



Unit 3

First Aid needs Assessment for the Workplace

Learning Outcomes

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

- ✓ Confidently perform all stages of a first-aid needs assessment at work
- ✓ Understand the nature and potential risk posed by hazards in the workplace
- ✓ Discuss how the first-aid needs of different types of employees are often different

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An employer should assess first-aid requirements based on the specific circumstances of each workplace.

The goal of first-aid is to lessen the effects of an injury or illness that occurs at work, whether or not the injury or illness is caused by the work itself. The availability of first-aid supplies must be "adequate and appropriate in the circumstances." This means that there should be enough first-aid personnel and facilities on hand:

- To provide immediate assistance to casualties suffering from injuries or illnesses, including those that are likely to occur as a result of specific workplace hazards;
- To request an ambulance or other professional assistance.

If an employer provides first-aiders in the workplace, they must have a current certificate of competence in either first-aid or emergency first-aid.

If an employer determines that a first-aider is not needed in the workplace, someone should be assigned to oversee the first-aid arrangements. This person's responsibilities include looking after the first-aid equipment and facilities and, if necessary, calling the emergency services. They can also cover for a first-aider who is unavailable due to unforeseen circumstances.

There is no requirement that first-aid assessments be formal or written down, though employers may find it useful to keep track of the results. Employers may have to defend their level of first-aid coverage.

Employers should think about the following when assessing their needs:

- The nature of the job and potential hazards in the workplace;
- The size of the business;
- The composition of the workforce;
- The organization's accident history;
- Traveling, remote, and lone workers' requirements;
- Work schedules;
- The workforce's distribution;
- The location's isolation from emergency medical services;
- Employees who work in shared or multi-occupancy environments;
- Annual leave and other absences of first-responders and other designated personnel;
- First aid provision for non-employees.

The Nature of the Work and Workplace Hazards

Because of the nature of the work and the hazards present at the workplace, certain work environments have a higher risk of injury and illness. Factory floors, auto shops, and forestry operations, for example, have a higher risk of injury that necessitates immediate medical attention than offices or libraries. As a result, different first-aid arrangements will be required at these locations.

Table 1: Injuries associated with common workplace hazards that may require first aid

Hazard	Potential Harm
Manual tasks	Overexertion can cause muscular strain.
Working at height	Slips, trips and falls can cause fractures, bruises, lacerations, dislocations, concussion.
Electricity	Potential ignition source could cause injuries from fire. Exposure to live electrical wires can cause shock, burns and cardiac arrest.
Machinery and equipment	Being hit by moving vehicles, or being caught by moving parts of machinery can cause fractures, amputation, bruises, lacerations, dislocations.
Hazardous chemicals	Toxic or corrosive chemicals may be inhaled, contact skin or eyes causing poisoning, chemical burns, irritation. Flammable chemicals could result in injuries from fire or explosion.
Extreme temperatures	Hot surfaces and materials can cause burns. Exposure to heat can cause heat stress and fatigue. Exposure to extreme cold can cause hypothermia and frost bite.
Radiation	Welding arc flashes, ionizing radiation and lasers can cause burns
Violence	Behaviours including intimidation and physical assault can cause nausea, shock and physical injuries
Biological	Infection, allergic reactions
Animals	Bites, stings, kicks, scratches

The type of work performed will help determine the hazard levels in the workplace, as well as the potential for harm to employees, and thus the level of first-aid provision. Employers may only need to provide an appointed person to take charge of first-aid arrangements, as well as a clearly identified and adequately stocked first-aid box, in organisations such as offices or shops. However, an accident or sudden illness can still happen in these circumstances, so employers may want to consider having a qualified first-aider on hand.

