

# **SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELFARE AT WORK (GENERAL APPLICATION) REGULATIONS 2007**

## **Workplace**

In summary, Chapter 1 of Part 2 of the regulations deals with the physical environment at the place of work and sets out the welfare facilities which should be provided as standard facilities for a premises used as a workplace. It covers the physical environment, stability, ventilation, fresh air, temperature and lighting. Pedestrians and vehicles must be able to circulate safely. Traffic routes, entrances and exits must be kept clear. Floors, walls, ceilings, roofs, doors and gates, loading bays and ramps must be safe. Companies are obliged to provide adequate toilet, washing and welfare facilities. Any employees working outdoors should be protected against bad weather, noise etc.

## **Ventilation of Enclosed Places of Work**

An employer shall ensure that:

*Sufficient fresh air is provided in enclosed places of work, having regard to the working methods used and the physical demands placed on the employer's employees*

In most cases the natural ventilation provided through windows and doors will be adequate. Mechanical ventilation systems should be maintained in good working order as part of a plant maintenance system.

If air-conditioning or mechanical ventilation installations are used, they should operate in such a way that employees are not exposed to draughts which cause discomfort. Any deposit or dirt likely to create an immediate danger to the safety and health of employees by polluting the atmosphere should be removed without delay.

## **Room Temperature**

For sedentary office work a minimum temperature of 17.5°C, so far as is reasonably practicable, is achieved and maintained at every workstation after the first hour's work. In cases where it is difficult to maintain an adequate overall temperature it may be necessary to provide effective local heating, protective clothing, or cooling at individual workstations.

The fact that a maximum temperature has not been specified in the regulations does not mean that any temperature is acceptable. At high or uncomfortable temperatures, especially when not caused by temporary weather conditions, a means of cooling should be provided.

Workers are entitled to have some means readily available to them to measure the temperature. In practice this means that if an employee wants to measure the temperature there will be a thermometer readily available. Other points to note include:

- Changing rooms and shower rooms should be adequately heated
- Excessive heat from the sun shining through windows, skylights or glass partitions must be avoided. This can be achieved by various means including internal blinds, external blinds, use of low-emissivity glass, white-washing of windows etc

### **Natural and Artificial Lighting**

An employer shall ensure that:

*Places of work receive, as far as possible, sufficient natural light and are equipped with artificial lighting adequate for the protection of the safety and health of the employer's employees*

Whilst the provision of natural lighting takes precedence over artificial lighting, in practice both will be required. Artificial lighting should be adequate and properly maintained for the safety and health of persons at work. To maximise the use of natural lighting, windows, skylights and glass partitions used for lighting workrooms should be kept clean on both inner and outer surfaces.

### **Emergency Routes and Exits**

All emergency routes to emergency exits and the exits themselves are to be kept clear at all times. People often fail to appreciate how quickly a fire can spread. It is vital that fire exits are not blocked or obstructed and that any such obstructions are moved without delay.

Other points to note:

- In the event of danger all employees should be able to evacuate all workstations quickly and safely
- Emergency exit doors open outwards
- Emergency routes and exits requiring illumination are provided with emergency lighting

### **Movement of Pedestrians and Vehicles in Danger Areas**

An employer must ensure that outdoor and indoor places of work are organised in such a way that pedestrians and vehicles can circulate in a safe manner. Some points to remember:

- Passageways should be wide enough and the surfaces suitable for the safe movement of the largest vehicle liable to use them
- Sharp bends and blind corners should be eliminated as far as possible. Where they otherwise remain, warning signs and mirrors should be used to reduce the risk of accidents

- Traffic routes for heavy traffic should avoid the areas mainly used by pedestrians
- The need for vehicles to reverse when collecting or delivering goods should, where possible, be avoided
- Suitable pedestrian crossings should be marked out
- Vehicles should be provided with flashing lights, reversing alarms etc as an effective means of warning pedestrians of their approach where the driver's view is restricted

### **Room Dimensions**

Workrooms must have sufficient surface area, height and air space to allow employees to perform their work without risk to their safety health or welfare. When considering this it should be remembered that overcrowding can increase the risk of accidents.

When calculating the allocation of space a reasonable approach should be taken as regards discounting any large spaces taken up by unusual fittings. For example, in a room including a counter, the space up to and under it should be included when calculating the space available for each person behind the counter.

In offices 4.65 square meters should be the minimum amount of floor space allowed for every person employed in any room. This should include the area occupied by the office desk and chair but should exclude filing cabinets and other office furniture.

### **General Welfare Requirements**

#### **1. Cleanliness**

The employer has a responsibility to ensure that any place of work is maintained in a clean and hygienic condition and that any rubbish, dirt, refuse and waste is not allowed to accumulate and is removed on a regular basis.

#### **2. Seating**

Seating is required where most of the job can be carried out while seated or where there may be opportunities for workers for sitting down between tasks without detriment to their work. If seating is not practical some other form of support is required so that workers are protected from the health effects of prolonged standing.

#### **3. Drinking Water**

The employer is required to provide an adequate supply of wholesome drinking water at locations that are accessible to employees.

#### **4. Facilities for the taking of meals**

The employer is required to either provide suitable and adequate facilities to allow employees to eat and drink any meals or beverages. The facilities provided must have means for boiling water.

## Sanitary and washing facilities

The employer should provide adequate and suitable sanitary facilities for the use of employees. The table below sets out the minimum number of sanitary facilities and washbasins that should be provided. The number of people at work refers to the maximum number of people likely to be in the place of work at any one time. Where separate facilities are provided for a group of employees, for example men, women, office workers or manual employees, a separate calculation should be made for each group.

Number of people at work	Number of water closets	Number of washbasins
1 to 5	1	1
6 to 15	2	2
16 to 30	3	3
31 to 45	4	4
46 to 60	5	5
61 to 75	6	6
76 to 90	7	7
91 to 100	8	8
Above 100	8 + 1 WC and washbasins per 25 persons or fraction thereof	

## Washing Facilities

To be adequate and suitable, facilities for washing should include running hot and cold water as well as soap and clean towels. Separate facilities should be provided for men and women. Washing facilities should have adequate lighting, be sufficiently ventilated and appropriately maintained and kept clean.