

# Protect your profit

**health and safety pays**



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# Foreword

Small businesses are an important part of Northern Ireland's economy. They provide employment opportunities, develop new ideas and provide essential services on which many larger companies depend.

Research has shown that most owners of small businesses are actually struggling to survive, with the biggest barrier to success being their failure to manage health and safety in the workplace (see note 1 below). These failures are costing Northern Ireland's employers between £99 and £370 million each year (see note 2 below).

## **The aim of this pack**

We have produced this information pack to help you understand exactly what it is that you need to do to effectively manage health and safety. The aim is to give you simple advice that you can easily understand and put into practice within your business.

<sup>1</sup> 2001 Small Firms Project – Final Report May 2002  
Price Waterhouse Coopers

<sup>2</sup> Health and Safety Executive For Northern Ireland.  
The cost of work-related injuries, ill-health and non-injury accidents to the Northern Ireland Economy June 2002.  
KPMG Consulting

# Introduction



## Why should health and safety concern me?

It is a huge mistake to believe that accidents will never happen in your business or that health and safety only applies to larger or higher-risk workplaces. Research has shown that small businesses are likely to have twice the number of fatal accidents compared to larger ones. It is a fact that every year in the UK:

- 250 people lose their lives while at work;
- 156,000 non-fatal injuries resulting from work activities are reported;
- 2.3 million people suffer from ill-health caused or made worse by their work; and
- over 40 million working days are lost.

**Don't panic.** Putting good health and safety measures into practice does not have to be complicated, expensive or take a lot of time. Most practices that you put in place will be as a result of good health and safety management. It makes good business sense and can actually save you money. Your business will not only be safer, but one that may develop and thrive well into the future.

## Cost of poor health and safety management

Which of the following sums up your attitude to health and safety?

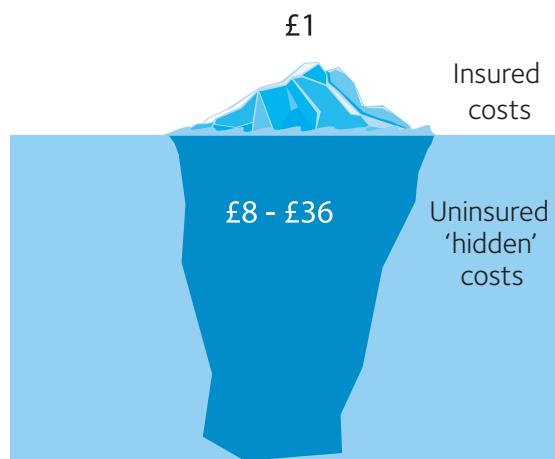
*Safety is the most crucial investment we can make. The question is not what will good practice cost us, but what will it save us?*

*or*

*Accidents don't cost me anything - that is what insurance is for!*

Be honest, the second statement is a more common attitude. However, in actual fact, insurance policies do not cover everything. Your policy may only pay out for a serious injury or illness or your policy excess may be greater than the amount you need to pay, leaving you to find the money out of your own profits.

And many of the extra costs associated with an accident or illness are not actually covered by your insurance policy, such as lost production time, sick pay, overtime, loss of a contract, legal costs, damage or loss of product, repairs to equipment and so on. These extra costs are often referred to as the hidden or uninsured costs as they are not immediately easy to see or accounted for. It has been estimated that these costs can be between £8 and £36 for every £1 covered by insurance.





### The effect on your insurance premiums

A poor claims record will affect the amount that your business will pay in insurance premiums. Ultimately your premium will increase or, at worst, your insurance company may refuse to provide cover.

In reality most businesses do not know how much accidents and ill health actually cost them and most are often surprised at the true total.

#### Example

An employee in a small engineering company was injured when using an unguarded drill. This cost the company a total of £45,000. The company was working on a 3% profit margin and had to increase turnover by £1.5 million just to cover the costs.

## Insurance cover – what do I need?

The law says that you must have employer's liability insurance when you employ members of staff, and motor insurance when you use a company vehicle on a public road.

People are confused over the three most common types of business insurance policy available.

**Employer's liability compulsory insurance:** You need this by law to make sure that all employees are covered by enough insurance during the course of their employment. The minimum cover you need is £5 million. You must keep the employer's liability certificate, which you must renew each year, for at least 40 years. You must also display a valid copy at your workplace.

**Public liability:** This covers your liability to another person you do not employ such as a customer or visitor who is injured as a result of your business's activities (for example, they trip on a trailing cable or damaged carpet). Public liability will also cover you if one of your employees, through the course of their work activities, injures someone or damages their property. This particular cover is voluntary and you can choose the limit of insurance you need.

**Product liability:** This covers injury or property damage which has arisen from a product that you supplied. This cover is voluntary and you can choose the limit of insurance you need.

*You can get more detailed information on the different types of insurance you may need for your business from the Business Link website at [www.businesslink.co.uk](http://www.businesslink.co.uk)*

*The British Insurance Brokers' Association can give you names of brokers who can advise you on getting insurance. See [www.biba.org.uk](http://www.biba.org.uk) or contact BIBA on 0870 950 1790.*



# Managing health and safety

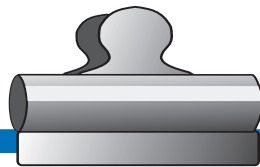
## Have I got it under control?

Business owners, directors and managers can be held personally responsible for failures to control health and safety.

Ask yourself *can I really afford these failures.*  
*Do I effectively manage health and safety? If not - why not?*

You need to manage the other areas of your business, so what is different about health and safety? The answer is nothing! Begin by thinking about how health and safety fits in with all the other important management systems in your business, such as finance, production and sales. Don't try to complicate things – most small businesses will have simple structures for managing their business.

**Remember: effective management is no accident- organisation and planning are essential.**



### Checklist

- |  |                          |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Do we have a health and safety policy?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is everyone in the workplace involved in spotting hazards and solving problems?  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Is it up to date and relevant?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is there enough written information and advice on health and safety displayed around the workplace?                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Is it signed by the most senior member of the business and displayed where all employees can see it? | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is it available to everyone?   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do all staff know their health and safety responsibilities?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do we have a health and safety action plan with realistic aims?  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Are all staff trained well enough to be able to work safely?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do we carry out any checks, such as workplace inspections to make sure that we are keeping to the arrangements we set in the policy? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do all staff know the risks and the control measures in place to reduce the risks?                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are accidents and incidents reported and thoroughly investigated?  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

To successfully manage health and safety, there are a number of things that you will need to do.

**1 Assess the risks** from your business's work activities, record the significant findings, develop an action plan and let your staff know the outcome.



**2 Develop a written health and safety policy** which outlines how you plan to manage health and safety. This should give details of who will be responsible for putting the policy into practice and outline the health and safety arrangements that you have in place.



**3 Decide on user-friendly rules and procedures for things such as:**

- fire safety and evacuation in an emergency;
- manual handling;
- using work equipment;
- using hazardous substances; and
- electrical safety.



**4 Decide who is going to co-ordinate and manage your health and safety policy and procedures day-to-day.**

This may be you as the business owner or director or you may want to involve a senior member of staff. You need to make sure that whoever has the responsibility for health and safety, is able to carry out that role (in other words, they have enough skills, experience and knowledge in both the business and in health and safety). You or your staff may need some more training.

**5 Communicate with your staff** to make sure that they know about the health and safety policy and the arrangements that have been put in place to make sure you protect their health and safety while at work. You must also pass on the findings of your risk assessments and the controls that you have set up to all staff who may be affected. Remember that not all staff may come into contact with the same hazards. Staff meetings are an ideal place for passing on this information. You should encourage feedback from your employees on any health and safety improvements that could be made.



**6 Monitor the arrangements against those you have set in your policy** such as monthly workplace or equipment inspections, weekly fire equipment inspections and so on. This is to identify and deal with possible hazards before they become a problem and cause injury or ill health.



**7 Carry out thorough accident or 'near-miss' investigations** to learn from the experience and make changes where needed.



**8 Regularly review your health and safety arrangements** in other words, your policy, procedures and risk assessments, to make sure they are still effective and all staff understand them. Don't leave them on a shelf to collect dust! Reviews should take place at least every six to 12 months unless something significant changes in the meantime.



## How do I carry out a risk assessment?

To manage health and safety effectively within the business, you need to know what the main hazards and risks are so that you can build in appropriate ways to control them. The first thing you need to do whether you are reviewing your systems or setting them up for the first time is to carry out a risk assessment.

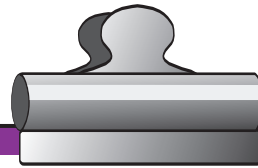
Risk assessment, while sounding complicated, is in actual fact quite simple.

**See the five steps to assessing risk on page 10.**

Each of us assesses risk each day, for example when crossing the road. Every time we cross the road, we make our own split-second assessment as to whether it is safe or not based on:

- the speed and nearness of oncoming traffic;
- whether or not there is a gap in the traffic;
- the width of road we need to get across; and
- our own ability, and the ability of others who may be with us, to cross the road in time.

If we decide that the risk is too great, we will decide to wait and use a pedestrian crossing which is a control measure to stop the traffic, allowing us to safely cross the road.



### Checklist

Set up a small working group of your most important members of staff who are experienced and knowledgeable in all or some of the working areas within the business.

Give all those members of staff some basic training in assessing risks.

**See the five steps to assessing risk on page 10.**

Identify all of the main work areas or activities within the business (such as the warehouse, office, housekeeping, maintenance and so on) where you need to carry out a risk assessment.

Draw up a timetable of when you want the assessments completed by.

Discuss, review and record the significant findings of the assessments as a working group, making sure that you include employees and managers from each area and agree to the further action needed.

Give all staff their own copy of the assessment or a summary of the significant findings, making sure that they understand what is needed from them.