First-aid requirements will be higher if the job involves chemicals or dangerous machinery, as well as special hazards like hydrofluoric acid or confined spaces. Employers may be required to:

- a) provide a sufficient number of qualified first-aiders so that someone is always available to provide first-aid immediately following an incident;

- b) provide additional training for first-aiders to deal with injuries caused by special hazards;
- c) consider additional first-aid equipment;
- d) provide one or more first-aid rooms;
- e) notify the local emergency services.

Employers must consider the various work activities in different parts of an establishment when deciding on their first-aid provision. A work site, for example, might have production and office/administration areas. Individual risk assessments for individual departments will almost certainly be required in such circumstances. The results of these separate assessments must be combined when determining first-aid requirements. As a result, first-aid coverage may differ between departments or buildings.

Records of injuries, illnesses, "near miss" incidents, and other information gathered to aid in the control of workplace risks will be useful in making appropriate first-aid decisions.

Any hazardous chemicals handled, used, or stored at your workplace should have their safety data sheets (SDS) checked. The SDS contains information about the chemical, its potential health effects, controls that can be used to reduce exposure, and first-aid instructions.

Data Sheets on Safety

The UK REACH Regulation mandates the use of Safety Data Sheets (SDS).

SDSs are crucial documents for the safe supply, handling, and application of chemicals. They assist in ensuring that those who use chemicals in the workplace do so in a safe manner that does not endanger users or the environment.

The SDS will include the information required by the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations for employers to conduct a risk assessment (COSHH). The SDS is not an evaluation in and of itself. It will, however, describe the hazards and assist employers in determining the likelihood of those hazards occurring in the workplace.

If a chemical is hazardous and is being supplied for use at work, SDS must be provided, whether in packages or not. If a chemical is not classified as hazardous but contains small amounts of a hazardous substance, SDS are also required.

Workplace Dimensions and Location

You should consider the following factors when determining the size and location of your workplace:

- The distance between different work areas
- Emergency service response times

First aid equipment and facilities should be placed in convenient locations and in areas where an injury or illness is more likely to occur.

A large workplace may require first aid to be available in more than one location if:

- work is being done far away from emergency services,
- small groups of workers are dispersed over a large area,
- access to a portion of the workplace is difficult, and
- the workplace has multiple floors.

It may be appropriate to locate first aid facilities centrally and provide first aid kits in each work area where there are separate work areas (for example, multiple buildings on a site or multiple floors in an office building).

Portable first aid kits in motor vehicles and other separate work areas are examples of this. When determining your first aid needs, consider the distance between your workplace and ambulance services, hospitals, and medical centres. If life-threatening injuries or illnesses occur and timely access to emergency services is not possible, a person trained in advanced first-aid techniques (such as the administration of oxygen) will be required.

Workers in remote or isolated areas may require additional first-aid considerations. When access is difficult due to poor roads or weather conditions, for example, aerial evacuation may be required.

You must provide a work system that includes effective communication with the worker in order to reduce the risks to health and safety associated with remote or isolated work. This will make it easier to respond quickly in an emergency.

The Number and Composition of Workers and Other People

Contractors, subcontractors, and volunteers should all be considered when calculating the size of your workforce. As a result, the size of your workforce might change over time. You should consider the maximum number of workers you can employ at any given time when deciding who needs access to first aid. A larger workforce, on average, necessitates more first-aid resources.

You should also think about:

- the special requirements of employees with a disability or a known health problem
- non-employees at your workplace, such as students in schools, members of the public in entertainment venues, fairgrounds, and shopping malls.

History of Accidents

When evaluating the adequacy of future first aid provision, information gathered during previous accidents/incidents should be used. This information could be useful in determining what first-aid materials and equipment are required, where first-aiders should be stationed, what geographical area they should be required to cover, and so on for large and/or multi-site organisations.

Needs of travelling, remote and lone workers

Employers are responsible for providing first-aid to employees who work away from the main site, such as those who travel frequently or work elsewhere. A personal first-aid kit should be carried by those who travel long distances or are constantly on the move, according to the assessment. Companies with employees who work in remote locations should make special arrangements, such as providing personal communicators and additional training. When employees work alone, other means of summoning assistance, such as a cell phone, may be useful in an emergency.

