

First Aid

Duties of the employer

Background

Employers need to either provide, or ensure that appropriate equipment and facilities are provided which will enable first aid to be administered in a timely manner to their employees if they are injured or become ill in the workplace.

Employers need to provide an appropriate number of persons, adequate for the site circumstances, who are qualified to administer first aid to their employees. Persons are not considered competent to administer first aid assistance unless they have had suitable training and hold current qualifications approved by the Health and Safety Executive or any additional training identified as being appropriate to the circumstances of that workplace.

A suitable and sufficient assessment of the workplace circumstances needs to be undertaken in order to determine the first aid needs considered appropriate to give adequate levels of cover for the range of activities and hazards present on-site. There are no pre-determined/fixed rules relating to the provision of first aid cover for premises, therefore each employer must assess what facilities and personnel are appropriate to the site.

Key elements that employers have to consider

- The hazards and risks present in the workplace (eg. powered machinery/equipment, FLT's, site transport, hazardous chemicals, etc).
- The physical size of the organisation.
- Any history of accidents/incidents within the business.
- Numbers, nature and the allocation of the workforce on-site.
- Time taken for emergency medical services to respond and reach the premises (next door to hospital or out in the countryside).
- Lone workers or those remote from the premises including those travelling in work vehicles.
- Multi-occupied premises using shared facilities/manpower.
- Unplanned/planned absences of first aiders and appointed persons due to either sickness/ill health or holidays.

First aid kits

There should be at least one suitably stocked first aid kit within each premises, including work vehicles, which should be located close to site hand washing facilities (where possible). No pills, potions or medicated lotions are to be stored within the first aid kit as these usually have an expiry date after which their efficacy will diminish.

There is no mandatory requirement for designated items to be stocked in the first aid kit but it would usually include the following (where no special risks are present):

- General guidance leaflet relating to first aid.
- 20 individually wrapped sterile adhesive dressings (assorted sizes), appropriate to the type of work (eg. 'blue' detectable type for food handlers).
- Two sterile eye pads.
- Four individually wrapped triangular bandages (preferable sterile).
- Six safety pins.
- Six medium sized individually wrapped sterile un-medicated wound dressings - approximately 12cm x 12cm.
- Two large sterile individually wrapped un-medicated wound dressings - approximately 18cm x 18cm.
- One pair of disposable gloves.

The correct pictorial signage and colour coding to indicate the presence/location of a first aid kit is a white cross on a green background as shown below. This should also be clearly indicated on all first aid kits:



Regular examination of the contents should be undertaken on a frequent basis and missing/used items should be restocked as soon as possible.

Records

It is good practice for employers to provide first aiders and appointed persons with a book in which to record incidents which require their attendance. In the case of multiple first aiders being in attendance at a site one central book should be used. The information to be entered should include:

- Date, time and place of incident.
- Name and job of the injured or ill person.
- Details of the injury, illness and what first aid was given.
- What happened to the person immediately afterwards (for example went home, went back to work, went to hospital).
- Name and signature of the first aider or person dealing with the incident.

Further reading:

First Aid at Work The Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 Approved Code of Practice and Guidance (L74)

Category of risk	Numbers employed at any location	Suggested number of first-aid personnel
Lower risk (shops, offices, libraries)	Fewer than 50	At least one appointed person
	50-100	At least one first aider
	More than 100	One additional first aider for every first-aider employed
Medium Risk (light engineering and assembly work, food processing, warehousing)	Fewer than 20	At least one appointed person
	20-100	At least one first aider for every 50 employed (or part thereof)
	More than 100	One additional first aider for every 100 employed
Higher Risk (most construction sites, slaughterhouse, chemical manufacture, extensive work with dangerous machinery or sharp instruments)	Fewer than 5	Where there are hazards for which additional first-aid skills are necessary, at least one appointed person
	5-50	At least one first aider
	More than 50	One additional first aider for every 50 employed. In addition, at least one first aider trained in the specific emergency action