Continually review your assessments and update when needed, repeating the whole process at least every 12 months.

# Five

## Steps to assessing risk

### Step 1 Identify the hazards

A **'hazard'** - is anything that can cause harm, for example, sharp equipment, damaged electrical equipment or boxes stored in front of the fire exit.

This involves walking around your business, looking at the work activities being carried out and talking to your employees. Your employees are the ones doing the job so ask them about any injuries or near misses they have experienced. They may also have suggestions as to how to improve the workplace. Including your employees from the beginning will also increase the chance of the measures you are introducing being effective, as they will understand how they came about and why they are needed.

### Step 2 Decide who might be harmed and how

Consider all those who could come into contact with the hazard, such as:

- employees, including any temporary staff, agency staff and student placements;
- visitors;
- contractors;
- members of the public;
- vulnerable members of staff such as young people or new and expectant mothers;
- customers; and
- maintenance staff.

### Step 3 Evaluate the risk

The **'risk'** is the chance (**high, medium or low**) that somebody may be injured or made ill by the hazard.

When deciding on the risk, there are two factors that you need to consider.

**How severe is it?** What would be the realistic outcome if the hazard did cause harm?

- **Would someone be killed or very badly injured**, for example, would it cause broken bones or amputation?
- **Could someone be very seriously hurt** causing them to be off work for more than three days, for example, a bad back or sprained ankle?
- **Could someone suffer a minor injury**, for example, a simple paper cut which needs only a plaster?

**How likely is it?** - What is the likelihood that harm will actually take place? Is it **highly likely, likely or unlikely** based on:

- the controls you already have in place;
- the number and type of people involved (in other words, are they experienced or not); and
- how often the task is carried out – several times a day or rarely.

If you want a way to be able to prioritise your hazards so that you can use your resources for those that pose the highest risk, you can add a value to the severity and the likelihood. See below.

Risk score	
How severe it is	How likely it is
Major = 3	Highly likely = 3
Serious = 2	Likely = 2
Minor = 1	Unlikely = 1
Severity x likelihood = Risk	

We suggest that those risks that come out 9 and 6 are your first priorities. Those at 4 and 3 are your second priority and finally 2 and 1 are your lowest.

#### Step 4 Control the hazard and the risk

Ideally, wherever possible, you should get rid of all hazards by removing any dangerous activities (for example, buy wood cut to size rather than using a circular saw or instead of using a meat slicer buy in pre-sliced cooked meat).

If this is not possible, you could change for a less hazardous one such as buying pre-diluted bleach solution instead of concentrated bleach.

If either of these options is not realistic given the nature of the hazard or the cost involved, you will need to look at ways of controlling the risk as far as is reasonably possible, using a mixture of the other forms of control.

- **Enclosing** the hazard, for example, by fitting a sound-absorbing enclosure around noisy machines.
- **Adding a physical barrier or guard** to prevent people from getting close to the hazard, for example, place a fence around the gas-bottle store or add a blade cover on a meat slicer.
- **Provide safe systems of work, written procedures, training and supervision** to make sure staff are made aware of the dangers and how to prevent themselves from being injured or made ill, such as lock out systems for machinery, manual-handling training or putting up a fire notice, practising evacuations and so on.

- **Providing personal protective equipment** (PPE) such as gloves to provide protection against chemicals or hot food.

**Personal protective equipment as a control measure is seen as the 'last resort' and you must never use it as the only control measure.**

#### Step 5 Review and revise

The whole idea of a risk assessment is that it allows you to make a reasoned judgment as to whether an activity will cause harm or not.

So, every time you change a significant part of your business, you will need to review your risk assessment to identify if the change brings about any new hazards or to see if it increases the risk of an existing hazard.

**As a general rule you should always review your assessments:**

- after an accident or near miss has happened;
- before a young or inexperienced employee begins work;
- once a female member of staff tells you that they are pregnant or when a new mother returns to work; and
- during the work carried out by a specialist contractor such as removing asbestos, re-wiring and so on.

Even if nothing changes, it is still important to **review your risk assessments each year** as your staff may be doing something that you were unaware of. It will also act as a check to make sure that your existing controls are still working as effectively as you think they are.

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## Recording your assessment

**If you have five or more employees, you must record the significant findings of your assessments, usually within the arrangements section of your company's safety policy.**

No matter how many employees you have, it is good practice to record the findings of your assessments as it will become much easier to explain the hazards and risks to your staff and what action you expect them to take. It also shows your enforcement officer that you have taken your health and safety responsibilities seriously. See the template for risk assessment on page 13.

Once you have completed your assessments and decided on the control measures that you are going to put in place, it is good practice to record them in an action plan together with details of who will be responsible for them and a time limit for doing them. See the action plan template on page 14.

# Risk assessment

Company name: .....

Date: .....

Next review date: .....

Completed by: .....

Page: ..... of .....

Activity	Hazards	People exposed	How severe is it?	How likely is it?	Risk assessment

# Action plan template

Company name: .....

Action plan completed by: .....

Date: .....

Next review date: .....

Page: ..... of .....

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Hazards</b>	<b>Existing controls</b>	<b>Extra controls needed</b>	<b>By whom?</b>	<b>By when?</b>



## How do I develop a safety policy and put it into practice?

Now that you have carried out your risk assessments, you can develop your safety policy.

No matter how small your company, you will have certain arrangements, procedures or rules in place to make sure that accidents are prevented during the course of your day-to-day business.

It is good practice to record all of these details in a policy document.

**A documented safety policy is a legal requirement if you employ five or more people.**

The main aim is to:

- show your employees and others that you are committed to their health, safety and wellbeing;
- identify those who are responsible for making sure that health and safety matters are seen to; and
- explain in detail the arrangements that are in place to control the main hazards shown in your risk assessments.

The format of your policy should include the following.

### **1 General health and safety statement signed and dated by the owner or director in the business.**

There is no standard wording for this section. You can express your commitment to health and safety.

### **2 Details of your organisational structure and health and safety responsibilities.**

In this section, you should explain who does what within the business to make sure that your health and safety rules are put into practice. An organisational chart is a useful aid for this section. Start with the most senior person, and identify those people with specific health and safety tasks.

### **3 Details of the business's health and safety arrangements.**

This part of your policy should describe in detail how you control the risks associated with your business activities. The policy must cover all of your work sites and activities. It should describe the procedures that you have developed to reduce the risk of injury.

You must be as specific as possible. For example, there is no point in describing your safety rules for dealing with chemicals if you don't use chemicals.

*The sample policy given is only an example. The amount of detail you will need in your policy will depend on your business and your activities.*

## Example safety policy

### General statement

We aim to act as a good employer and to carry out our business activities in a way which will achieve the highest possible standard of health and safety for our employees, visitors and members of the public.

We see managing health and safety successfully as central to all our other business activities. All levels of management, including the Managing Director, consider it as important as sales and quality control.

All employees must co-operate to promote health and safety within the company. This may involve carrying out safety inspections or going to safety committee meetings.

### We plan to keep to all legal requirements and relevant codes of good practice. In particular we will:

- assess risks to all employees while at work;
- provide and maintain safe working conditions and equipment;
- provide instruction, information, training and supervision;
- provide suitable protective equipment where necessary;
- provide adequate resources; and
- keep training records.

### Each employee has a duty to co-operate by:

- taking reasonable care of their own and others' health and safety;
- keeping to company rules;
- reporting incidents or hazards which could lead to injury or damage;
- not interfering with anything provided to protect their health and safety; and
- using personal protective equipment provided.

Signed by business owner, managing director or chief executive:

Name: .....

Date: ..... Review date: .....

## Organisational responsibilities

### **The business owner, managing director or chief executive**

has overall responsibility for health and safety.

### **The general manager and assistant manager**

is responsible for making sure that the health and safety policy is put in place fully within the business's day-to-day activities.

### **The supervisor**

is responsible for looking after the first-aid box and carrying out the weekly health and safety inspections.

### **All employees must:**

- report faulty or damaged equipment, possible dangers and accidents or near misses;
- use the protective equipment provided; and
- keep to company rules.

## Arrangements

### **Consultation with employees**

Management will have regular health and safety meetings with employee representatives to consult on health and safety issues.

### **Training**

All employees will receive training to allow them to understand and keep to company policy and procedures. We have produced a separate training manual to make sure that enough training is delivered to all members of staff.

### **First aid**

The first-aid box is in the supervisor's office and the appointed first-aider is Jo Smith. If there is an accident, call the first-aider. Do not move the injured person until a first-aider has examined them. The supervisor is responsible for keeping the first-aid box stocked.

### **Reporting accidents**

We have provided an accident book and the manager must fill this in when an accident happens to staff, visitors or members of the public. You must keep a copy of the report form on the person's personnel record.

The manager must also report all deaths and serious accidents immediately to the enforcing authority and fill in a NI2508 form and send it to the enforcing authority within 10 days of the incident.

The manager must report accidents likely to result in an absence from work of more than three days to the appropriate enforcing authority using the NI2508 form. This must be done within 10 days of the incident happening.

### **Fire safety**

The manager will make sure that fire evacuation drills take place once every three months. They will also make sure that:

- fire exits are kept clear at all times;
- fire extinguishers are kept in their correct positions;
- fire extinguishers, fire alarms and emergency lighting are checked weekly; and
- all fire notices are displayed.

All employees should remove any obstructions to the emergency escape routes and report this to management.

## Arrangements

### Electrical safety

We must maintain all electrical equipment regularly and an electrical engineer will check this each year. Employees should report any faulty equipment and remove it. In particular, you should look out for:

- loose wires;
- trailing cables; and
- signs of overheating, for example, blackening around the plugs and socket outlets.

### Manual handling

We will train all employees in lifting techniques. You should keep to the following rules.

