

Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare (SafetyNet Guidance Document)

Last modified 25 April 2012 14:58

Health and Safety is not an 'add on' to an individual's job. It is an integral part of the job and managers are legally required to manage health and safety in the workplace and plan it into daily routines. This section covers the general principles of managing health, safety and welfare within the workplace.

Definitions

- Workplace – applies to a wide range of areas, not just offices, and includes non-domestic premises made available as places of work such as schools, libraries, residential homes, places of entertainment and leisure and places where domestic staff are employed, such as kitchens. Workplaces include the common or shared parts of buildings, private roads and paths on industrial estates and business parks and temporary worksites (but not construction sites which are governed by separate legislation).
- Work – means work as an employee, volunteer or self employed person.
- Premises – means any place (including outdoors).
- Domestic premises – means a private dwelling.

Scope

Health, safety and welfare is covered under four main categories:

- The working environment, including temperature, ventilation, lighting, room dimensions and workstations.
- Safety, including the safe passage of vehicles and pedestrians, windows and skylights, doors and gates, floors, prevention of falls from height and falling objects.
- Facilities, including toilets, washing, eating and changing facilities, rest areas and facilities for expectant and nursing mothers.
- Housekeeping, including maintenance of the workplace, equipment and facilities, cleanliness and removal of waste materials.

The why, what and how

KCC is a diverse and geographically dispersed organisation. In conducting our activities and interacting with other directorates, external organisation and members of the public, managers need to ensure that workplaces meet the health, safety and welfare needs of the entire workforce and those affected by our activities.

Workplaces and facilities need to suit the needs of all individuals and must take into account the needs of people with disabilities, particularly when dealing with areas such as traffic routes, toilets and workstations.

People in charge of non-domestic premises also need to ensure that this extends to people other than employees who visit the premises.

These requirements also extend to people other than employers if they have any level of control of a workplace. As an example, owners or landlords of business premises should ensure that common parts, common facilities and means of access and egress within their control are suitable and maintained. Shortcomings in day-to-day activities such as sanitary facilities and spillages are the responsibility of the tenants. It is also important that tenants co-operate with one another.

Associated procedures and documentation

Listed below are related topics within SafetyNet. To read a topic, select the link.

Procedures

[Managing Health and Safety](#)

[Risk Assessment \(SafetyNet Guidance Document\)](#)

[Display Screen Equipment – \(Computer Safety\)](#)

[Personal Protective Equipment](#)

[Manual Handling – \(Moving and Handling\)](#)

[Work Equipment \(SafetyNet Guidance Document\)](#)

[Young Persons](#)

[Safe Use of Chemicals \(COSHH\)](#)

[Fire Safety in the Workplace](#)

[Smoking in the Workplace \(KCC Smoking Policy\)](#)

[Temperature at Work](#)

[Managing Noise at Work](#)

[New and Expectant Mothers](#)

Documentation

The documentation listed below refers to legislation and Industry Standards. To read these in greater detail select the website links and type in the name of the document you require.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

The Display Screen Equipment Regulations 1992

The Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992

The Workplace (Health Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992

The Provision and use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998

The First Aid at Work Regulations 1981

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002

[Link to the HMSO website](#)

[Link to the DCSF website](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

What type and how much ventilation should be provided in the workplace?

Workplaces need to be adequately ventilated. Fresh, clean air should be drawn from a source outside the workplace, uncontaminated by discharge from flues, chimneys or other process outlets, and be circulated throughout the workplace. Ventilation should also remove and dilute warm, humid air and provide air movement that gives a sense of freshness, without causing a draught. Workplaces that contain process or heating equipment or other sources of dust, fumes or vapour will need more fresh air to provide adequate ventilation.

Windows or other openings may provide sufficient ventilation, but where necessary mechanical ventilation systems (e.g. extractors and air conditioning) should be provided and maintained.

What should the temperature be in indoor workplaces?

