic understanding of what is required in the health and safety of the workplace. In every instance you should consult with your local authorities for particulars as to what pertains exactly in your case. The following is meant only as a guide.

MINIMUM STANDARDS**704.01 MINIMUM WORKPLACE STANDARDS**

All businesses must ensure their workplace – whether this is a factory, office or shop – meet minimum health and safety standards.

Your responsibilities are likely to include:

- Carrying out a risk assessment
- Providing clean toilets and sanitation facilities
- Meeting fire safety standards
- Ensuring employees use IT equipment safely
- Reporting accidents or dangerous incidents in the workplace to the relevant authorities.

Ensure basic levels of comfort

There are basic standards of comfort and sanitation for every workplace. You must make sure that:

- Toilets are clean and in good working order – facilities can be mixed providing they're enclosed and lockable from the inside.
- Hot and cold or warm water, soap and towels or a hand-dryer are available
- There is a supply of mains drinking water or water in refillable containers where it cannot be obtained directly from a mains supply.
- Working areas are cleaned and waste removed regularly.
- There is sufficient space and ventilation for people to work comfortably – a minimum of 11 cubic metres is required for each employee.
- The temperature is at least 16 degrees Celsius if people are seated or don't have to move much, or 13 degrees Celsius where they're active. If you cannot guarantee this level you should provide local heating.

Put up suitable notices and signs

If you have staff you must put up suitable health and safety notices and signs in your workplace. You must either display the poster "Health and safety law: what you should know" or alternatively give staff the leaflet "Your health and safety – a guide for workers", which contains the same information.

You must also display your certificate of employers' liability insurance. And you may have to put up notices or signs warning of specific threats or hazards such as moving vehicles or pipe work containing dangerous substances.

Provide suitable first aid facilities

You must provide appropriate first aid equipment and facilities in the workplace under the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1991.

As a minimum you must:

- Provide a suitably stocked first aid box
- Nominate an individual to be responsible for restocking first aid boxes and to take charge in an emergency
- Inform your staff of first aid arrangements – putting up
- Appropriate notices will normally be sufficient

You'll probably have to make additional provisions if:

- There are specific risks – perhaps if you work with hazardous substances or dangerous tools
- Your workplace is remote from emergency medical services

Although not a legal requirement it may also be advisable to appoint a first aider. This will depend on a number of factors including the size and nature of your business and the level of hazards identified in your risk assessment.

RISK ASSESSMENT

704.02 RISK ASSESSMENT

Carry out a risk assessment of your workplace

Every business must carry out a risk assessment of its workplace to check that the necessary precautions are in place.

This looks at what might cause harm to people and assesses whether you've done enough to protect people and the environment from the risk of an accident.

You can follow five simple steps.

1. Look for the hazards, eg slips, trips and falls, working high up, exposure to hazardous substances, high noise levels, moving vehicles, fire and explosion.

2. Decide who might be harmed and how.
3. Evaluate the risks and decide whether existing precautions are adequate or whether more needs to be done.
4. Record your finds.
5. Review your risk assessment from time to time and revise it if necessary – particularly if new hazards are introduced to your workplace.

If you employ five or more people, your risk assessment must be put down in writing.

Businesses in Northern Ireland can get further advice on controlling risks from the HSENI website.

In the United States more information:

Health for Consumers:

<http://www.consumer.gov/health.htm>

Employee Health & Safety – surveys

<http://www.busreslab./safety-surveys.htm>

Product Safety

<http://www.consumer.gov/productsafety.htm>

FIRE PROTECTION

704.03 FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

Every business must conduct a fire risk assessment of its workplace and check it meets all the necessary fire safety standards.

Talk to the fire safety officer at your local fire station for more information on the areas you must consider as part of your fire risk assessment.

When looking at fire safety standards you need to consider:

- Escape routes to a place of safety
- Fire resistant doors and walls
- Fire fighting equipment
- Fire alarms
- Emergency lighting
- Safe storage of flammable materials
- Staff training

You may need to make changes if your building is sub-standard. And if you change your workplace in any way, you must check it still meets fire safety standards.