- Stand close to the load.
- Bend your knees and keep your back straight.
- Grasp the load firmly.
- Lift with your legs and not your back.
- Never lift a load that is too heavy – get help!

We have carried out a risk assessment for all manual-handling tasks.

### Safe storage

You should keep to the following rules.

- Inspect shelving regularly for damage.
- Do not climb on shelves.
- Do not load shelves with too much.
- Store heavy items at low levels.

### Stepladders

All stepladders will be inspected by the assistant manager every month. We will train all staff in using ladders correctly.

#### **Do not:**

- use faulty ladders;
- overreach while using a ladder; or
- stand a stepladder on a box or other unsteady base.

Make sure that the ladder is fully extended and locked in position. Use a ladder which allows you to gain access safely.

### Good housekeeping

Good housekeeping is essential to an effective safety programme and everyone has a responsibility to keep workplaces and toilets clean and tidy. We should keep gangways clear at all times.

### Drugs and alcohol

Our drugs and alcohol policy aims to protect and promote the health, wellbeing and safety of all staff and visitors by:

- making staff aware of how drugs and alcohol can affect them and their work performance;
- allowing staff to recognise a problem at its earliest stage;
- identifying sources of help and support for colleagues with drug or alcohol problems; and
- encouraging staff with problems to get help.

*This is only a summary of a policy. The examples above are only a sample.  
You may need to include separate detailed procedures for each area.*



# Vulnerable groups

There are many groups of people at work who you should pay special attention to, to make sure that you maintain high standards of health and safety at all times.

## New and expectant mothers

There are specific laws that say you must protect the health, safety and welfare of new and expectant mothers as there are many risks that may affect their health and safety and that of their unborn child. Working conditions considered acceptable beforehand may no longer be so during pregnancy and while breast-feeding. These risks will vary depending on the employee's health and at different stages of their pregnancy.

As an employer you should carry out a specific risk assessment, taking account of any advice the employee has been given from their GP or midwife. Some of the more common hazards might be:

- lifting or carrying heavy loads;
- standing or sitting for long periods of time;
- being exposed to infectious diseases;
- work-related stress;
- workstations and posture;
- other people's smoke in the workplace;
- long working hours; and
- working with chemicals.

Wherever possible, you should remove these hazards. If this is not possible, you should adjust the working conditions such as hours of work, or the duties of the employee.

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## Disabled workers

As an employer you can make reasonable adjustments within the workplace for disabled workers. Some adjustments which could be considered reasonable are:

- providing suitable fire-evacuation procedures;
- allowing time off for rehabilitation, assessment or treatment;
- buying or modifying equipment;
- adjusting the premises or workstations;
- providing a reader or interpreter; and
- providing appropriate toilet facilities.

You must also make sure that the services you provide are accessible to everyone and that any physical features of the building do not make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to get in (for example, steps at the entrance of a building).

***You can find more information in 'Balancing Disability Rights & Health & Safety Requirements – A guide for employers'. You can get this from:***

***The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, 7-9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast BT2 7DP.  
Phone: 028 9050 0600 or go to [www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org)***

***Or, contact Disability Action, Portside Business Park, 189 Airport Rd., Belfast, BT3 9ED.  
Phone: 028 9029 7880 or go to: [www.disabilityaction.org](http://www.disabilityaction.org)***

***Or, you can contact HSENI, 83 Ladas Drive, Belfast. BT6 9FR.  
Helpline: 0800 0320 121 or go to: [www.hseni.gov.uk](http://www.hseni.gov.uk)***



## Young workers

A **young person** is anyone above minimum school leaving age (they have to be 16 years old at the end of the school year) and under 18.

**A child is anyone under the minimum school leaving age and there are restrictions on the type of work they may do and for how long. You can get more information from your local education and library board.**

As an employer you must assess and control the risks to young workers before they start work. You must take account of the fact that young workers are inexperienced, unaware of health and safety risks and may be physically or mentally immature.

You may need extra control measures to make sure that you remove or reduce hazards to the lowest possible level.

A structured training programme with close supervision is very important for young workers while they are developing and learning new skills.

Keep a record of the findings of the risk assessment and provide a copy to the parents or guardians of any students and employees below minimum school leaving age.

**You should protect young workers from work which is beyond their physical and mental ability or work which involves being exposed to hazardous substances, extreme hot or cold, noise or vibration unless it is part of their training.**

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## People with communication difficulties

People whose second language is English or people with learning disabilities or literacy issues may be vulnerable at work due to language difficulties. This can affect all areas of health and safety including training, instruction and in developing and putting into practice safe systems of work.

It is important to make sure that:

- employees can understand all health and safety messages that you are giving them. (This may involve a translator or a trainer who speaks clearly to communicate the message);
- all warning signs or posters have pictures to communicate the message rather than depending on written warning signs;
- you use simple plain English where you need to give written instructions; and
- you provide appropriate supervision.



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## Temporary workers

You may employ temporary workers, for example, agency workers or staff on short-term contracts for a variety of reasons, for example, to cover for permanent employees who are off sick or on holiday, or to cope with seasonal increases in workload. Temporary workers are an important safety management issue because they are unfamiliar with the workplace and company rules. And, they are on site for a limited time.

As an employer who uses temporary staff you must:

- give all temporary staff information about the risks to their health and safety, the measures taken to prevent or control these risks and the action that they should take in an emergency;
- make sure that all temporary staff have the appropriate experience and skills to carry out the job safely; and
- provide appropriate training and keep appropriate records.

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## People working alone

Some people work by themselves without close or direct supervision. These employees are more vulnerable and cannot get help if an accident happens. Examples of situations where people may work by themselves include:

- working in separate or isolated areas of a larger premises, for example, warehouses and cold stores;
- working outside normal working hours, for example, security staff and cleaners;
- service workers, for example, postal staff, home helps, estate agents; and
- driving while at work, for example, sales reps and delivery personnel.

It is your duty to assess risks to people working alone and take steps to avoid or control the risk where necessary. Below are examples.

- Get rid of the need to work alone.
- Identify situations where working alone is not appropriate, for example, in confined spaces.
- If working alone cannot be avoided, reduce the risk by introducing a policy which should provide information, instruction and training to employees. This may include:
  - personal safety training;
  - a programmed schedule of work or 'check-in' system throughout the day;
  - a mobile phone and charger to make sure you can contact them at all times; and
  - a first-aid kit and basic first-aid training.



# Managing accidents and emergencies

## Preventing accidents

Accidents don't just happen. There is always a reason for them. You need to plan and control everything that is done in the workplace so that accidents don't happen. Remember that one serious accident could cost you your business!

Accidents mainly happen because of:

- poor management;
- poor working practices;
- dangerous machinery and equipment;
- lack of training; and
- the poor attitude of employers and employees.

The first step to preventing accidents is to carry out a risk assessment described earlier in this pack. You will then need to take action to control the risks that you have identified. For example, you could:

- add a guard to a dangerous machine;
- use a less hazardous chemical;
- put together a safe system of work;
- train staff; or, as a last resort,
- provide personal protective equipment (PPE).

## Monitoring and investigating accidents

You must be made aware of all accidents and near misses (an incident which had the potential to cause harm) so that you can identify the hazard and take the steps needed to prevent it from happening again.

Make employees aware of who they should report accidents and near misses to. Make sure that this person records the details in an accident book. Investigate the circumstances and recommend appropriate action to be taken.

You can buy accident books from:

### The Stationery Office

16 Arthur Street  
Belfast  
BT1 4GD

Phone: 028 9023 8451  
Website: [www.tsoshop.co.uk](http://www.tsoshop.co.uk)



Research shows that for every accident resulting in a major injury, there were 29 resulting in minor injuries and 300 with no injuries.



## Reporting injuries, diseases and dangerous events (see note 3 below).

It is good practice to record, in your accident book, the details of all work-related accidents. However, you may need to report some of these to the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland, HSENI (see below) or your local district council. (See page 42 for contact details.)

By law you must do the following.

**You must report immediately, by phone,** any accident or incident connected with work which results in:

- a death or major injury (see the examples below) to your employee or self-employed person working on your premises;
- a member of the public being taken to hospital from your premises; or
- a dangerous event. This could include:
  - part of a building collapsing;
  - gas storage containers exploding or a pressure system failing;
  - a fire or explosion which stops your business for more than 24 hours; and
  - a lift or other lifting equipment (for example a fork lift truck collapsing).



### Report in writing.

Within 10 days of the incident you must report it on a NI2508 form to (see page 24 for an example of the form which you can download from [www.hseni.gov.uk](http://www.hseni.gov.uk)):

- confirm any phone report you made;
- let your local enforcement authority know about an accident which results in a member of staff being away from work for more than three days (see below for a further explanation).

You must report, using a NI2508A form, diseases (see the examples below) confirmed in writing by a doctor, arising from specific types of work.

### Major injury

- Broken bone (except fingers and toes)
- Dislocation of the shoulder, hip, knee or spine
- Loss of sight or serious injury to an eye
- Loss of consciousness caused by electric shock, lack of oxygen or being exposed to a hazardous substance
- Amputation
- If a person needs to be resuscitated.

**HSENI**  
**83 Ladas Drive Belfast BT6 9FR,**  
**Northern Ireland**

Phone: 028 9024 3249

Textphone: 028 9054 6896

Fax: 028 9023 5383

E-mail: [hzeni@detini.gov.uk](mailto:hzeni@detini.gov.uk)

### Over three-day injury

- This is an injury that results in the injured person being away from work or unable to do their normal work for more than three days (including weekends or other non-work days) such as strains and sprains. It also includes acts of physical violence to an employee at work.

### Occupational disease

- Hand-arm vibration syndrome
- Occupational asthma
- Dermatitis is a skin disease which is caused by a person coming in contact with a hazardous substance.

<sup>3</sup> In the regulations events are referred to as occurrences.

Filling in this form

This form must be filled in by an employer or other responsible person.