Comfort depends on air temperature, radiant heat, air movement, humidity and the tasks being undertaken. Individual personal preference makes it difficult to specify a temperature indoors that satisfies everyone.

For workplaces where the activity is mainly sedentary (sitting/desk work), the temperature should

normally be at least 16°C after the first hour. If work involves physical effort it should be at least 13°C (unless other laws specify different temperatures). For schools the minimum temperature is 18°C.

There is no maximum temperature for workplaces. If managers receive complaints from employees regarding excessive or uncomfortable conditions they should take action to make staff comfortable.

Further advice can be sought from the [Health and Safety Advisers](#)

What am I expected to do for employees who work in hot or cold environments?

The risk to the health and safety of workers increases as the conditions move further away from those generally accepted as comfortable. Risk of heat stress arises from working in high air temperatures or exposure to high levels of humidity, such as those found in foundries and laundries. Cold stress may arise, for example from working in cold stores, food preparation areas and in the open air during winter.

Managers need to carry out a risk assessment for people who are expected to work in hot or cold conditions.

An assessment of the risks to workers' health from working in either a hot or cold environment needs to consider two sets of factors – personal and environmental.

- Personal factors include body activity, the amount and type of clothing and duration of exposure.
- Environmental factors include ambient temperature and radiant heat. If the work is outside they will include sunlight, wind velocity and the effects of rain or snow.

An assessment needs to consider:

- what could be done to control the workplace environment, in particular sources of heat. Minimising the risk of heat stress may mean insulating hot parts of plant which are acting as a source of radiant heat, providing local cooling by increasing ventilation and maintaining the appropriate level of humidity. If it is not reasonably practicable to avoid workers being exposed to cold environments, managers should consider local environmental controls for example cab heaters in vehicles.
- restricting exposure by, for example, re-organising tasks to build in rest periods or other breaks from this type of work. This will allow workers to rest in an area where the environment is comfortable and, if necessary, to replace body fluids to combat dehydration or cold. If work causes sweating, workers may need frequent rest pauses to allow them to change into dry clothing.
- using suitable clothing, which may need to be heat resistant or insulating, depending on whether the risk is from heat or cold.

- acclimatising workers to the environment in which they work.
- training in the precautions to be taken.
- supervision to ensure that the precautions identified by the assessment are put in place and are effective.

What type and how much lighting must be provided?

Lighting should be sufficient to enable people to work and move about safely. If necessary, local lighting should be provided at individual workstations and at places of particular risk such as crossing points or traffic routes. Lighting and light fittings should not create any hazard.

Automatic emergency lighting, powered by an independent source, should be provided in situations where a sudden loss of light would create a risk.

How clean should my workplace be and what should be done with waste materials?

Every workplace and the furniture, furnishing and fittings in it should be kept clean. It should also be possible to keep the surfaces of floors, walls and the ceiling clean. Waste should be stored in suitable receptacles, and cleaning the workplace and removing waste should be carried out as necessary, in an effective way.

How much room should each individual have in the workplace?

Workrooms should be big enough to allow people to move about with ease. Each person should have at least 11 cubic metres of space. Any part of a room more than three metres high should be discounted when calculating the space available. Eleven cubic metres per person is a minimum and may not be enough, depending on the layout, contents and nature of the work.

What should I consider when setting up workstations and seating?

Workstations should be suitable for the people using them and for the work involved. People should be able to leave workstations quickly in an emergency. If work can or must be done sitting, the manager must provide seats that are suitable for the people using them and for the work being done. Seating should give adequate support for the lower back and footrests should be provided if requested.

Why and when should I carry out maintenance?

The workplace and certain equipment, devices and systems should be maintained in good repair and in efficient working order with reference to health, safety and welfare standards. Such maintenance is required for mechanical ventilation systems, emergency lighting and equipment and devices which

would cause a risk to health and safety or welfare if a fault occurred. Managers should follow the regular maintenance schedules specified for each individual piece of equipment, device or system.

