

Essential Health & Safety Information

As a business proprietor you are required by law to carry out a risk assessment of your business. Simply this means that you need to look at the hazards – those things in your business that could cause harm to people.



The Importance of Risk Assessment

After looking at the hazards you then need to assess the likelihood of harm occurring, and finally decide whether more could be done to prevent harm. If you employ 5 or more people, your findings must be documented, although it is recommended that you record all risk assessments. Your assessment should be reviewed regularly. (Guidance Leaflet INDG 163).

As a start up business the main risks you need to consider include fire, electrical safety, slips, trips and falls, safe handling of chemicals, scalding and manual handling. Depending on your business, you may have additional, more specific hazards to consider: Your local Environmental Health Department will be able to offer further advice.

Fire

You'll find advice on fire safety issues in a separate leaflet in this pack.

Electrical Safety

Electrical equipment must be maintained so as to prevent danger. 95% of electrical faults or damage can be identified by a visual inspection. Staff with basic electrical knowledge and common sense should be able to carry out visual electric inspections and checks – switch off, unplug and look! You should keep records of your checks, findings and the actions you have taken. Earthed equipment such as kettles or cookers need to be tested every 1 to 2 years by a competent person. (Guidance Leaflet INDG 237)

Slips, Trips and Falls

Accidents like this are a major cause of injury. To reduce the risk, floor surfaces must be of suitable material, be in good condition and free from obstructions. Check regularly for worn carpets, lifted lino, trailing cables, loose rugs and slippery surfaces. Keep the premises tidy and the lighting adequate. Stairs and steps must be free from obstruction, hand rails and banisters must be in good condition and securely fixed.

Hazardous Substances

It is your duty to minimise your employees' exposure to hazardous substances. Cleaning chemicals for example are generally safe but may be hazardous if used incorrectly. They must always be applied according to the manufacturers' instructions. Care should be taken not to mix chemicals, and chemicals should be stored in their original containers. Staff should be clearly instructed and must be provided with protective clothing (e.g. rubber gloves) as specified by the manufacturer's instructions. Hazardous chemical datasheets should be available from your supplier/manufacturer and should be made easily available to your staff in the event of an accident.

Did you know?

In the UK, slips, trips and falls in the workplace accounted for around 40,000 reported injuries in 2003.

Gas Safety

Defective gas fired appliances can emit carbon monoxide which is highly toxic. All gas fittings and flues must be maintained in a safe condition. An annual safety check must be carried out on each gas appliance (boiler, gas fires etc) and flue by a CORGI registered fitter.

A record of each safety check in the form of a detailed inspection report must be kept for 2 years. Any other gas equipment such as gas cookers should be serviced as recommended by the manufacturer.

Manual Handling

Repeated or incorrect lifting by staff of heavy or awkward loads, such as bulk sacks or boxes of foodstuffs, can cause back injury. Manual handling should be minimised and you should ensure that staff know how to lift properly.

First Aid and Accidents

Adequate first aid provision for employees is essential. Provide a properly equipped first aid box and nominate an 'appointed person' to take charge when someone is injured and to keep the first aid box fully stocked. You should be familiar with the local medical facilities. All accidents at work must be recorded in an accident book. (Where 10 or more staff are employed, you need to use the official accident book which complies with data protection requirements). The record should include the name of the injured person, date, time and circumstance of the accident, details of the injury sustained and any treatment given.

Some accidents, whether they are to staff, visitors or members of the public, must be reported to the enforcing authority via the HSE Incident Contact Centre (Tel: 0845 3009923 Fax: 0845 3009924, e-mail: riddor@natbrit.com). These include accidents resulting in major injury, hospitalisation, death – or where staff are off for more than 3 days as a result of an accident at work. You should have Public Liability Insurance, which covers owner's liability to guests and others for injury, loss and damage. If you employ staff you must also have Employer's Liability Insurance.

Training

Staff training is essential for the efficient and effective running of your business. Your training programme should cover induction, fire safety, electrical safety, first aid arrangements and accident reporting, manual handling and chemical (e.g. cleaning products) safety.

Information for Employees

If you employ staff, the poster entitled 'Health and Safety Law, what you should know', must be displayed. It provides information on the basics of health and safety management. You can obtain it from HSE Books Tel: 01787 881165 and from good book sellers.

Health and Safety Policy

If you employ 5 or more people you must have a written policy document which sets out how you manage health and safety policy. It shows who does what, and when and how they do it. The policy should describe the systems and procedures you have in place to ensure employees' health and safety. It may refer to other health and safety documentation and should be reviewed regularly. The policy must be shown to all staff (Guidance Leaflet INDG 324).

Further Sources of Information:

The Environmental Health Department of your local Council – see separate list.

The following leaflets are available from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE Books, P.O. Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 6FS, Tel: 01787 881165, Fax: 01787 313995. **HSE website www.hse.gov.uk**

An introduction to Health and Safety	INDG 259
RIDDOR explained	HSE 31
COSHH – a brief guide to the regulations	INDG 136
Getting to grips with manual handling	INDG 143
First Aid at work – your questions answered	INDG 214
Maintaining portable electrical equipment in hotels and Tourist accommodation	INDG 237
Gas appliances – get them checked, keep them safe	INDG 238
Preventing slips, trips and falls at work	INDG 225
Five steps to risk assessment	INDG 163