**Part A**

- About you
- 1 What is your full name?
  - 2 What is your job title?
  - 3 What is your telephone number?

About your organisation

- 4 What is the name of your organisation?
- 5 What is its address and postcode?
- 6 What type of work does the organisation do?

**Part B**

- About the incident
- 1 On what date did the incident happen?
  - 2 At what time did the incident happen? (Please use the 24-hour clock eg 0600)
  - 3 Did the incident happen at the above address? Yes  No  Go to question 4

- Where did the incident happen?
- elsewhere in your organisation - give the name, address and postcode
- at someone else's premises - give the name, address and postcode
- in a public place -- give details of where it happened

If you do not know the postcode, what is the name of the local authority?

- 4 In which department, or where on the premises, did the incident happen?

**Part C**

About the injured person  
If you are reporting a dangerous occurrence, go to Part F.  
If more than one person was injured in the same incident. Please attach the details asked for in Part C and Part D for each injured person.

- 1 What is their full name?
- 2 What is their address and postcode?
- 3 What is their home phone number?
- 4 How old are they?
- 5 Are they  male?  female?
- 6 What is their job title?

- 7 Was the injured person (tick only one box)  one of your employees?  on a training scheme? Give details:

- on work experience?
- employed by someone else? Give details of the employer:

- self-employed and at work?
- a member of the public?

**Part D**

- About the injury
- 1 What was the injury? (eg fracture, laceration)
  - 2 What part of the body was injured?

- 3 Was the injury (tick the one box that applies)  a fatality?  a major injury or condition? (see accompanying notes)

- an injury to an employee or self-employed person which prevented them doing their normal work for more than 3 days?
- an injury to a member of the public which meant they had to be taken from the scene of the accident to a hospital for treatment?
- 4 Did the injured person (tick all the boxes that apply)  become unconscious?  need resuscitation?  remain in hospital for more than 24 hours?  none of the above.

**Part E**

About the kind of accident  
Please tick the one box that best describes what happened, then go to Part G.

- Contact with moving machinery or material being machined
- Hit by a moving, flying or falling object
- Hit by a moving vehicle
- Hit something fixed or stationary
- Injured while handling, lifting or carrying
- Slipped, tripped or fell on the same level
- Fell from a height  metres
- How high was the fall?

- Trapped by something collapsing
- Drowned or asphyxiated
- Exposed to, or in contact with, a harmful substance
- Exposed to fire
- Exposed to an explosion
- Contact with electricity or an electrical discharge
- Injured by an animal
- Physically assaulted by a person
- Another kind of accident (describe it in Part G)

**Part F**

Dangerous occurrences  
Enter the number of the dangerous occurrence you are reporting. (The numbers are given in the Regulations and in the notes which accompany this form).

For official use  
Client number  Local number  Event number

**Part G**  
Describing what happened

- Give as much details as you can. For instance
- the name of any substances involved
  - the name and type of any machine involved
  - the events that led to the incident
  - the part played by any people

If it was personal injury, give details of what the person was doing. Describe any action that has since been taken to prevent similar incident. Use a separate piece of paper if you need to.

**Part H**

Your Signature

Signature

Date

**Where to send the form**

Please send it to the Enforcing Authority for the place where it happened. If you do not know the Enforcing Authority, send it to the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland, 83 Ladas Drive, Belfast BT6 9FR

For official use  
Client number  Local number  Event number

IVP REP  Y  N



## First aid and emergencies

### Emergency plans

You need to plan for emergency situations such as accidents, fires, bomb alerts, chemical spillages, and so on.

Once in place, you must let all staff know about the emergency plan by training them in the correct procedures to follow. In other words:

- how to raise the alarm;
- what to do, for example, how to call the emergency services;
- how to leave the building safely;
- how to evacuate visitors safely;
- where to assemble in an emergency;
- the names of first aiders and people in control; and
- essential action to take such as shutting down equipment in an emergency.

### First aid

*It is important that you can provide first-aid at all times to people who are at work. Accidents or ill health, such as a heart attack, can happen at any time.*

First-aid treatment can save lives and can also help someone to recover more quickly after an accident.

**The minimum first aid you should provide in any workplace is shown below.**

- **An appointed person** who is responsible for taking charge of the first-aid arrangements, for example, to call an ambulance and to look after first-aid equipment.
- **A suitably stocked first-aid box.** It is important to let your staff know where all first-aid equipment is kept; and
- the name of the appointed person or first-aiders. You should display this information at suitable places throughout the premises.

**It is important to record the details of all first-aid treatment given.**

You can use this information to identify accident trends and possible areas for improvement in controlling health and safety risks. You can also use it to help with future first-aid assessments.

There is no set list of contents for a first-aid box as the contents should be based on an assessment of first-aid needs. The following list suggests a minimum stock of first-aid items.

- A leaflet giving general guidance on first aid at work
- Twenty individually wrapped sterile adhesive dressings (assorted sizes)
- Four individually wrapped triangular bandages (preferably sterile)
- Two sterile eye pads
- Six safety pins
- Six medium-sized (about 12cm x 12cm) individually wrapped sterile unmedicated wound dressings
- Two large-sized (about 18cm x 18 cm) individually wrapped unmedicated sterile wound dressings
- Sterile water (if mains tap water is not readily available)
- One pair of disposable gloves.

You should not keep tablets or medicines in the first-aid box.

You may need other items depending on your first-aid assessment. For example, if there is a risk of chemicals coming into contact with a person, you may need facilities such as an eyebath, face wash or shower.



## What you provide

You need to assess what first-aid you need to provide to see what first-aid equipment or facilities you need. It will depend on the type of business you are in and the hazards that are present. However, all businesses including self-employed people, need first-aid provision. The number of trained first-aiders will depend on the nature of the work, the number of employees and the size of the workplace and where it is.

- In small, lower-risk environments such as offices and shops, you may only need the minimum first-aid provision shown on page 25.
- For larger or high-risk premises you may need to provide suitably trained first-aiders.

The table below gives some guidance on the number of trained first-aiders that you would need.

Type of workplace and number of employees	Suggested numbers of first-aid staff
<b>Lower risk</b> for example, shops, offices, libraries and so on.	
Fewer than 50	At least one appointed person
50 to 100	At least one first-aid-er
More than 100	One extra first-aid-er for every 100 you employ
<b>Medium risk</b> for example, light engineering, assembly work, food processing or warehousing.	
Fewer than 20	At least one appointed person
20 to 100	At least one first-aid-er for every 50 you employ
More than 100	One extra first-aid-er for every 100 employed
<b>Higher risk</b> for example, construction, manufacturing, extensive work with dangerous machinery or sharp instruments.	
Fewer than five	At least one appointed person
5 to 50	At least one first-aid-er
More than 50	One extra first-aid-er for every 50 you employ
You may need more first-aid staff than set out above. You may need to provide more to cover staff absences or special circumstances such as shift work or sites with several separate buildings or if you are based a long way from emergency medical service.	

## Training appointed people

In small firms where the assessment shows you do not need a fully-qualified first-aid-er, it makes sense to train the appointed person in the basics of first aid – resuscitation, controlling bleeding and treating an unconscious patient.

## Other information

You can get a list of all first-aid training providers registered with the Employment Medical Advisory Service (EMAS) from the HSENI website at [www.hseni.gov.uk](http://www.hseni.gov.uk) or by phoning 028 9040 8004.

# The working environment

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There are many different types of workplaces including factories, offices, shops, vehicles and the outdoors. In general, if you keep to the following guidance, we would normally consider that you have kept to the law. However, you should carry out an assessment for your workplace.

**Temperature** Inside workplaces you should provide a comfortable working temperature of at least 16°C, or 13°C if the job involves physical effort.

- If people work outside or in a cold environment, such as cold stores, and you cannot achieve a suitable working temperature, you must provide suitable protective clothing such as thermal clothing, waterproof coats and so on.
- If people work in a hot environment such as a bakery, you should try to achieve a reasonable working temperature. If this is not possible, you must provide adequate breaks, clean drinking water and suitable personal protective clothing such as light cotton overalls.

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**Lighting** There must be enough lighting to allow work to be carried out safely and without risk of eyestrain. We would recommend natural light if possible, but you may need to use artificial lighting as well. You must maintain all lighting.

**The types of artificial lighting you can use are:**

- general – strip lighting which can cover large work areas;
- localised – uplighters in smaller work areas;
- specific – spotlights which shine directly on a machine part or for close, detailed work; and
- outdoor lighting – for traffic routes used by pedestrians which need to be lit after dark for both safety and security reasons.

**Emergency lighting**

You must provide emergency lighting on fire-evacuation routes and if a person would be in danger if the artificial lighting failed, for example, at a dangerous machine.

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**Ventilation** Every enclosed workplace must be able to be ventilated with enough fresh or purified air. You can achieve this in the following ways.

- **Natural ventilation** – such as through windows or openings. If this is not possible or you need to add to the natural ventilation, consider the following.
- **General mechanical ventilation** – such as fans or air-conditioning systems.
- **Specific ventilation** – think about specific extraction systems in workplaces if you need to reduce dust, for example, wood dust, flour dust or fumes, for example, welding fumes. A competent person must maintain all specific ventilation systems regularly (at least every 14 months).