What is a 'traffic route'?

'Traffic route' means a route for pedestrians, vehicles or both and includes stairs, fixed ladders, doorways, loading bays, gateways and ramps.

What should I consider when thinking about floors and traffic routes?

There should be enough traffic routes, with sufficient width, separation and headroom, to allow people and vehicles to circulate safely and with ease.

Floors and traffic routes should be sound and strong enough for the loads placed on them and for the traffic expected to use them. The surfaces should not have holes or be uneven or slippery and should be kept free of obstructions.

Restrictions should be clearly indicated. Where sharp or blind bends are unavoidable or vehicles need to reverse, measures such as one way systems and visibility mirrors should be considered. Speed limits should be set and clearly marked.

People should be protected by screening if they have to work where they could be at risk from exposure to exhaust fumes or from materials that could fall from vehicles. Contractors should use temporary screens to shield people's eyes from arc welding operations.

Additional measures need to be taken where pedestrians have to cross or share vehicle routes. These may include marking routes and/or providing crossing points, bridges, subways and barriers.

Staircases

Open sides of staircases should be fenced with an upper rail at 900mm or higher and a lower rail. A handrail should be provided on at least one side of every staircase and on both sides if there is a particular risk. Additional handrails may be required in the centre of wide staircases. Access between floors should not be by ladder or steep stairs.

Pits and loading bays

Where a load has to be tipped into a pit or similar place, and the vehicle is at risk of falling into it, barriers, baulks of timber or portable wheel stops should be provided at appropriate positions before the tip or pit.

Loading bays should have at least one exit point from the lower level. Alternatively, a refuge should be provided to avoid people being struck or crushed by vehicles.

What should I consider when thinking about falls or falling objects?

Because the consequences of falling from heights or into dangerous substances are so serious, managers are required to put a high standard of protection in place.

Providing fencing or covers

Managers should provide secure fencing and upstands at least 1100mm high to prevent people falling from edges. Toe-boards should also be provided to prevent objects falling onto people. Where fencing cannot be provided, other suitable measures should be taken to prevent falls.

Dangerous substances in tanks and pits etc., should be securely fenced or covered. Covers should be capable of supporting any load likely to be imposed upon them and not be easily displaced.

Fixed ladders

Fixed ladders should be of sound construction, properly maintained and securely fixed. Rungs should be horizontal and give adequate footholds. The stiles should extend at least 1100mm above the landing.

Fixed ladders over 2.5m long at a pitch of more than 75° should be fitted with safety hoops or permanently fixed fall arrest systems. Fixed vertical ladders of more than six metres should have a landing or other resting place at every six metre point.

Fixed ladders should only be used if it is not practical to install a staircase.

Roof work

Slips and trips which may be trivial at ground level can result in fatal accidents when on a roof. Precautions should be taken where there is a risk of falling off or through a roof or through fragile materials such as roof lights or asbestos cement sheeting. These precautions could include fall arrest devices or crawling boards. Fragile roofs or surfaces should be clearly identified by notices.

Loading or unloading Vehicles

People should, as far as possible, avoid climbing on top of vehicles or their loads. If this is not possible, effective measures such as providing access staging and fencing should be taken to prevent falls.

If a tanker is loaded from a fixed gantry and access is required onto the top of the tanker, fencing should be provided. Lorries should be sheeted in properly designated and equipped places. In other situations, safety lines and harnesses should be provided for people on top of a vehicle.

When moving goods up or down between levels, the edge should be fenced, as far as possible, and secure handholds should be provided where necessary.

Measures other than fencing covers, etc

If fencing or covers cannot be provided or have to be removed, effective measures should be taken to prevent falls. Access should be limited to specified people, and in high-risk situations formal 'written permit to work' systems should be put in place.

A safe system of work should be operated. This could include the use of a fall arrest system or safety lines, harnesses and secure anchorage points. Safety lines should be short enough to prevent injury.

