



# UNIT - 9

## Planning for Health and Safety

### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

## Unit 9

### Planning for health and safety

Planning is the key to ensuring your health and safety arrangements really work. It helps you think through the actions you have set out in your policy and work out how they will happen in practice. Consider:

- what you want to achieve, eg how you will ensure that your employees and others are kept healthy and safe at work
- how you will decide what might cause harm to people and whether you are doing enough or need to do more to prevent that harm
- how you will prioritise the improvements you may need to make
- who will be responsible for health and safety tasks, what they should do, when and with what results
- how you will measure and review whether you have achieved what you set out to do

#### Writing a health and safety policy

Your business must have a health and safety policy, and if you have fewer than five employees, you don't have to write anything down.

Most businesses set out their policy in three sections:

- **The statement of general policy on health and safety at work** sets out your commitment to managing health and safety effectively, and what you want to achieve
- **The responsibility section** sets out who is responsible for specific actions
- **The arrangements section** contains the detail of what you are going to do in practice to achieve the aims set out in your statement of health and safety policy

To help you write your own health and safety policy, you can use this example (PDF) and template (PDF).

The arrangements section should say how you will meet the commitments you have made in your statement of health and safety policy. Include information on how you are going to eliminate or reduce the risks of hazards in your workplace.

#### What do we mean by 'hazard' and 'risk'?

A **hazard** is something in your business that could cause harm to people, such as chemicals, electricity and working at height. A **risk** is the chance – however large or small – that a hazard could cause harm.

#### Additional arrangements

The additional actions you take to manage health and safety should be set out in the arrangements section of your policy. They could include:

- staff training
- using signs to highlight risks
- improved safety equipment, such as guards or additional personal protective equipment, including goggles, safety boots or high-visibility clothing
- replacing hazardous chemicals with less harmful alternatives
- improved lighting
- anti-slip flooring

Focus your attention on the activities that could present a risk to people or cause serious harm.

### Controlling the risks

As part of managing the health and safety of your business, you must control the risks in your workplace. To do this you need to think about what might cause harm to people and decide whether you are taking reasonable steps to prevent that harm.

This process is known as risk assessment and it is something you are required by law to carry out. **If you have fewer than five employees you don't have to write anything down.**

A risk assessment is not about creating huge amounts of paperwork but rather about identifying sensible measures to control the risks in your workplace.

You are probably already taking steps to protect your employees, but your risk assessment will help you decide whether you have covered all you need to.

### Identify the hazards

One of the most important aspects of your risk assessment is accurately identifying the potential hazards in your workplace.

A good starting point is to walk around your workplace and think about any hazards (things that may cause harm). In other words, what is it about the activities, processes or substances used that could injure your employees or harm their health?

When you work in a place every day it is easy to overlook some hazards, so here are some tips to help you identify the ones that matter:

- **Check manufacturers' instructions** or data sheets for chemicals and equipment as they can be very helpful in explaining the hazards and putting them in their true perspective
- **Look back at your accident and ill-health records** – these often help to identify the less obvious hazards
- **Take account of non-routine operations** (eg maintenance, cleaning operations or changes in production cycles)
- **Remember to think about long-term hazards to health** (eg high levels of noise or exposure to harmful substances)

There are some hazards with a recognised risk of harm, for example working at height, working with chemicals, machinery, and asbestos. Depending on the type of work you do, there may be other hazards that are relevant to your business.

### Who might be harmed?

Then think **how** employees (or others who may be present such as contractors or visitors) 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.

For each hazard you need to be clear about who might be harmed – it will help you identify the best way of controlling the risk. That doesn't mean listing everyone by name, but rather identifying groups of people (eg 'people working in the storeroom' or 'passers-by'). Remember:

- Some workers may have particular requirements, for example new and young workers, migrant workers, new or expectant mothers, people with disabilities, temporary workers, contractors, homeworkers and lone workers (see Your workers)
- 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 harmed by your work activities
- If you share a workplace with another business, consider how your work affects others and how their work affects you and your workers. Talk to each other and make sure controls are in place
- Ask your workers if there is anyone you may have missed

### Evaluate the risks

Having identified the hazards, you then have to decide how likely it is that harm will occur, ie the level of risk and what to do about it. Risk is a part of everyday life and you are not expected to eliminate all risks. What you must do is make sure you know about the main risks and the things you need to do to manage them responsibly. Generally, you need to do everything reasonably practicable to protect people from harm.

Your risk assessment should only include what you could reasonably be expected to know – **you are not expected to anticipate unforeseeable risks.**

Look at what you're already doing and the control measures you already have in place. Ask yourself:

- Can I get rid of the hazard altogether?
- If not, how can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely?

Some practical steps you could take include:

- trying a less risky option
- preventing access to the hazards
- organising your work to reduce exposure to the hazard
- issuing protective equipment
- providing welfare facilities such as first-aid and washing facilities
- involving and consulting with workers

Improving health and safety need not cost a lot. For instance, placing a mirror on a blind corner to help prevent vehicle accidents is a low-cost precaution considering the risks. Failure to take simple precautions can cost you a lot more if an accident does happen.