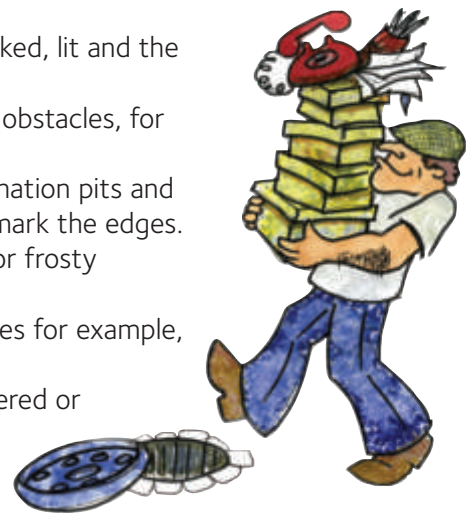
**Housekeeping** You must regularly clean premises, furniture, floors, steps, walkways and equipment, keep it well-maintained and tidy to help prevent accidents such as slips, trips and falls and to reduce the risk of fire. You must:

- provide suitable bins and clear waste and rubbish regularly;
- provide suitable cleaning equipment and cleaning materials and make sure that spillages are cleaned up immediately and warning notices are used during cleaning operations; and
- provide enough storage for cleaning materials. You should store those that are hazardous to health, for example, bleach, in a well-ventilated and locked store with clear signs.

## Floors and gangways

A major percentage of workplace accidents are due to slips, trips and falls (75% of all reported injuries at work). We recommend the following precautions.

- Keep floors clear, clean, dry and maintained.
- Make sure gangways and walkways are well marked, lit and the edging is defined.
- You should clearly mark steps, corners and fixed obstacles, for example, with black and yellow diagonal stripes.
- Keep floor openings, for example, vehicle-examination pits and trap doors covered when not in use and clearly mark the edges.
- Salt, sand and sweep outdoor routes during icy or frosty conditions.
- Make sure there is good drainage in wet processes for example, food-preparation rooms.
- Keep electrical cables and trailing leads tidy, covered or taped down.
- Provide proper footwear if necessary.



## Working at height

If anyone is working at height, they should do so from a platform with suitable protection at the edge. Occasionally this may not be possible and a ladder may have to be used. However, ladders are best used as a way of getting to a workplace. They should only be used as a workplace for light work which will not take long.

When deciding what equipment to use, think about what the job includes, how long it will last and where it needs to be done. It is tempting to use a ladder for all sorts of work but you should always consider a working platform first, for example, a properly erected mobile scaffold tower or a mobile elevated working platform (MEWP).

Jobs such as removing or installing guttering, installing replacement windows, or painting should usually be carried out from scaffolds or mobile-access equipment.

## Noise

Being exposed to high levels of noise such as from a jack hammer or loud music, can cause permanent hearing damage. Noise from machines and radios playing can also cause distractions and make communicating difficult. **You must decide if there is a noise problem** – Do people have to shout to be heard when standing less than two metres away? If the answer is yes you will need to have the noise levels assessed by a competent person. You must take appropriate action to reduce the levels and keep a record of the results.



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**Transport** Moving delivery vehicles and forklift trucks around premises and buildings accounts for a large percentage of accidents, for example, hitting people, other vehicles and overturning. We recommend the following precautions.

- Separate vehicles and people, for example, by using clearly marked, well-planned pedestrian and vehicle traffic routes both indoors and outdoors.
- Create a one-way traffic system if possible.
- Try to get rid of the need for large vehicles to reverse.
- Employ someone to supervise the vehicles.
- Display appropriate signs, for example, speed limits, customer parking, travel direction and so on.
- Fit warning lights and warning signals that can be heard, to vehicles where appropriate.
- Make sure only trained and authorised drivers use forklift trucks and other work vehicles.
- Do not leave keys in the ignition of vehicles when unattended.
- Restrict access to dangerous areas such as loading and unloading bays.
- Make sure surfaces over which vehicles pass are even.
- Check vehicles regularly and make sure you keep them properly maintained.
- Give visitors information and instructions, for example, on parking arrangements, signing in at reception.
- Provide suitable high-visibility clothing for people working in high-risk areas.

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**Mobile phones** Mobile phones are often used at work. They can have benefits for safety, efficiency and convenience of employers and staff. However, it is illegal under road traffic laws to use a hand-held mobile phone while driving. You should tell your employees about your policy on using hands-free kits.

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**Welfare facilities**

- You should provide toilet facilities for all staff including toilets for disabled people. These should be kept well ventilated, clean, and in working order. You must provide a wash basin close to every toilet. The basin must have hot and cold (or warm) running water, soap and towels.
- Provide an area for eating and drinking with a way of preparing or getting a hot drink, for example, provide a kettle or a vending machine.
- If it is not possible to buy hot food, on or nearby the premises, you should provide a way of heating food, for example, a microwave oven.
- Provide changing areas with lockers or hanging space for work or casual clothing.
- Provide clean drinking water either tap or bottled.
- You should also provide rest facilities for pregnant and nursing mothers.



## Electricity

Electricity is used each day in all workplaces. However, it can severely burn, injure, kill or cause devastating fires.

**Electricity has its own particular risks – the two main risks are shown below.**

**Electric shocks** – When electricity passes through the body it causes shocks, burns and can kill.

**Fires and explosions** – About 22% of all workplace fires are started by electrical appliances.

### How can I prevent electrical accidents from happening?

#### General safety

- Know the age, condition, operating voltage and suitability of the electrical system in your premises. Make sure it is soundly built and that it has been properly installed. A competent person, such as a qualified electrician, should check it regularly (at least every five years or at shorter intervals as recommended by the Institution of Engineering and Technology. You can find more information on their website at [www.theiet.org](http://www.theiet.org)).
- Keep switchboards, fuse boards and other dangerous parts of the system in a locked room or cupboard. Make sure that a responsible person holds the key to prevent unauthorised access.
- Make sure fuses are properly identified, rated and clearly labelled.
- Provide enough socket outlets to prevent overloading and the need to use adaptors.
- Choose equipment, including portable electrical appliances, which are suited to the working environment, especially if they might get damaged or wet or they are in a potentially explosive environment.
- When using an electrical supply outside, make sure that external cables are properly rated and protected against damage. Protect against the risk of shock by fitting a 30-milliamp residual current device (RCD) to the supply outside.
- Highlight to staff the dangers of using electricity in the workplace and show them how to switch the power off in case of an emergency.

#### User checks

If you carry out regular visual inspections of portable electrical equipment before it is used, you can find 95% of faults and damage. Train your staff to disconnect equipment at the switch and look for:

- damage, for example, cuts, splits or severe rubbing to the outer casing (sheath) of the cable;
- damage to the plug, for example, the casing is cracked or the pins are bent;
- make-do repairs and connections, for example, taped joints in the cable;
- damage to the casing of the equipment or obviously loose parts or screws;
- overheating in other words, a burning smell or burn marks on the casing, cable, plug or the socket from which the equipment was disconnected; and
- the cable not being properly gripped where it enters the plug or equipment. Look to see if the coloured insulation of the wires inside are showing.

If faults or damage are found or reported – remove the faulty item from use and clearly label it “**Do not use**” until it has been properly repaired and inspected by a competent person.



## Combined inspection and testing, portable appliance testing programme. (PAT) testing

You will not pick up all faults during a visual inspection and some portable equipment will need a PAT test by someone who has been trained and competent to do so, such as a qualified electrician.

When you carry out the PAT testing will depend on the equipment, the wear and tear it receives and where you use it. For example, an angle grinder with a metal body, which is used outdoors and is frequently dropped or damaged needs more frequent testing than a plastic bodied, double-insulated computer that is rarely moved from its office environment.

The following table gives **suggested** intervals for user and PAT checks.

### Suggested maintenance intervals

Type of business	User checks	Formal visual inspection	Combined inspection and test
Equipment hire	Does not apply	Before it is issued and after it is returned	Before issue
Construction	110V - every week  230V mains – Every day of every shift	110V - every month  230V mains - every week	110V - Before it is first used on the site, then every three months  230V mains - Before first used on site then every month
Light industrial	Yes	Before it is first used then every six months	Every six to 12 months
Heavy industrial equipment with a high risk of equipment damage	Every day	Every week	Every six to 12 months
Office information technology, for example desktop computer, photocopier, fax machines	No	Every one to two years	None if double-insulated, otherwise up to five years
Double-insulated equipment not hand-held for example, fans and table lamps	No	Every two to three years	No
Hand-held, double-insulated (class II)	Yes	Every six months to a year	No
Earthed (class I) equipment, electric kettles, some floor cleaners	Yes	Every six months to a year	Every one to two years
Equipment used by the public, for example, in hotels	By member of staff	Every three months	Every year
Cables and plugs and extension leads	Yes	Every year	Every two years