Systems which do not require disconnection and re-connection of safety harnesses should be used. If there is no need to approach edges, the length of the line and anchorage should prevent the edge being approached.

People should not be allowed into dangerous areas where work is going on overhead.

Change of level

Changes of level (such as a step between floors) which are not obvious should be marked to make them conspicuous. This is also important for persons with visual impairment.

What should I consider when thinking about stacking and racking?

Materials and objects need to be stored and stacked in such a way that they are not likely to fall and cause injury.

Storage racking and shelving needs to be strong and stable enough for the loads that will be placed on it. In general, racking and shelving is made from lightweight materials and there is a limit to the amount of wear and tear it can withstand. The skill of the workplace transport operators has a great bearing on how likely it is that racking and shelving will be damaged. The more damage racking and shelving sustains, the weaker it will become and it may eventually collapse even when supporting less than its normal load.

To ensure that racking or shelving continues to be serviceable:

- Check it regularly to identify damage and any action that needs to be taken.
- Encourage employees to report any damage, however minor, so that its effect on safety may be assessed.
- Fix maximum safe working load notices and adhere to them strictly.

Appropriate precautions in stacking and storing include:

- Safe stacking of sound pallets.
- Banding or wrapping to prevent individual articles falling.

- Setting limits for the height of stacks to maintain stability.
- Inspecting stacks regularly to detect and fix any unsafe stacks.
- Making special arrangements for objects which may be difficult to store.

What should I consider when thinking about windows and transparent or translucent doors, gates or walls?

Managers need to consider whether or not there is a foreseeable risk of people coming into contact with glazing in vulnerable areas (usually at shoulder height or below) and being hurt. If this is the case, the glazing will have to meet the requirements of the Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare Regulations 1992.

Windows, transparent or translucent surfaces in walls, partitions doors and gates should, where necessary for reasons of health and safety, be made of a safety material or be protected against breakage. If there is a danger of people coming into contact with it, it should be conspicuously marked or incorporate features to make it more visible.

What should I consider when opening windows and how do I clean them safely?

Openable windows, skylights and ventilators should be capable of being opened, closed or adjusted safely without risk of people falling. When open they should not be dangerous to passers-by.

Windows and skylights should be designed so that they can be cleaned safely. When considering this issue, managers should take into account the equipment that is to be used, together with the window or skylight and any other devices fitted to the building such as ring bolts where safety lanyards used by window cleaners and contractors can be attached.

What should I consider when thinking about doors and gates?

Doors and gates should be suitably constructed and, if necessary, fitted with safety devices (e.g. closers on fire doors).

Doors and gates which swing both ways and conventionally hinged doors on main traffic routes should have a transparent viewing panel. These should be positioned so that a person in a wheelchair can be seen from the other side.

Sliding doors should have a stop or some other way of preventing the door coming off its tracks.

Power-operated doors and gates should have safety features to prevent people being struck or trapped. Where necessary they should have a readily identifiable and accessible control switch or device that allows them to be stopped quickly in an emergency.

Upward-opening doors or gates need to be fitted with an effective device to prevent them falling back. Properly maintained counterbalance springs and similar counterbalance or ratchet devices designed to hold them in the open position are acceptable.

What sanitary conveniences and washing facilities need to be provided in the workplace?

Suitable and sufficient sanitary conveniences and washing facilities should be provided in readily accessible places. They and the rooms in which they are contained should be clean, adequately ventilated and lit.

Washing facilities should have hot, cold or warm running water, soap, clean towels or other means of cleaning and drying. If the sort of work undertaken means showers are required, these should be provided and should be thermostatically controlled to prevent scalding.

Men and women should usually have separate facilities unless each facility is in a separate room with a lockable door and is for use by only one person at a time. If necessary, special provision should be made for any worker with a disability to have facilities suitable for their use.

Do I need to supply drinking water for employees?

Workplaces should have an adequate supply of wholesome drinking water with an upward drinking jet or suitable cups. It should be readily accessible and clearly marked.

