



Unit 2

The Role of the First Aider in the Workplace

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Understand the main characteristics of a good first responder
- ✓ Discuss the main priorities for the first aider upon encountering a casualty
- ✓ Take the steps necessary to stay safe when providing first-aid

Unit 2

The Role of a First Aider in the Workplace

The help that a sick or injured person receives until full medical treatment is available is referred to as first aid. Knowing how to administer first aid is a simple skill that can have a huge impact, from reassuring a casualty to potentially saving their life. It covers a wide range of services, from applying a plaster to a cut to performing CPR.

It covers a wide range of services, from applying a plaster to a cut to performing CPR. The first and most important task of a first-aid officer is to save lives. They're also a part of the team that makes sure workplaces are well-prepared for emergencies and accidents.

This means the officer will be responsible for tasks outside of his or her normal responsibilities, which will require patience, maturity, and selflessness.

Characteristics of a Good First Responder

There are a variety of skills that a first responder should possess in order to deal with situations as effectively as possible. The following are some characteristics of a good first responder:

Communication Skills

The injured person will be much more likely to trust and feel reassured if you can communicate effectively with them. You will relieve their anxiety and make the situation much easier for both of you. Strong communication skills are also useful if you need to communicate important information to the emergency services.

The Ability to Work under Pressure

A first aider's responsibilities can range from something as simple as a cut finger to something far more serious, such as a cardiac arrest. As a first responder, you must be prepared for any scenario and know how to respond quickly. You must maintain your composure – panicking will only make matters worse – and be able to work effectively under duress.

Initiative and Leadership

In an emergency, time is often a factor that determines the outcome. Quick action, taking the lead, using your initiative, and trusting your judgement are all essential skills.

Ability to Work in a Group

You must be able to work effectively in a team in addition to being able to lead. It's possible that you'll have to work alongside emergency personnel, and being able to communicate with them is crucial.

Positivity

Someone who sees the glass as half full rather than half empty is a good fit for a first responder. Positive thinking will assist you in reassuring the injured person while also preventing you from becoming mentally exhausted while on the job.

This list is by no means complete, but it's always a good idea to weigh personal qualities against technical ability.

First Aid Priorities for a First Aider

- Quickly and calmly assess the situation.
- Keep yourself and any casualties safe from harm—never put yourself in jeopardy.
- As much as possible, avoid cross-contamination between yourself and the casualty.
- Assist and reassure victims.
- Assess the casualty: as accurately as possible, determine the nature of the injury or illness afflicting the casualty.
- Treat casualties as soon as possible, focusing on those with the most serious (life-threatening) conditions.
- Arrange for appropriate assistance: if you suspect a serious injury or illness, dial 999 for emergency assistance; transport or send the casualty to the hospital; transfer him to the care of a healthcare professional or to a higher level of medical care. Keep an eye on a casualty until help arrives.

How to Prepare Yourself

When responding to an emergency, keep in mind that everyone involved, including yourself, has emotional and physical needs. You should take care of your own mental health and be able to recognise stress when it arises.

You must respond calmly and considerately in order to gain the trust and respect of those around you in order to effectively give or receive information from a casualty or witnesses. This includes being aware of and managing your reactions so you can concentrate on the casualty and assess the situation. You will inspire confidence in your actions and generate trust between you and the casualty if you speak to them in a kind, considerate, gentle but firm manner.

He may not tell you about an important event, injury, or symptom if he lacks this confidence, and he may remain in a distressed state.

The actions outlined in this chapter are designed to assist you in fostering trust, reducing distress, and providing support to help the casualty cope and recover. The following are the essential steps to becoming an effective first responder:

- Be calm in your approach
- Be aware of the dangers (to yourself and others)
- Build and maintain trust (from the casualty and the bystanders)
- Provide prompt treatment, beginning with the most serious (life-threatening) conditions.
- Call appropriate help.
- Keep in mind your own requirements.

Be Calm

It's critical to maintain a calm demeanour when administering first aid. Consider what situations might present a problem for you and how you would handle them. You must be able to control your own emotions and reactions in order to instil confidence in others and encourage them to trust you.

The unknown is something that many people are afraid of. Gaining a better understanding of first aid priorities and the key techniques in this book can help you feel more at ease. You can take steps to overcome your fears by identifying them ahead of time.

Stay in Control

The body reacts to an emergency by releasing hormones that can cause a "fight, flight, or freeze" response. Your heart beats faster, your breathing quickens, and you may sweat more when this happens. You may also feel more alert, as if you want to flee, or as if you are frozen in place.