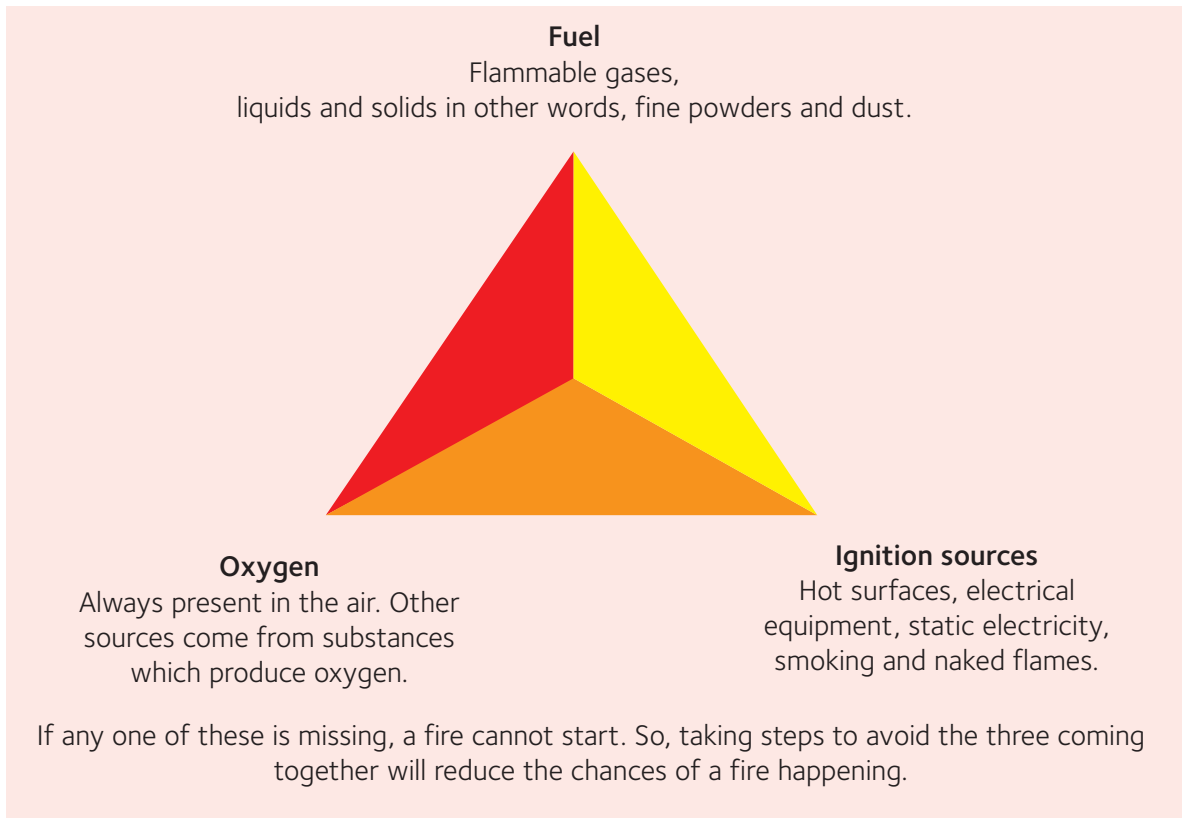
**You should keep records of all maintenance and inspections on file.**



## Fire

### The fire triangle

For a fire to start, the three things in the triangle below are needed.



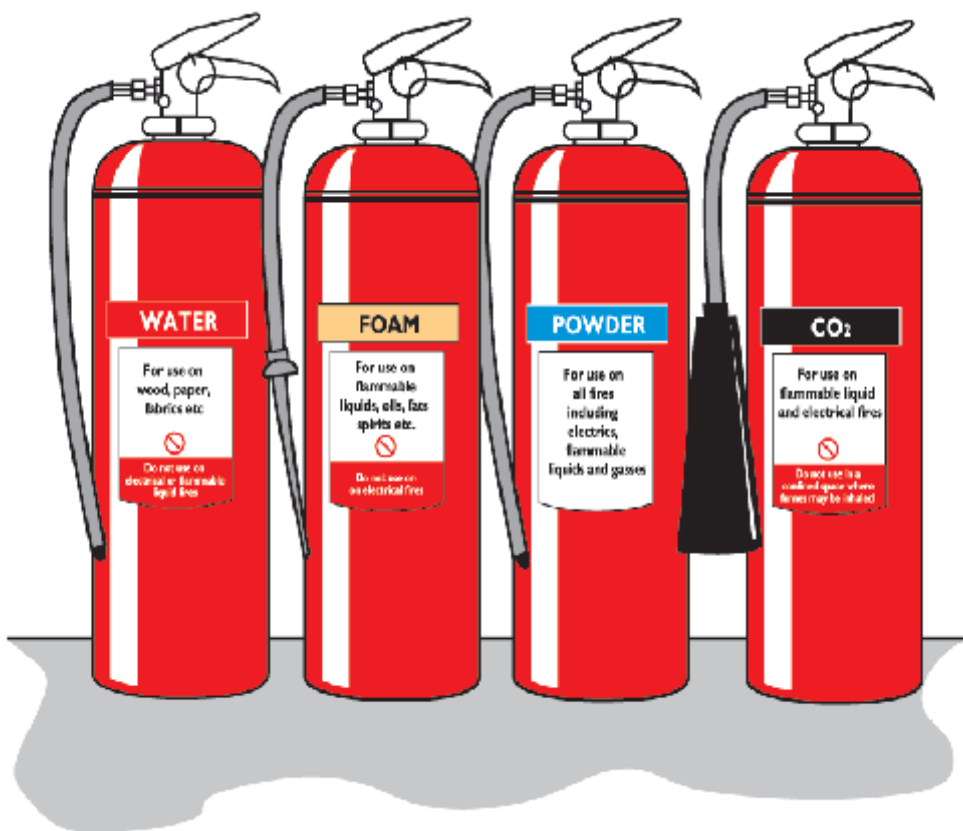
### 1 Prevent a fire from starting

- Keep work areas clean and tidy.
- Get rid of waste regularly.
- Store goods and equipment tidily.
- Keep electric lamps and light bulbs away from items which can catch fire (for example, by not stacking goods too high).
- Regularly inspect and repair any worn or damaged electrical equipment or wiring. A qualified electrical contractor should carry out inspections regularly.
- Secure any portable electrical heaters so that they cannot fall over.
- Never put items such as books, papers or clothing over heaters or ventilation openings on equipment.
- Develop a system for checking work areas at the end of the day, for example, checking that equipment is switched off.
- Have a smoking policy. Make sure that smoking is not allowed in areas where flammable material is stored.
- Prevent a build-up of dust, grease or oil around equipment.
- If you use flammable substances, keep them in their proper storage containers and store these in a fire-resistant cabinet or a fire-resisting store for larger quantities.
- Make sure that you service liquefied petroleum gas appliances regularly and that you store or install cylinders outside in a well-ventilated area.
- Make sure you provide good ventilation to areas where flammable vapours or dust may be created, for example, during welding or battery-charging operations.



## 2 Prevent a fire from spreading

- Keep fire doors closed – if fire doors are on automatic door-release units, make sure they are not obstructed.
- Make sure that any smoke detectors, sprinkler systems and so on are well maintained.
- Check that fire dampers in ventilation ducting and extraction hoods operate efficiently.
- Think before carrying out any alterations to your premises (let your local Building Control Service know).
- Have enough fire extinguishers of the right type to deal promptly with small outbreaks of fire.
- Have the extinguishers serviced each year and keep them in prominent positions and near high-risk activities, for example, welding.



### Fire extinguishers and their colour

**Water**  
red extinguisher

**Foam**  
red with a cream band

**Powder**  
red with a blue band

**Gas (carbon dioxide)**  
red with a black band

## 3 Make sure everyone can get out safely

- Everyone must know what to do in a fire. Create an emergency procedure and have drills regularly.
- Display fire action instructions.
- Make sure staff know how to raise the alarm.
- Make sure fire escape routes and doors are clearly marked and are kept clear at all times.
- Make sure you provide and maintain emergency lighting.
- Fire-escape doors must be able to be opened easily from inside whenever anyone is on the premises.
- Make sure you check and maintain fire-alarm systems.

**Never underestimate fire. What may appear to be a small fire can spread rapidly throughout the building, producing intense heat, smoke and toxic fumes which can kill in minutes. Even if nobody is injured, the damage caused can close a business.**



# Workplace health

## Drugs and alcohol

Any business, however small, can take practical steps to reduce, as far as possible, the risks associated with inappropriate drinking or drug misuse.

You should have a drugs and alcohol section within your health and safety policy. You may also need disciplinary procedures if the problem carries on or interferes with the health and safety of your employees or anyone or anything within the workplace.

If you fail to manage drug and alcohol misuse, it can affect your business through:

- loss of productivity;
- lateness and time off;
- safety concerns;
- effect on team morale and employee relations;
- bad behaviour or poor discipline; or
- poor company image and customer relations.

Signs of substance misuse may include:

- sudden mood changes;
- unusual irritability or aggression;
- impaired job performance;
- poor timekeeping;
- increased short-term sickness absence; or
- absence after having been paid.

### Think about communication and training

- How will current staff and any recruited in the future know your rules about alcohol and substance misuse?
- Does anyone need more information or training?

Supervisors and other managers need to be clear about company rules and what to do if they believe an employee's drinking or substance misuse is affecting their work. You may think about encouraging those with a problem to get help.

For more information contact the *Employment Medical Advisory Service (EMAS)*, Avenue House, 42/44 Rosemary Street, Belfast BT1 1QE. Phone: 028 9040 8004.

## Smoking

All employers have a general duty to provide a safe and healthy workplace. If you have not assessed the risk posed by smoking in the workplace and put together a policy to deal with it, you would find it difficult to prove that you had met that duty.

You should have a written policy on smoking in the workplace and make it available to all staff and visitors. (It is best to draft this policy by consulting employees and to give a suitable lead-in time for putting the policy into practice).

If you have set aside smoking areas in your policy, they should be well away from flammable materials and be easily identified for use. You should provide fire resistant waste bins or sand bins in the smoking area.

You should let all your employees know the rules about smoking in the workplace and the consequences of smoking in unauthorised areas.

For more information, contact *The Health Promotion Agency*, 18 Ormeau Avenue, Belfast BT2 8HS. Phone: 028 9031 1611.





## Hazardous substances

Hazardous substances are used in nearly all businesses across all industry sectors, for example, in catering, construction, hairdressing, engineering and so on.

As an employer you should identify all substances used and found within the workplace such as dust, liquids or fumes and assess them to see if they could cause ill health (for example, dermatitis, asthma, cancer, and so on). You may find information that can help you on the safety data sheet or you may need to get specialist advice. You can get 'safety data' sheets from your supplier. You need to keep a copy on file.