Involvement of workers, so you can be sure that what you propose to do will work in practice and won't introduce any new hazards.

If you control a number of similar workplaces containing similar activities, you can produce a 'model' risk assessment reflecting the common hazards and risks associated with these activities.

You may also come across 'model' assessments developed by trade associations, employers' bodies or other organisations concerned with a particular activity. You may decide to apply these 'model' assessments at each workplace, but you can only do so if you:

- satisfy yourself that the 'model' assessment is appropriate to your type of work
- adapt the 'model' to the detail of your own work situations, including any extension necessary to cover hazards and risks not referred to in the 'model'

### **Record your findings**

Make a record of your significant findings – the hazards, how people might be harmed by them and what you have in place to control the risks. Any record produced should be simple and focused on controls.

**If you have fewer than five employees you don't have to write anything down.** But it is useful to do this so you can review it at a later date, for example if something changes. If you have five or more employees you are required by law to write it down.

Any paperwork you produce should help you to communicate and manage the risks in your business. For most people this does not need to be a big exercise – just note the main points down about the significant risks and what you concluded.

An easy way to record your findings is to use our risk assessment template. When writing down your results keep it simple, for example 'fume from welding – local exhaust ventilation used and regularly checked'.

A risk assessment must be 'suitable and sufficient', ie it should show that:

- a proper check was made
- you asked who might be affected
- you dealt with all the obvious significant hazards, taking into account the number of people who could be involved
- the precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low
- you involved your employees or their representatives in the process

Where the nature of your work changes fairly frequently or the workplace changes and develops (eg a construction site), or where your workers move from site to site, your risk assessment may have to concentrate more on a broad range of risks that can be anticipated.

Take a look at our selection of example risk assessments. They show you what a completed risk assessment might look like for your type of workplace. You can use these as a guide when doing your own. If your risk assessment identifies a number of hazards, you need to put them in order of importance and address the most serious risks first.

If your risk assessment identifies a number of hazards, you need to put them in order of importance and address the most serious risks first.

Identify long-term solutions for the risks with the biggest consequences, as well as those risks most likely to cause accidents or ill health. You should also establish whether there are improvements that can be implemented quickly, even temporarily, until more reliable controls can be put in place.

Remember, the greater the hazard the more robust and reliable the measures to control the risk of an injury occurring need to be.

### **Regularly review your risk assessment**

Few workplaces stay the same. Sooner or later, you will bring in new equipment, substances and procedures that could lead to new hazards. So it makes sense to review what you are doing on an ongoing basis, look at your risk assessment again and ask yourself:

- Have there been any significant changes?
- Are there improvements you still need to make?
- Have your workers spotted a problem?
- Have you learnt anything from accidents or near misses?

Make sure your risk assessment stays up to date.

### **Accidents and investigations**

Monitor the effectiveness of the measures you put in place to control the risks in your workplace. As part of your monitoring, you should investigate incidents to ensure that corrective action is taken, learning is shared and any necessary improvements are put in place.

Investigations will help you to:

- identify why your existing control measures failed and what improvements or additional measures are needed
- plan to prevent the incident from happening again
- point to areas where your risk assessment needs reviewing
- improve risk control in your workplace in the future

Reporting incidents should not stop you from carrying out your own investigation to ensure risks in

your workplace are controlled efficiently.

An investigation is not an end in itself, but the first step in preventing future **adverse events** that includes:

- **accident:** an event that results in injury or ill health
- **incident:**
  - **near miss:** an event not causing harm, but has the potential to cause injury or ill health (in this guidance, the term near miss will include dangerous occurrences)
  - **undesired circumstance:** a set of conditions or circumstances that have the potential to cause injury or ill health, eg untrained nurses handling heavy patients
- **dangerous occurrence:** one of a number of specific, reportable adverse events, as defined in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)

### **Multi-occupancy workplaces**

Where employers share workplaces (whether on a temporary or permanent basis), they need to co-operate with each other to comply with their respective health and safety obligations.

Each employer needs to take all reasonable steps to co-ordinate the measures they adopt to fulfil those obligations. They also need to tell the other employers about any risks their work activities could present to their employees, both on- and off-site.

These requirements apply to self-employed people where they share a workplace with other employers or where they share a workplace with other self-employed people.

### **Deciding 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. In many cases, you will know the risks in your business best. This will mean that you are the competent person and can carry out the risk assessments yourself.

You could appoint (one or a combination of):

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

Many businesses can develop the necessary expertise in-house and are well equipped to manage health and safety themselves. However, there are some things you may not be able to do for yourself and you may decide to get external help. Possible sources of advice include:

- trade associations
- safety groups
- trade unions
- consultants registered on the Occupational Safety and Health Consultants Register (OSHCR)
- local councils

- health and safety training providers
- health and safety equipment suppliers

Identifying and deciding what help you need is very important. If you appoint someone to help you, you must ensure that they are competent to carry out the tasks you give them and that you provide them with adequate information and support. If you are not clear about what you want, you probably won't get the help you need.