If you're feeling stressed and overwhelmed, you might feel compelled to act before you're sure what's required. Take a few slow breaths and pause. Consider who else could assist you in feeling more relaxed, and keep in mind the importance of first aid (opposite). Take another breath and tell yourself to be calmer if you're still feeling overwhelmed. You will be able to think more clearly and plan your response if you remain calm.

The way you act and feel are both influenced by the thoughts you have. If you believe you won't be able to cope, you'll have a harder time deciding what to do and will become more anxious, ready to fight, flee, or freeze. You will be better able to deal with anxiety and assist the casualty if you know how to calm yourself.

Protection from Infection

It's critical to protect yourself (and the casualty) from infection as well as injury when administering first aid. Take precautions to avoid cross-contamination, which involves

spreading germs or infection to a casualty or contracting an infection from one. Even with relatively minor injuries, infection is a possibility.

It's especially important if you're treating a wound because blood-borne viruses like hepatitis B and C, as well as the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), can be transmitted through blood contact. In practise, the risk is low enough that performing first aid should not deter you. If an infected person's blood comes into contact with yours through a cut or scrape, the risk increases.

In most cases, simple precautions such as hand washing and wearing disposable gloves will provide adequate protection for both you and the casualty. No evidence of these blood-borne viruses being transmitted during resuscitation has been found. When giving rescue breaths, use a face shield or pocket mask if one is available.

When Should You Seek Medical Help?

Avoid pricking yourself with any needles found on or near a casualty, and avoid cutting yourself on glass. If you prick or cut your skin, or if you accidentally splash your eye, wash the area thoroughly and seek medical help right away. If you provide first aid on a regular basis, you should seek advice on other forms of personal protection, such as immunisation. If you suspect you've been exposed to an infection while providing first aid, seek medical help right away.

Caution

You can carry protective equipment to help protect yourself from infection, such as:

- Face shield or pocket mask
- Disposable latex-free gloves
- Hand sanitizer (alcohol gel)

Minimizing the Risk of Cross Contamination

- Hands should be washed and latex-free disposable gloves should be worn (in case you or the casualty are allergic to latex). If gloves aren't available, have the casualty dress his or her own wound, or cover your hands with clean plastic bags.
- Apply waterproof dressings to cuts and scrapes on your hands.
- If you're dealing with a lot of bodily fluids, put on a plastic apron and put on glasses or goggles to protect your eyes.
- Make sure to properly dispose of all waste.
- Never touch a wound with your bare hands, or any part of a dressing that will come into contact with a wound.
- While treating a casualty, do not breathe, cough, or sneeze over the wound.

Thorough Hand-Washing

If at all possible, wash your hands before touching a victim; if this is not possible, wash them as soon as possible afterward. Pay close attention to all parts of the hands, including the palms, wrists, fingers and thumbs, and fingernails, for a thorough wash. If soap and water aren't available, use alcohol gel to rub your hands.

1. Put your hands under running water to get them wet. In the palm of a cupped hand, place some soap. Rub your hands together in the palms.
2. Rub the back of your right hand with the palm of your left hand, then the back of your left hand with the palm of your right hand.
3. Work the soap between the fingers of both hands by interlocking them.
4. Rub your right hand's back of fingers against your left hand's palm, then repeat with your left hand in your right palm.
5. Rub the palm of your left hand with your right thumb, then the palm of your right hand with the left thumb.
6. Rub your left hand's fingertips in your right hand's palm and vice versa. After rinsing thoroughly, pat dry with a paper towel.



Anti-infection protection

Wearing Gloves to Protect Yourself

Gloves provide additional protection against infection in a first-aid situation, in addition to hand washing. Carry protective, disposable, latex-free gloves with you at all times if at all possible. They should be worn whenever there is a chance of coming into contact with blood or other bodily fluids. Wear them anyway if you're unsure.

Only one casualty should be treated with disposable gloves. Put them on just as you're about to approach a victim, and take them off as soon as the treatment is finished and before you do anything else.