**Hazardous substances are normally labelled, for example, toxic, very toxic, corrosive, irritant or harmful.**

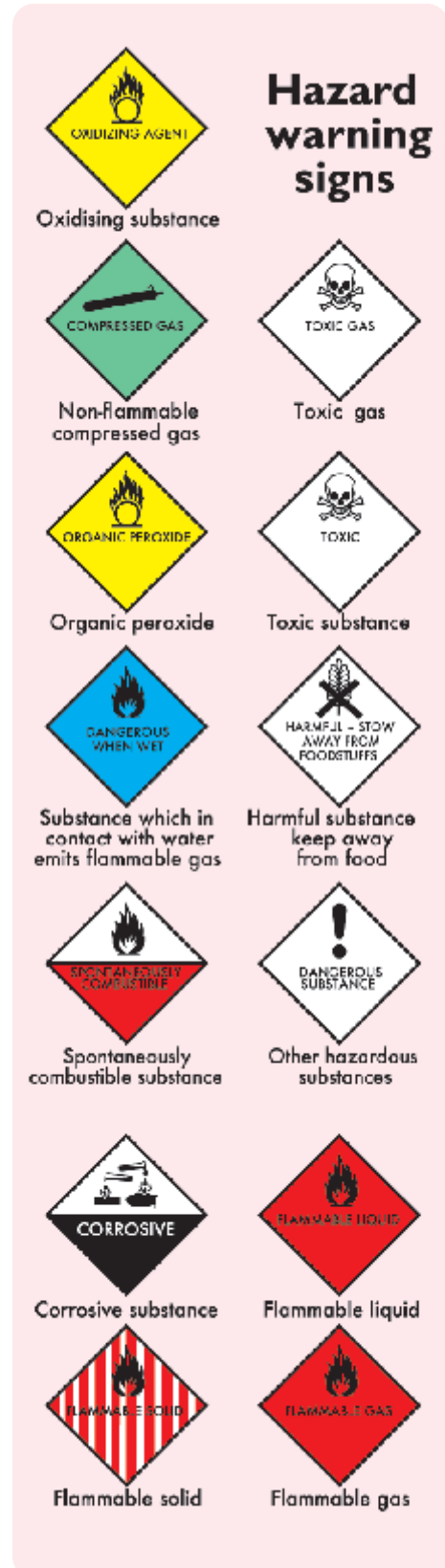
If it is practical to do so, you should stop using the product. If this is not possible, consider:

- changing the process or activity so that you do not need the hazardous substance or it is not produced;
- replacing it with a safer alternative; or
- using it in a safer form, for example, as a pellet instead of powder.

### Control exposure

If prevention is not reasonably possible, you must control exposure. You should consider and put in place measures appropriate to the activity and consistent with the risk assessment, including, in order of priority, one or more of the following.

- Use appropriate work processes, systems and engineering controls, and provide suitable work equipment and materials. For example, use processes which reduce, as far as possible, the amount of material used or produced, or equipment which totally encloses the process.
- Control any exposure at the source (for example, local extraction), and reduce the number of employees exposed, the level of their exposure, and the quantity of hazardous substances used or produced in the workplace.
- Provide personal protective equipment (for example, face masks, respirators, protective clothing), but only as a last resort and never to replace other control measures which are needed.





## Stress

Stress is a reaction people have to too much pressure or other types of demand placed on them. People cope with pressure differently. However, stress can affect anyone, no matter what type of job they are in. So it is not confined to any occupational group and can happen in all types of workplace.

There is an important difference between pressure and stress. Pressure can be a motivating factor, encouraging improved performance. However, stress can lead to reduced performance, absenteeism and poor morale. While stress is not an illness, too much pressure can cause mental and physical health problems such as anxiety, insomnia, depression and high blood pressure. A lack of concentration can also lead to accidents.

Research shows that the significant causes of workplace stress relate to organisational issues. It is your responsibility to carry out a five-step risk assessment to identify hazards and assess who might be at risk.

- Step 1** Identify the hazards. You can group the main factors causing stress into six areas. (See the following table). If you do not manage these effectively in your business, your staff are at risk of suffering from work-related stress. There are several different ways of helping you identify if there is a problem with work-related stress in your workplace, such as informal talks to staff, performance appraisals, information on sickness absence and staff turnover. While doing this, remember to respect staff confidentially.
- Step 2** Decide who might be harmed and how. At particular times, your staff may be more vulnerable to work-related stress. For example, those who have a domestic crisis such as a bereavement.
- Step 3** Evaluate the risk and see the following table.
- Step 4** If you employ five or more employees, you must record the significant findings of the assessment and share them with your employees.
- Step 5** Review the assessment at appropriate intervals.



The main factors causing stress	Principles of management standards
<p><b>Demands</b> – such as workload and the work environment.</p>	<p>Ensure there are enough resources to do the work. Strike a balance and make sure that employees are not overloaded or underloaded. Give your staff suitable training to do their jobs. Assess the risk of physical violence and verbal abuse and take appropriate steps to deal with it.</p>
<p><b>Control</b> – how much say the person has in the way they do their work.</p>	<p>Give more control to staff by allowing them to have a say in planning their own work and breaks. Encourage employees to develop their skills and help them carry out new and challenging pieces of work.</p>
<p><b>Support</b> – includes encouraging staff and providing resources.</p>	<p>Support and encourage staff, even when things go wrong. Offer support such as coaching or emotional support. Listen to your staff and agree a course of action for tackling any problems. Employees know how to get the resources to do their job. Involve your staff. Encourage a healthy ‘work-life balance’.</p>
<p><b>Relationships</b> – covering issues such as bullying and harassment.</p>	<p>Work with staff to make sure that bullying and harassment are never an issue. Have disciplinary and grievance procedures in place to deal with unacceptable behaviour. Value difference – don’t discriminate against people for any reason.</p>
<p><b>Role</b> – whether the individual understands their role in the organisation, and whether you make sure that the person does not have conflicting roles.</p>	<p>Make sure your staff have clear roles. Make sure that new members of staff receive a thorough induction to your organisation. If your organisation has gone through change, check with staff to make sure they understand their new roles.</p>
<p><b>Change</b> – how organisational change is managed and communicated in the organisation.</p>	<p>Explain what the organisation wants to achieve and why it is essential that the change takes place. Communicate new developments quickly to staff. Give staff the opportunity to comment and ask questions.</p>

You can get more information on Management Standards and guidelines on work-related stress on HSE’s website at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)



## Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs)

MSDs are the most common workplace illness in Northern Ireland, affecting around 31,400 people every year. Work-related upper-limb disorders (WRULDs) and manual-handling injuries are two specific types of MSDs experienced by workers. They affect the muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves and other soft tissues and joints, with the back, neck and upper limbs being at most risk.

### Work-related upper-limb disorders (WRULDs)

Many employees, including assemblers, supermarket checkout assistants and keyboard operators are affected by upper-limb disorders at some point in their working lives. The term covers a number of related medical conditions, for example, tennis elbow, which affects the arms, particularly the hands and forearms. The symptoms of upper-limb disorders include pain or soreness and limited movement of affected parts. Typical causes are incorrect posture, too great a workload, over-forceful movements and not enough rest breaks.

You can prevent injury by:

- improving design of working areas (position of keyboard and VDU screens, heights of workbenches and chairs, lighting);
- adjusting workloads and rest periods;
- providing special tools; and
- better training and supervision. (See the section on workstations for more information.)

### Manual handling

Manual handling is not just about lifting. It includes using the hands or bodily force to push, pull, carry, move or support any object, person or animal. Because nearly every job involves some manual handling, it has become the most common cause of “over-three-day” accidents in the workplace.

Most injuries involve pain in the back, but the hands and feet are also vulnerable. In many cases, the damage builds up gradually rather than being caused by a single incident. This damage can be very debilitating, making everyday activities painful and causing lengthy time off from work.

It is not only moving heavy loads that can harm people. Other factors include:

- restricted space for movement;
- awkward postures; or
- unstable loads.

Managing the risk from manual handling is based on the principles of **avoid**, **assess** and **reduce**. In the first instance, identify all the activities in your workplace that involve staff moving materials.

### Avoid

The best solution is to avoid the need for any manual handling. It may be possible to achieve this by redesigning tasks or the layout of the workplace so that hazardous manual handling is not necessary. You can introduce equipment such as forklift trucks, conveyors and sack trolleys. This equipment must also be suitable for the task and kept in good working condition. If it is not reasonably possible to do this, you need to assess the risk of harm.

### Assess

Your assessment must take account of:

- the load;
- the task;
- the working environment; and
- individual ability.

Do not forget that introducing handling aids and mechanical equipment, such as roll cages and fork-lift trucks, may create new hazards and these will need to be assessed, for example, moving vehicles.



## Reduce

Consider the following solutions to common problems.

### The load

- You can break up heavy loads or order smaller packages.
- You can place loads that are difficult to grasp or that could shift during transport in a container for carrying or bind them together before moving.
- If loads are awkward, you can get help or use a trolley.

### The task

- You can reduce stooping and reaching by storing items at waist height or by using scissor lifts or suitable stepladders or platforms for access to higher shelves.
- Reduce carrying over long distances by arranging delivery and storage to be as near as possible to the point of use, or use conveyor belts.
- Vary work activities to avoid repetitive tasks.

### The working environment

- Remove any obstructions that restrict movement or create dangers from tripping.
- Make sure that lighting levels are adequate.
- If possible, avoid steep steps and ramps.
- Where possible, provide a warm environment.

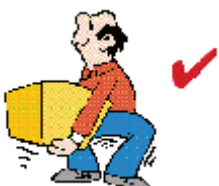
### The individual ability of your staff

- Make sure that staff can perform the tasks given to them. Pay particular attention to those who are either pregnant or who have a known physical weakness.
- Train all staff in safe lifting techniques and in the safe procedures you have identified for moving materials.
- Tell staff what clothing and footwear to use.
- Provide protective shoes, hats and gloves where necessary.

## The safe lifting technique

### Stop and think

- Do I need help?
- Where is the load going?
- Are there any aids to help me?



### The lift

- Keep your feet apart.
- Put your leading leg forward.
- Bend your knees.
- Lift in stages.
- Keep your back straight.
- Keep the load close to your body.
- Lean forward a little for good grip.
- Keep your shoulders level.
- Get a firm grip.
- Put the item down first, then move into position.

