



Unit 1 What is First Aid at Work?

Learning Outcomes

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

- ✓ Discuss what it means to contribute towards a safe and healthy work environment
- ✓ Understand what's involved in appointing first aid personnel at work
- ✓ Provide a brief overview of the basics every first aid kit must contain

Unit 1

What is First Aid at Work?

What is a safe and healthy work environment?

Not only does the work environment need to be safe and healthy to avoid work-related illness and injury, but it also needs to be safe and healthy so that you can do your job properly while you are there. Your employer will have happier, healthier, and more productive employees if you take care of your health and safety. Workplace stress can have a negative impact on your health and contribute to stress-related conditions like insomnia and burnout. Learning to manage stress and stress-related conditions can help you stay healthier and safer at work, as well as improve your overall quality of life.

Every safety measure outlined for home safety also applies to workplace safety for both employees and the general public. Employees must also be aware of and follow any fire, safety, health, or disaster protocols established by their employers. Workers must know how to use and have access to safe and ergonomic equipment and safety gear when needed, as well as have a basic understanding of body mechanics, proper food handling, and adequate ventilation and lighting. A safe workplace must include the following features:

- Be free of any known hazards and constructed in a safe manner.
- As needed, make all safety devices and gear, as well as appropriate tools and equipment, available.
- Alcohol and narcotics are prohibited.
- Provide employees with protection from chemicals and biological agents found in research labs, such as bodily fluids, mold, and dew.
- In animal-related workplaces, provide protection from animals or animal waste.
- Ensure that employees understand and practice proper body mechanics and exercises in order to avoid injury.
- Allow plenty of time for meals and breaks.
- Ensure that employees can safely enter and exit the workplace.
- Provide mental stressors such as workplace harassment, bullying, and physical threats and violence to employees.

What is first aid at work?

Workers may sustain injuries or become ill at work. Whether the injury or illness is caused by their work or not, it is critical to provide them with immediate medical attention and, in serious cases, to call an ambulance. You should make plans to ensure that this occurs. It has the potential to save lives and keep minor injuries from becoming major ones.

According to the Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981, you must provide adequate and appropriate first-aid equipment, facilities, and personnel so that your employees can receive immediate assistance if they are injured or become ill at work. What constitutes "adequate and appropriate" in your workplace will vary depending on the circumstances, and you should assess your first-aid requirements.

A suitably stocked first-aid kit, an appointed person to take charge of first-aid arrangements, and information for employees about first-aid arrangements are the minimum first-aid provisions on any work site.

What is the definition of appointive authority?

If your workplace's first-aid needs assessment reveals that a trained first-aider is not required, you should appoint someone to oversee first-aid arrangements. This is the absolute minimum. Even in a small, low-hazard business where first-aiders are not considered necessary, an accident or sudden illness can happen at any time. As a result, it's critical that someone is always available to oversee these arrangements.

This person's responsibilities include looking after first-aid equipment and facilities and, if necessary, calling the emergency services. They can also cover for a first-aider who is unavailable due to unforeseen circumstances (annual leave does not count). A person who has been appointed does not require first-aid training. When there is a sufficient number of appropriately trained first-aiders, an appointed person is not required.

What is a first-aider?

A first-aider is someone who has completed the necessary training as determined by the needs assessment. This could be first aid at work (FAW), emergency first aid at work (EFAW), or some other type of first-aid training tailored to your workplace's specific needs.

Basics of First Aid in the Workplace

Because first aid is complicated and situational, the more informed and trained you are, the better prepared you will be to deal with any unexpected illness or injury.

When someone suffers an injury or a sudden illness, the first thing you should do is administer first aid. But first aid is about more than having a well-stocked first-aid kit; it's about being able to prevent, prepare for, recognize, and quickly treat minor injuries, as well as knowing what to do in an emergency. When you know what to do, you can treat most common illnesses and injuries, but first you must decide whether first aid will suffice or if you require professional assistance. Knowing how to act until help arrives can save someone's life when the situation necessitates more than first aid.

The Right Equipment

A good first-aid kit is required for proper first-aid administration. The better your first-aid kit is stocked and organized, the more likely you are to respond effectively to emergencies at home. Keep a written list of kit supplies in your home, along with your emergency plan, and make sure to restock the kit as needed, replacing items with expired dates, items that have been used, or anything that is supposed to be sterile but has an open package or broken seal.

The Right Container

Use a sturdy container that can be securely closed and clearly labeled "First-Aid Kit." Commercial kits are available from a variety of sources, but any large, well-constructed plastic fishing tackle box or toolbox will suffice and is usually much less expensive.

