

FIRST-AID IN THE WORKPLACE

Introduction

Chapter 2 of Part 7 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 relates to first-aid and the prevention of occupational accidents or ill health. We have summarised below the main points of this section, which are not intended to be a legal interpretation of the legislation.

Employers have a duty to provide first-aid equipment at all places of work where working conditions require it. Depending on the size or specific hazards (or both) of the place of work, trained occupational first-aiders must also be provided. Apart from some exceptions first-aid rooms must be provided where appropriate.

Information must be provided to employees or Safety Representatives (or both) as regards the first-aid facilities and arrangements in place.

Definitions

First-aid means either the treatment in a life-threatening situation (e.g. heart stoppage or severe bleeding) pending medical help, or the treatment for minor injury (e.g. cuts or bruises). First-aid does not include the administration of drugs or medication.

The regulations provide a new definition of an occupational first-aider as someone trained and qualified in occupational first-aid.

Application

The requirements for first-aid facilities and equipment and, where appropriate, occupational first-aiders apply to all places of work to which the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 applies and to employers and self-employed alike.

Duties of Employer

An employer shall:

Provide and maintain suitably marked and easily accessible first-aid equipment, as is adequate and appropriate in the circumstances for enabling first-aid to be given to persons at every place where working conditions require it, at a place of work under the employer's control.

Different work activities involve different hazards and, therefore, different first-aid equipment is necessary. Some places of work (e.g. offices) have relatively low hazards whereas others (e.g. factories, construction sites) often have a greater degree of hazard. First-aid requirements will, therefore, depend on several factors, including the size of the

undertaking, the numbers employed, the hazards arising, access to medical services, dispersal of employees, employees working away from their employer's premises, workers in isolated locations etc.

Outlined below is the type of first-aid equipment which should be reasonably provided.

Recommended Contents of First-Aid Boxes and Kits

Materials	First Aid Travel Kit Contents	First Aid Box Contents		
		1 – 10 persons	11 – 25 persons	26 – 50 persons
Adhesive Plasters	20	20	20	40
Sterile Eye Pads (No. 16) (Bandage attached)	2	2	2	4
Individually Wrapped Triangular Bandages	2	2	6	6
Safety Pins	6	6	6	6
Individually Wrapped Sterile Unmedicated Wound Dressings Medium (No. 8) (10 x 8cms)	1	2	2	4
Individually Wrapped Sterile Unmedicated Wound Dressings Large (No. 9) (13 x 9cms)	1	2	6	8
Individually Wrapped Sterile Unmedicated Wound Dressings Extra Large (No. 3) (28 x 17.5 cms)	1	2	3	4
Individually Wrapped Disinfectant Wipes	10	10	20	40
Paramedic Shears	1	1	1	1
Pairs of Examination Gloves	3	5	10	10
Sterile water where there is no clear running water	2 x 20 mls	1 x 500mls	2 x 500 mls	2 x 500 mls
Pocket Face Mask	1	1	1	1
Water Based Burns Dressing Small (10 x 10 cms)	1	1	1	1
Water Based Burns Dressing Large	1	1	1	1
Crepe Bandage (7cm)	1	1	2	3

Notes

Where more than 50 persons are employed, pro rata provision should be made.

Where mains tap water is not readily available for eye irrigation, sterile water or sterile normal saline (0.9%) in sealed disposable containers should be provided. Each container should hold at least 20ml and should be discarded once the seal is broken. Eye bath/ eye cups/ refillable containers should not be used for eye irrigation due to the risk of cross infection. The container should be CE marked.

Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs)

The provision of automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in workplaces to prevent sudden cardiac death should be considered. In relation to preserving life, the “Chain of Survival Concept” is recognised under the regulations. This is based on four vital links to save a life which are:

1. Early access
2. Early Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (PR)
3. Early defibrillation
4. Early advanced care

Ideally, wherever there is an occupational first-aider(s) in a workplace, provision of an AED should be considered. The training of other employees who are not occupational first-aiders in the use of AEDs is also encouraged.

Whereas it may be practicable and desirable to have an AED in every workplace, due to cost considerations it would be unreasonable to expect all employers (especially small and medium size enterprises (SMEs)) to have one on their premises, even if there is an occupational first-aider present. These costs not only include the purchase price but also the cost of maintenance of the equipment and refresher training for those trained in how to use AEDs.