### Don't

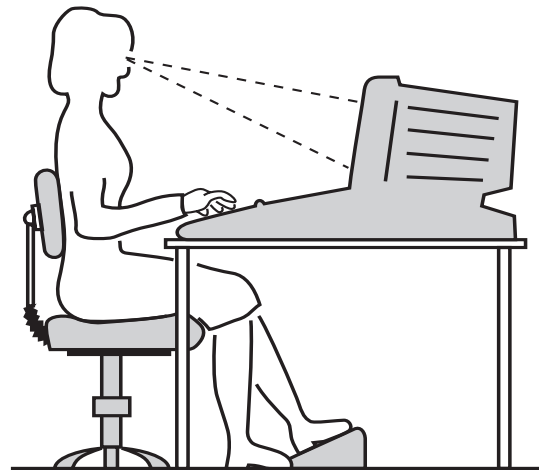
- Jerk
- Overstretch
- Twist
- Lift loads which are too heavy





## Workstations

The modern workplace contains many workstations, often including computers and other display-screen equipment (DSE). Most workstations are generally safe, but incorrect use can give rise to a number of health complaints including back pain, upper-limb disorders, headaches, tiredness and stress, resulting in reduced work efficiency and lost working days. However, you can prevent these problems with suitable design, enough training, proper work planning and choosing appropriate software. As an employer you should:



- assess all workstations;
- take steps to reduce, as far as possible, any problems identified by your assessment; and
- encourage staff to report any discomfort, aches or pains they may be experiencing.

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### Workstations

A workstation may include a chair and a table but may also include a computer. Consider the following when setting up your workstation.

### Work environment

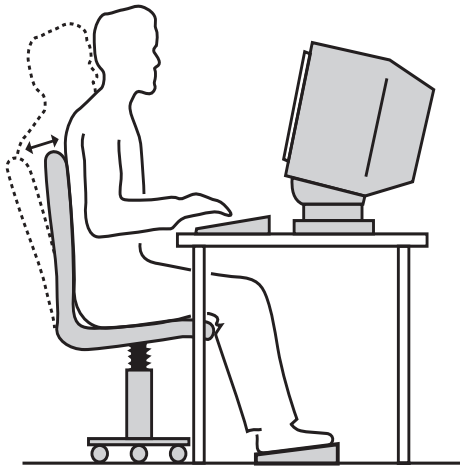
Make sure you provide a comfortable working environment, and make sure the temperature and humidity are acceptable and reduce any distracting noise.

### Training

Let staff know about the hazards associated with equipment positioned incorrectly. Give them training on the precautions that you can take including adjusting the workstation to meet individual needs. Emphasise the need to take frequent breaks from the workstation or to change their position often, especially if using DSE over long periods of the day.

### Daily work routines

Plan work to allow for enough breaks away from the screen or changes of activity, such as filing. This is particularly important for staff who use display screen equipment for long periods. Short, frequent breaks are more effective than less frequent, longer breaks. Staff should be able to decide when to have their breaks.



### Table

- Is the table large enough for the task, or example, a computer and room for paperwork?
- Is there enough leg room under the table?
- If someone is working with a computer, is the desk surface anti-reflective?

### Chair

- Is the chair easy to move?
- Is the height adjustable?
- Is the back adjustable for height and does the back tilt to support the small of the back?
- Do arms on the chair prevent the user sitting close to the table?
- Is a foot rest needed?
- Is there a weight limit shown on the chair?

If you are using a computer or display-screen equipment, consider the screen, keyboard and mouse.

### Screen

- Arrange workstations to avoid any glare or reflections on the screen.
- Position the screen at right angles to windows and between rows of fluorescent lights, using window blinds and desktop lamps to avoid problems with unwanted light.
- The monitor should swivel and tilt, be adjustable for brightness and contrast, clean and large enough to see the characters clearly.
- When sitting tall and looking straight ahead, is the user looking at the top edge of the screen?
- Is the screen at a comfortable reading distance?

### Keyboard and mouse

- Is the keyboard separate from the monitor? (Laptops are not designed for extended daily use in the office.)
- Is it possible to tilt the keyboard?
- Is it possible to rest your forearms on the chair or desk while using the keyboard or mouse without over-stretching or bending the wrists?
- Is the keyboard in good condition and the keys easy to read and use?
- Is the mouse suitable for left- or right-handed people to use?

### Software

You should provide user-friendly software. The software you choose should be suitable for the task, easy to use and adaptable. You should give enough training on how to use it.

### Eye tests

Organise an eye examination and eyesight test regularly for those employees who use display screen equipment a lot. You must only pay for spectacles if employees need special ones for this type of work and they cannot use their normal glasses.



## Contact details for local District Councils

**Antrim:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Antrim Borough Council  
Antrim Civic Centre, 50 Stiles Way  
Co. Antrim BT41 2UB. Phone: 028 9446 3113.

**Ards:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Ards Borough Council  
2 Church Street, Newtownards  
Co. Down BT23 4AP. Phone: 028 9182 4000.

**Armagh:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Armagh City and District Council  
Council Offices, The Palace Demesne  
Co. Armagh BT60 4EL. Phone: 028 3752 9600.

**Ballymena:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Ballymena Borough Council  
Ardeevin, 80 Galgorm Road, Ballymena  
Co. Antrim BT42 1AB. Phone: 028 2566 0300.

**Ballymoney:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Ballymoney Borough Council  
Riada House, 14 Charles Street, Ballymoney  
Co. Antrim BT53 6DZ. Phone: 028 2766 0200.

**Banbridge:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Banbridge District Council  
Health Office, Downshire Road, Banbridge  
Co. Down BT32 3JY. Phone: 028 4066 0600.

**Belfast:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Belfast City Council  
The Cecil Ward Building, 4-10 Linenhall Street  
Belfast BT2 8BP. Phone: 028 9032 0202.

**Carrickfergus:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Carrickfergus Borough Council  
Carrickfergus Museum and Civic Centre  
11 Antrim Street, Carrickfergus  
Co. Antrim BT38 7DG. Phone: 028 9335 1604.

**Castlereagh:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Castlereagh Borough Council  
1 Bradford Court, Upper Galwally  
Belfast BT8 6RB. Phone: 028 9049 4500.

**Coleraine:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Coleraine Borough Council  
Cloonavin, 66 Portstewart Road, Coleraine  
Co. Londonderry BT52 1EY. Phone: 028 7034 7034.

**Cookstown:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Cookstown District Council  
Burn Road, Cookstown,  
Co. Tyrone BT80 8DT. Phone: 028 8676 2205.

**Craigavon:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Craigavon Borough Council  
Civic Centre, Lakeview Road, Craigavon  
Co. Armagh BT64 1AL. Phone: 028 3831 2400.

**Down:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Down District Council Offices  
24 Strangford Road, Downpatrick  
Co. Down BT30 6SR. Phone: 028 4461 0800.

**Dungannon:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council  
Council Offices, Circular Road, Dungannon  
Co. Tyrone BT71 6DT. Phone: 028 8772 5311.

**Fermanagh:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Fermanagh District Council  
Town Hall, Enniskillen,  
Co. Fermanagh BT74 7BA. Phone: 028 6632 5050.

**Larne:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Larne Borough Council  
Victoria Road, Larne,  
Co. Antrim BT40 1RU. Phone: 028 2827 2313.

**Limavady:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Limavady Borough Council  
7 Connell Street, Limavady  
Co. Londonderry BT49 0HA. Phone: 028 7776 0302.

**Lisburn:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Lisburn City Council  
Lagan Valley Island, The Island, Lisburn  
Co. Antrim BT27 4RL. Phone: 028 9250 9250.

**Londonderry:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer, Derry City Council  
Council Offices, 98 Strand Road  
Co. Londonderry BT48 7NN. Phone: 028 7136 5151.

**Magherafelt:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Magherafelt District Council  
50 Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt  
Co. Londonderry BT45 6EN. Phone: 028 7939 7979.

**Moyle:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Moyle District Council, Sheskburn House  
7 Mary Street, Ballycastle,  
Co. Antrim BT54 6QH. Phone: 028 2076 2225.

**Newry:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Newry and Mourne District Council  
O'Hagan House, Monaghan Row, Newry,  
Co. Down BT35 8DJ. Phone: 028 3031 3031.

**Newtownabbey:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Newtownabbey Borough Council  
Mossley Mills, Newtownabbey  
Co. Antrim BT36 5QA. Phone: 028 9034 0000.

**North Down:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
North Down Borough Council  
Town Hall, The Castle, Bangor  
Co. Down BT20 4BT. Phone: 028 9127 0371.

**Omagh:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Omagh District Council  
The Grange, Mountjoy Road, Omagh,  
Co. Tyrone BT79 7BL. Phone: 028 8224 5321.

**Strabane:**

Chief Environmental Health Officer  
Strabane District Council  
47 Derry Road, Strabane,  
Co. Tyrone BT82 8DY. Phone: 028 7138 2204.



Contact details for local District  
Councils are listed on page 42

#### **Safety and Environmental Advice Service**

Belfast City Council Advice Centre  
14 Wellington Place  
Belfast  
BT1 6GE

Phone: 028 9031 9605  
Email: [advicecentre@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:advicecentre@belfastcity.gov.uk)



#### **HEALTH & SAFETY WORKS NI**

ADVISING SMALL BUSINESSES

Health and Safety Works NI  
Avenue House  
42/44 Rosemary Street  
Belfast  
BT1 1QE

Phone: 028 9040 8007  
Fax: 028 9040 8040  
Textphone: 028 9054 6896  
E-mail: [hswni@detini.gov.uk](mailto:hswni@detini.gov.uk)  
[www.healthandsafetyworksni.gov.uk](http://www.healthandsafetyworksni.gov.uk)