Your kit should be light enough to carry while also being large enough to hold all necessary items in an organized and easily accessible manner. It should be dustproof, waterproof, and strong enough to withstand being crushed or falling.

What kind of first-aid supplies should be available?

After a first-aid needs assessment has been completed, the results can be used to determine what first-aid equipment should be provided in the workplace. A properly stocked first-aid box is the bare minimum. Additional materials and equipment, such as scissors, hypoallergenic microporous adhesive tape, disposable aprons, and individually wrapped, moist wipes, may be required as a result of the assessment. They can go in the first-aid kit or be kept separate.

If mains water is unavailable for eye irrigation, at least one litre of sterile water or sterile normal saline (0.9%) in sealed, disposable containers should be available. Containers should not be kept for reuse after the seal has been broken. Containers should not be used after they have passed their expiration date.

What should a workplace first-aid kit contain?

The results of the first-aid needs assessment will influence the decision on what to provide. As a general rule, a minimum stock of first-aid items for low-hazard work activities might be:

- A general first-aid leaflet (for example, the HSE's leaflet Basic advice on first aid at work);
- Sterile plasters, individually wrapped (assorted sizes) and appropriate for the type of work (hypoallergenic plasters can be provided if necessary);
- Eye pads that are sterile;
- Triangular bandages, individually wrapped and preferably sterile;
- Safety pins;
- Large sterile unmedicated wound dressings, individually wrapped;

- Unmedicated medium-sized sterile wound dressings, individually wrapped;
- Disposable gloves

How often should first-aid kit contents be replaced?

Despite the lack of a formal review schedule, many items, particularly sterile ones, are labeled with expiration dates. They should be replaced according to the dates provided, and expired items should be safely disposed of. If there are no dates on sterile items, it is best to contact the manufacturers to find out how long they can be stored. It is a matter of judgment for non-sterile items without dates, based on whether they are fit for purpose.

Traveling, remote, and lone workers' first aid

Employers are responsible for providing first-aid to employees who work away from the main site. The evaluation of first-aid requirements should reveal whether:

- Those who travel long distances or who are constantly on the move should have a personal first-aid kit with them; and
- Personal communicators/mobile phones should be provided to employees.

First aid needs assessment

An employer should conduct a first-aid needs assessment in order to determine what provisions are required. This assessment should take into account the working environment, the workforce, and any potential hazards or risks. The results will aid you in determining what first-aid measures you should take.

When determining a workplace's first-aid requirements, keep the following in mind:

- The type of work you'll be doing
- Dangers and risks in the workplace (including specific hazards requiring special arrangements)
- The nature and size of the workforce
- The employees' work schedules
- Absences of first-aiders and appointed persons due to vacations and other absences
- Organisation's history of accidents

You might also want to think about:

- The requirements of mobile, remote, and lone workers
- The distribution of the workforce
- The distance between any of your locations and emergency medical service
- Whether employees work in a shared or multi-occupancy environment
- First-aid provision for non-employees (eg members of the public).

Fire Safety at Work

Fire extinguishers that are easily accessible; working, manual fire-alarm pull boxes on the walls; emergency lights; exit doors; unobstructed sprinkler heads; and sprinkler-system risers should all be included in workplace protocol. In the event of a fire, clear access to the front and back of the building, as well as to fire hydrants, automatic sprinkler connections, and sprinkler control valves, should always be available. To extinguish smoking materials, your workplace should have designated smoking areas with safe, noncombustible receptacles.

Brush and vegetation, as well as all other combustibles, must be kept away from the structure. Permanent wiring, rather than extension cords and surge suppressors connected to all computers, should be installed in your office or workplace. All equipment must be kept up to code, and all combustibles must be stored away from heat sources, according to the owners and management. Pull fire alarms, dial 999, exit the building, and wait for the fire department to arrive in the event of a fire.

Preventing Injuries in the Workplace

Poor ergonomic workplace conditions, such as temperature, station design, lighting, noise, rotating shifts, insufficient meals and breaks, and machine design, can result in back injuries, stress-related health problems, carpal-tunnel syndrome, headaches, and mental-health problems. Small corrective actions can help to avoid larger, more costly issues.

Many physical problems can be avoided by using ergonomically correct chairs and keyboards, properly positioned workstations, a mouse with the proper tension, wrist supports, telephone neck supports, ample lighting, frequent breaks, and proper foot support, for example.

Further Reading:

- ✓ First aid at work Paperback – October 1, 2013 by Health and Safety Executive
- ✓ Community Care First Aid: Your Guide to First Aid in the Home and Workplace Paperback November 7, 2017 by Dynamic Health Systems LLC
- ✓ CPR, AED & First Aid Provider Handbook by Dr. Karl Disque 2016