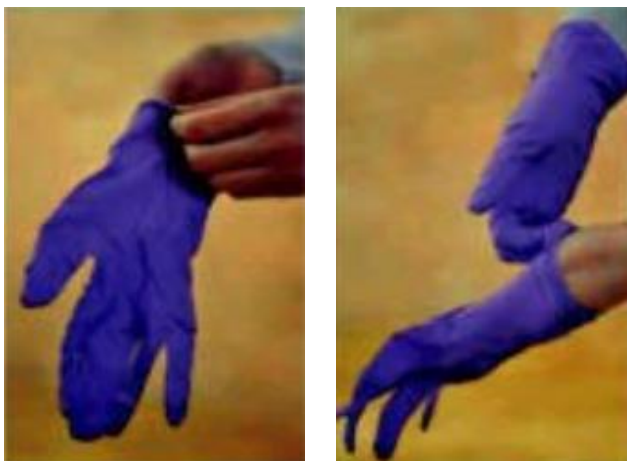
Caution

Use latex-free gloves at all times. Some people have a severe latex allergy, which can result in anaphylactic shock. Gloves made of nitrile (often blue or purple) are recommended.

Hold the top edge of one glove with your other gloved hand and peel it off so that it is inside out when removing the gloves. Rep with the other hand, avoiding touching the gloves' outsides. Put them in a biohazard bag and throw them away.

Putting Gloves On

- Putting on the gloves Pull one of the gloves on by the top. Keep your fingers away from the main part of the glove.
- The gloved hand. Pull it onto your hand with your fingers under the top edge. Your gloved fingers should not come into contact with your skin.



Waste Disposal

To prevent the spread of infection, all soiled material must be carefully disposed of after treating a casualty.

Put dressings or gloves in a plastic bag, preferably a biohazard bag, and hand it over to the emergency services. The bag should be tightly sealed and labelled to indicate that it contains clinical waste. Sharp objects, such as needles, should be placed in a sharps container, which is usually red in colour.

Taking Care of a Casualty

Victims are frequently terrified of what is happening to them and what might happen next. Your job is to remain calm and in control of the situation, but be prepared to step back if someone else is more qualified. Use the primary survey to identify the most seriously injured casualties and treat them in order of priority if there are more than one.

BUILDING TRUST

Introduce yourself to your casualty to gain their trust. Find out what the person prefers to be called and address him by that name. Crouch or kneel down so you're at the same level as the victim. Explain what's going on and why it's happening. If you say what you're going to do before you do it, you'll gain trust. Always treat the casualty with dignity and respect. Give him options if possible, such as whether he wants to sit or lie down, and/or who he wants to accompany him. Also, if at all possible, get his permission before treating him by asking if he agrees with what you're going to do.

Diversity and Communication

When speaking with your casualty, keep in mind his age and appearance, as different people require different responses. Respect people's wishes; recognise that some people may prefer to be treated a certain way.

When someone speaks a different language or is unable to hear you, communication can be difficult. Use simple language or signs, or jot down your questions. Inquire if anyone knows the casualty, speaks the same language as them, or witnessed the incident and can describe what happened.

Taking Care of a Casualty

Listen Carefully

- Pay attention to how a casualty reacts with your eyes and ears. Listening skills include both verbal and nonverbal listening.
- Maintain eye contact but look away occasionally to avoid staring.

- Speak in a confident, calm tone that is loud enough to be heard but not shouted.
- Avoid speaking too quickly.
- Use short sentences and simple words in your instructions.
- When the casualty speaks, use affirming nods and "mmms" to show you're paying attention.
- Double-check that the casualty understands what you're saying—ask for confirmation.
- Make simple hand motions and gestures.
- Do not interrupt the casualty, but always acknowledge what they have said; for example, summarise what they have said to demonstrate that you understand.

When a Casualty Resists Help

When someone is sick or injured, he or she may be upset, confused, tearful, angry, and/or desperate to get away. Be sensitive to the feelings of a casualty and assure him that his reactions are understandable. Accept that you may not be able to assist and may even be perceived as a threat.

Keep a safe distance until you've gotten the person's permission to get closer, so he doesn't feel crowded. Do not disagree or argue. A casualty may refuse assistance if he is suffering from a head injury or hypothermia, for example. Explain why you believe a person requires something other than what he has requested. "I think someone should look at where you're hurt before you move," you could say, "in case moving makes it worse." If someone continues to refuse your assistance and you believe he requires immediate medical attention, dial 999 for assistance.

Even if it causes more harm, a casualty has the right to refuse assistance. Tell the dispatcher that you offered first aid and were turned down. If you are concerned that someone's condition is deteriorating, keep a safe distance until assistance arrives.

Treating the Casualty

To maintain trust with a casualty, always relate to her calmly and thoughtfully. Consider how he may be feeling. Check that you comprehended what the casualty said and consider the impact of your actions, such as whether the casualty is becoming more (or less) upset, angry, or tense as a result of your actions. A shift in emotional state can signal that a problem is getting worse.