However, different employers at the same location, such as in shopping centres, small business enterprise centres etc, where relatively large numbers of employees or other persons are likely to be habitually present, might find it feasible to cooperate in the provision of shared AED equipment, training and assistance.

Employees Working Away from Employer’s Premises

Where employees regularly work away from the employer’s premises and there are no special hazards or problems of isolation, no first-aid equipment need be provided by the employer. Where the work involves the use of dangerous tools or substances (e.g. agricultural and forestry work, electricity, gas, water and telecommunications services, transport of hazardous articles and substances etc.) the first-aid kit in **column 2** in the above table should be provided along with any special equipment or antidotes.

Supervision of First-Aid Equipment and Supplies

In workplaces where there are occupational first-aiders, first-aid boxes and kits should be under their control. Otherwise they should be under the control of a responsible person named in the Safety Statement.

Recommended Numbers of Occupational First-Aiders

The table below gives a broad indication of the numbers of occupational first-aiders which should be provided in different circumstances where the risk assessment carried out as part of the Safety Statement indicates the need for them.

These numbers should be doubled if the workplace is more than one hour away from medical assistance. These requirements do not preclude other employees who are trained to a lower level of skill in first-aid.

Type of Workplace	Maximum number of employees present at any one time	Number of Occupational First-Aiders
Factories, Construction Sites, Surface Mines and Quarries	Up to 49	1 if Safety Statement Risk Assessment shows it necessary.
	50 to 149	Minimum 1
	150 to 299	Minimum 2
	More than 300	1 extra for every 150 employees or part thereof
Underground Mines		1 for every 10 employees or part thereof
Other Workplaces	Up to 99	1 if Safety Statement Risk Assessment shows it necessary.
	100 to 399	1
	400 to 699	2
	More than 700	1 extra for every 300 employees or part thereof.

Employers must ensure that details of arrangements made for the provision of first-aid, including the names of occupational first-aiders and the location of first aid rooms, equipment and facilities for or at the place of work, are included in the Safety Statement, and the names, addresses and telephone numbers of the local emergency services are clearly displayed at each place of work.

In addition to the above arrangements, details of all cases treated by occupational first-aiders should be entered in a first-aid treatment record book, which must be kept in a suitable secure place, respecting the confidential nature. These records should be readily available and shown to a Health & Safety Authority inspector if requested.

First-Aid Rooms

All places of work must have one or more first-aid rooms if the risk assessment undertaken for the Safety Statement shows it necessary, based on the following criteria:

- (a)** Size of the premises
- (b)** Type of activity being carried out
- (c)** Frequency of accidents arising
- (d)** Existence of special hazards
- (e)** Distance from nearest appropriate medical facility

As a general rule, any workplace, which presents a relatively high risk from hazards should have a suitably equipped and staffed first-aid room. Where Occupational Health Services exist on premises, the surgery or accommodation housing that service may be considered to be a first-aid room, provided that the conditions set out below are met.

Where first-aid rooms are required, the following minimum conditions should be met:

- (a)** An occupational first-aider should be responsible for the upkeep of the first-aid room so as to ensure that it is kept stocked to the required standard and that it is at all times clean and ready for immediate use
- (b)** The room should be large enough to hold a couch, with space for people to work around it, and a chair
- (c)** The room's entrance should be wide enough to accommodate an ambulance trolley, stretcher, wheel chair or carrying chair
- (d)** The room should be clearly identified as a first-aid room by means of a sign
- (e)** A telephone or other suitable means of communication should be provided

The following minimum facilities and equipment should be provided in first-aid rooms:

- Sink with running hot and cold water always available
- Drinking water and disposable drinking vessels
- A suitable store for first-aid equipment and materials
- First-aid equipment
- Smooth topped working surfaces
- Soap
- Paper towels
- Suitable refuse containers lined with a disposable plastic bag
- A couch (with a waterproof surface) and frequently cleaned pillow and blanket

- A chair
- A bowl or basin
- Clean protective garments for use by occupational first-aiders
- A first-aid treatment record book

Training

The Health & Safety Authority has determined that the standard for Occupational First-Aid in the workplace will be set at FETAC Level 5 Standard. Those who achieve the appropriate result in the assessments will be awarded a FETAC Certificate. Any occupational first-aiders who are due to renew their qualifications will have to achieve this new standard.