### **Some points to consider when using external help**

- Make sure you clearly explain what you need and check that they understand you. Ask them to explain what they understand the work to be and what they will do, when they will do it, and what they will charge you
- Check for evidence of relevant health and safety training/knowledge, such as formal qualifications or practical experience of providing advice in your industry/area of work
- Can they explain why they are competent to advise you on your particular problem?
- Is the person a member of a professional body? If you are in doubt, you can check with the professional body on what training, knowledge or qualifications are relevant and whether the person is listed as a member
- Shop around to find the right help at the right price. If you were buying equipment or another service, you wouldn't always accept the first offer, so do the same with health and safety advice. You should also check that the person you choose is adequately insured
- Consider whether you have received the help you needed. Do you have a practical, sensible solution to your problem? Or have you ended up with something completely 'over the top' or a mountain of useless paperwork? If you are not happy with the solution, ask for an explanation and whether there may be a simpler alternative
- You can find consultants through Occupational Safety and Health Consultants Register (OSHCR) an independent online directory to help you find sensible health and safety advice. Registered members have met set standards within their professional bodies, and are bound by a code of practice. They give proportionate advice, specific to your business needs, by topic, industry or location

Try to make sure that you get a good follow-up service and are able to get further advice on any issues that arise from implementing their recommendations.

If you need help with technical issues or very specific health and safety risks, you may need to consult external specialists. Find information on using a health and safety consultant or adviser.

### **Consulting your employees**

Workplaces where employees are involved in taking decisions about health and safety are safer and healthier. Collaboration with your employees helps you to manage health and safety in a practical way by:

- helping you spot workplace risks
- making sure health and safety controls are practical

- increasing the level of commitment to working in a safe and healthy way
- providing you with feedback on the effectiveness of your health and safety arrangements and control measures

You must consult all your employees, in good time, on health and safety matters. In workplaces where a trade union is recognised, this will be through union health and safety representatives. In non-unionised workplaces, you can consult either directly or through other elected representatives.

Representatives' main role is to talk to their employer about issues affecting the health and safety of employees they represent in the workplace. You should ensure that any representatives receive paid time off during normal working hours so they can carry out their duties. They should also receive suitable training and access to any facilities needed to help them in their role.

Consultation involves employers not only giving information to employees but also listening to them and taking account of what they say before making decisions on health and safety. You have to give employees or their representatives information to allow full and effective participation in consultation. This should include:

- risks arising from their work
- proposals to manage and/or control these risks
- what to do if employees are exposed to a risk
- the best ways of providing information and training

### **Providing 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 and information, and adequate training, for your employees.

Consider how much training is necessary. A proportionate approach is needed, for example a low-risk business would not need lengthy technical training. Providing simple information or instructions is likely to be sufficient.

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

- hazards and risks they may face, if any
- measures in place to deal with those hazards and risks, if necessary
- how to follow any emergency procedures
- Some employees may have particular training needs, for example:
  - new recruits need basic induction training in how to work safely, including arrangements for first aid, fire and evacuation
  - people changing jobs or taking on extra responsibilities need to know about any new health and safety implications
  - young employees are particularly vulnerable to accidents and you need to pay particular attention to their needs, so their training should be a priority. It is also important that new, inexperienced or young employees are adequately supervised

- employee representatives or safety representatives will require training that reflects their responsibilities
- some people's skills may need updating by refresher training

Your risk assessment should identify any further training needs associated with specific risks. If you have identified danger areas in your workplace, you must ensure that your employees receive adequate instruction and training on precautions they must take before entering them.

You need to think about any legal requirements for specific job training, eg for operating forklift trucks. Remember that if you introduce new equipment, technology or changes to working practices/systems, your employees will need to know about any new health and safety implications.

Employees also have responsibilities under health and safety law to:

- take care of their own health and safety and that of others
- co-operate with you to help you comply with health and safety legislation
- follow any instructions or health and safety training you provide
- tell you about any work situations that present a serious and imminent risk
- let you know about any other failings they identify in your health and safety arrangements

### **Providing supervision**

You must provide an adequate and appropriate level of supervision for your employees:

- Supervisors need to know what you expect from them in terms of health and safety. They need to understand your health and safety policy, where they fit in, and how you want health and safety managed
- Supervisors may need training in the specific hazards of your processes and how you expect the risks to be controlled
- New, inexperienced or young people, as well as those whose first language is not English, are very likely to need more supervision than others. Make sure workers know how to raise concerns and supervisors are familiar with the possible problems due to unfamiliarity, inexperience and communication difficulties
- Supervisors need to ensure that workers in their charge understand risks associated with the work environment and measures to control them
- Supervisors will need to make sure the control measures to protect against risk are up to date and are being properly used, maintained and monitored
- Make sure you have arrangements in place to check the work of contractors is being done as agreed

Effective supervision can help you monitor the effectiveness of the training that people have received, and whether employees have the necessary capacity and competence to do the job.