Prepare to change your demeanour depending on the comfort level of the person you're speaking with; for example, ask fewer questions or switch topics. Rather than telling a casualty what to do, keep him updated and give him options. Inquire about the casualty's relatives or friends who may be able to assist, and assist him in making contact with them. Inquire if you can assist in making arrangements for any responsibilities the casualty may have.

Keep an eye on the casualty. Except to call for emergency help, never leave someone who is dying, seriously ill, or badly injured alone. While touching the casualty's shoulder or arm, or holding his hand, speak to him. Allowing a casualty to feel alone is never a good idea.

Enlisting Help from Others

In an emergency, you may be faced with several tasks at once: maintaining safety, calling for help, and beginning to administer first aid. Some of the onlookers may be able to assist you with the following:

- Make the area safe by controlling traffic and keeping onlookers at bay.
- For emergency assistance, dial 999/112.
- Get first-aid supplies, such as an AED (automated external defibrillator).
- Apply direct pressure to stop bleeding or support an injured limb.
- Assist in maintaining the privacy of the casualty by placing a blanket around the area and encouraging onlookers to move away.

If the casualty's life is in immediate danger, transport him to a safe location only if it is safer to move him than to leave him where he is, and you have the necessary assistance and equipment.

Care of Personal Belongings

Ascertain that the casualty's belongings are always with him. If you need to search a person's belongings for identification or clues to their condition (such as medication), do so in front of a trustworthy witness. Before you do this, if at all possible, ask the casualty's permission. After that, make sure that all of the casualty's clothing, personal belongings, and medication are transported to the hospital or handed over to the police.

Keeping Notes

Write down any information you gather about a casualty so you can refer to it later. Medical personnel benefit greatly from having a written record of the sequence of events. Take note of the duration of an unconscious period, the duration of a seizure, the time of any changes in the casualty's condition, and the time of any intervention or treatment, for example. When the emergency services arrive, hand your notes to them or give them to the casualty. The following is a list of useful information to provide:

- Information about the casualty, such as his name, age, and contact information
- The incident or illness's history
- Brief description of any injuries
- Unusual behaviour, or a change in behaviour
- Treatment—when and where it's given
- Vital signs (if the first aider is trained): level of response, breathing rate, and pulse

- Medical background
- A list of the medications the casualty has taken, including the amounts and when they were taken.
- Next-of-kin contact details
- Your contact information, as well as the date, time, and location of your participation

Keep in mind that any information you gather is private.

Without his permission, never share it with anyone who isn't involved in the casualty's care. Let the victim know why you're collecting information and who you'll be giving it to. Be mindful of who is present and the casualty's privacy and dignity when requesting such information.

Requesting Help

Additional assistance is available from a variety of sources. If assistance is required, you must decide on the type of assistance as well as how to obtain it. First, conduct a preliminary investigation to determine the severity of the casualty's condition. Explain the options and let him choose where to go if it isn't serious. If a casualty's condition is critical, get help right away.

If the casualty requires immediate medical attention and should be transported to the hospital in an ambulance, such as if you suspect a heart attack, dial 999/112.

- Transport the casualty to a hospital or send them there. When a casualty requires hospital treatment but is unlikely to worsen, such as a finger injury, choose this option. If you can arrange transportation—either in your own car or in a taxi—you can take him yourself.
- Seek medical help. The casualty should be advised to contact his own physician or nurse practitioner, depending on what is available in his area. He'd do this, for example, if he was suffering from earache or diarrhoea.

Calling For Help

You can call for help from:

- Call 999/112 for emergency services such as police, fire, and ambulances.
- Utilities, such as gas, electricity, or water—a phone number will be listed in the phone book.
- Medical services, such as doctors, dentists, and hospitals—this varies by region. The phone numbers will be listed in the phone book.
- Any phone, including cell phones, can call the emergency services for free.

Reduce the amount of time the casualty is away from you. Tell someone else to make the call while you stay with the casualty, if possible. Request confirmation from the person that the

call was made and that assistance is on its way. If you need to leave a casualty to call for assistance, make sure you take any necessary vital actions first.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *First Aid, Survival, and CPR: Home and Field Pocket Guide 1st Edition*
by Shirley A. Jones ,2011
- ✓ *First Aid/CPR/AED Participant's Manual Paperback – March 1, 2011*
by American National Red Cross