Work patterns

Where employees work shifts or out of hours, first-aid requirements may differ. When employees are at work, it is critical that adequate provisions are always available, and separate arrangements may need to be made for each shift.

Distribution of the workforce

An employer should consider how the size of the premises may affect quick access to first-aid facilities, such as whether additional first-aid provision is required on a multi-building site or whether additional provision is unnecessary due to the distance between buildings. Employers who have a multi-story building should think about how many first-aiders or appointed persons will be needed on each floor. Employees who work in self-contained areas should also be considered, as well as how their needs are assessed and met.

The Site's Distance from Emergency Medical Services

Employers may need to make special arrangements to ensure appropriate transportation is available if a site is far from emergency medical services. Employers should notify emergency services of their location and any special circumstances, such as specific hazards, in writing.

Employees who work on a shared or multi-occupancy site

Employers can arrange for one employer to be responsible for providing first-aid coverage for all workers on a shared or multi-occupied site. In these situations, a complete exchange of information about the hazards and risks involved should assist in ensuring that the shared provision is adequate. The arrangements should be agreed upon by all employers, and

employees should be kept informed. To avoid any misunderstandings, both employers should sign a written agreement.

When an employment business "contracts out" employees to another employer, the employment business should make sure that these employees have access to appropriate first-aid care through an agreement with the user employer.

Annual leave and other absences of first-responders and other appointed individuals

At all times when people are at work, adequate provisions must be made. Employers must therefore ensure that annual leave and other planned absences of first aiders or appointed persons are covered.

Employers should also consider what kind of coverage is required for unplanned and unusual absences, such as sick leave or bereavement leave. Non-employees have access to first-aid. Employers are not required to provide first-aid to anyone other than their own employees under these regulations.

Indeed, the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 prohibits regulations requiring first-aid provision for members of the public. Many organisations, such as schools, places of entertainment, fairgrounds, and shops, provide a service for others, and it is strongly recommended that employers consider non-employees when assessing and planning for first-aid needs.

When providing first-aid to both employees and non-employees, employers should double-check that their liability insurance covers all first-aid activities. They must also make certain that:

- The level of employee provision does not fall below the minimum set forth in these Regulations;
- The level of non-employee provision complies with any other applicable legislation and guidance.

Review of First Aid Provision

Employers should review their first-aid needs on a regular basis, especially after any operational changes, to ensure that they are still adequate. It is suggested that a record of the incidents dealt with by first-aiders and appointed persons be kept to aid this process.

Records

Employers should provide a book for first-responders and appointed persons to keep track of the incidents they attend. Any such book should be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998's requirements (see Further Information). When there are several first-

aiders working for the same company, it is best to use one central book, though this may not be possible on larger, more dispersed sites. The following information should be recorded:

- The incident's date, time, and location;
- The injured or ill person's name and occupation;
- The nature of the injury or illness, as well as any first-aid administered;
- What happened to the person right after (for example, a car accident)
- Went back to work, went home, went to hospital);
- The name and signature of the first-responder or other person involved in the incident.

This data can assist the employer in identifying accident trends and areas where health and safety risks can be better controlled. It can be consulted for future "first-aid needs assessments." These documents may be useful for insurance and investigation purposes as well. The accident book and the record book are not the same thing, though they may be combined.

Riddor

Employers, self-employed people, and those in charge of work premises (the Responsible Person) are required by RIDDOR to report certain serious workplace accidents, occupational diseases, and specified dangerous occurrences (near misses).

HSE should be notified of any incidents that occur in England, or HSE NI in Northern Ireland.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *First Aid Basics (Health and Your Body) – January 1, 2012 by Rebecca Weber*
- ✓ *NSC Advanced First Aid, CPR & AED – January 15, 2011 by National Safety Council*