Some businesses also require a fire certificate. You must obtain one if:

- Your workplace is a public building, eg a shop or restaurant
- More than one business operates in the same building
- You employ more than 20 people or more than ten of your employees work above or below the ground floor

704.04 MAKING SURE EQUIPMENT IS APPROPRIATE

You have to make sure any equipment you provide to employees – or which they provide themselves – is suitable and safe to use under the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations.

These regulations cover all equipment used by employees at work – from hammers, knives, ladders and drilling machines, to circular saws, photocopiers, lifting equipment and motor vehicles.

All equipment must be:

- Suitable for its intended use
- Maintained in a safe condition
- Accompanied by suitable safety measures such as protective devices, markings and warnings.

You must also ensure that only people who have received adequate information, instruction and training use the equipment.

Safe use of IT equipment

You have a duty to ensure that you and your employees use computers and other IT equipment safely under the Health and safety Regulations. This is to reduce the risk of repetitive strain injury (RSI), headaches and other aches and pains.

In particular you must:

- Ensure workstations and workplace layout will meet a range of minimum requirements in areas such as clarity of image, adjustable chairs and suitable lighting.
- Ensure staff receive a Display Screen Equipment risk assessment and that any arising problems are resolved
- Give staff regular breaks away from display screens or allow them to switch to a different activity
- Pay for employees' eye tests on request
- Provide training to make sure staff can use their DVU (visual display unit) and workstation safely

704.05 REPORT INCIDENTS IN THE WORKPLACE

You must keep specific records of any accidents or dangerous incidents in the workplace that have been reported under the Recording of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR).

You must keep these records at your usual place of business for at least three years. You can keep records in any way you wish, by:

- Keeping copies of report forms in a file
- Recording the details on a computer
- Maintaining a written log
- Using the statutory Accident Book

Some accidents or incidents must be reported to the HSE or your local authority. You must report:

- Deaths or major injuries
- Certain work-related diseases
- Certain dangerous occurrences
- A work-related injury which causes someone to be away from or unable to do the full range of their normal duties for more than three days

WORKING AT HOME

704.06 HEALTH AND SAFETY FOR PEOPLE WHO WORK AT HOME

If you work at home you must still comply with a range of health and safety regulations.

In particular you must carry out a risk assessment. As part of this process you must consider how the health and safety of visitors and other people in your household may be affected.

If you employ people who work at home, remember that they should have similar levels of protection under health and safety law as people employed in the workplace.

You must comply with rules on the use of equipment, computers and furniture and the taking of regular breaks. You are also required to check that workers' equipment and electrics are safe to use and are properly maintained.

COUNTRY LINKS

UNITED KINGDOM

Download a guide to first aid at work:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg214.pdf>

Download the five steps to risk assessment:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg291.pdf>

A guide to fire safety for employers

<http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/fire/contents.htm>

A guide on health, safety – working from home.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg226.pdf>

Health and Safety Law

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/law.pdf>

Health and Safety in Small Businesses

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg259.pdf>

CANADA

**Listings and links to all sections
Of the Canadian Government:**

http://www.canada.gc.ca/depts/major/depind_e.html

**The following link will provide the individual information
on each Province in Canada.**

<http://www.bsa.cbcs.org/gol/bsa/interface.nsf/vSSGBasic/su10000e.htm>

IRELAND

The Government of Ireland Official Gateway

<http://www.irlgov.ie/>

Irish local government Council websites:

<http://www.outtood.com/localgov/eire.htm>

AUSTRALIA

Australian Commonwealth Government Gateway

<http://www.australia.gov.au/>

General Information

<http://gov.info.au/>

Federal, State and Local Government

<http://www.nia.gov.au/oz/gov/>

NEW ZEALAND

The Government of New Zealand Gateway

<http://www.govt.nz/>

The E-Government site for New Zealand

<http://www.e.govt.nz/>

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