Water should only be provided in refillable enclosed containers where it cannot be obtained directly from a mains supply, unless it is in a jet from which persons can drink easily.

The containers should be refilled at least daily unless they are chilled water dispensers where the containers are returned to the supplier for refilling. Bottled water/water dispensing systems may be provided as an alternative source of drinking water.

What type of accommodation for clothing and facilities for changing do I need to provide for employees?

Adequate, suitable and secure accommodation should be provided for storing workers' clothing and special clothing. As far as is reasonable practicable the facilities should allow for drying clothing.

Changing facilities should also be provided for workers who need to change into special work clothing. The facilities should be readily accessible, without overcrowding from workrooms and washing and eating facilities, and should be separate for each sex to ensure the privacy of the user.

What facilities for resting and eating meals do I need to provide for employees?

Enough suitable, readily accessible rest facilities should be provided. Rest areas or rooms should be large enough and have sufficient seats (with backrests) and tables for the number of workers likely to use them at any time. They should include suitable facilities for eating meals where meals are regularly eaten in the workplace and the food would otherwise be likely to become contaminated.

Seats should be provided for workers' use during breaks. These should be placed in an area where workers do not need to wear personal protective equipment. Work areas can be counted as rest areas and as eating facilities provided they are adequately clean and there is a suitable surface on which to place food.

Where provided, eating facilities should include a facility for preparing or obtaining a hot drink.

Where hot food cannot be obtained in or reasonably near to the workplace, workers may need to be provided with a means for heating their own food. Canteens or restaurants may be used as rest facilities provided there is no obligation to purchase food.

Suitable rest facilities should be provided for expectant or nursing mothers. They should be near to sanitary facilities and, where necessary, include facilities for lying down. Facilities should also be provided for employees who are taken ill or need to lie down.

How can managers check that things are working well?

Health and safety audits

A specific part of managing health and safety is monitoring the effectiveness of the controls that have been developed and put in place. In effect this means carrying out a health and safety audit.

A health and safety audit checks:

- that managers have the policies and procedures they need, that they are being used (rather than gathering dust in an office) and that they do the job they were designed to do. If failings are noted they must be addressed.
- whether or not individuals have had adequate up-to-date training and that this is recorded, as well as whether or not they have received all the information they need and are putting it into practice.
- that the tools and equipment being used are right for the task and are being maintained and used correctly, as well as whether or not the required personal protective equipment (PPE) is being provided and used correctly.

Health surveillance

Where significant hazards to health have been identified, managers should have assessed the risk to their employees and developed measures to reduce the risk.

There is still, though, a need to check whether or not the measures taken are protecting employees as planned. Health surveillance will help managers do this and will alert them to any adverse effects on an employee's health where risks are seen as significant.

Some examples of health surveillance include:

- Employees exposed to high noise levels undergoing hearing tests.
- Employees exposed to respirable dust undergoing lung function testing.
- Employees exposed to skin sensitisers undergoing regular skin tests.

For more information on health surveillance contact your Directorate Health and Safety Adviser or Staff Care Services (Occupational Health).

What information and training must I provide for staff?

Information

Managers must make sure employees and others affected are aware of the risks they face in the workplace and the control measures that have been put in place to manage those risks.

Managers need to make sure they communicate in a way that ensures all employees understand what is required of them. This means thinking about staff abilities and needs and those who may require an alternative format or more specific training to suit their individual needs. The manager will also need to consider shift patterns when providing information and training.

Health and safety training must be provided to new employees as part of their induction. If the risks facing employees and associated parties change they must be given refresher training.

Training

In addition to constantly providing staff with the most up-to-date information, managers need to ensure they have provided those affected with the level of training necessary to enable them to work safely. As an example, when allocating work to staff, managers must make sure that the demands of the task do not exceed an individual's level of knowledge and/or capabilities.

Managers are advised to keep records of what information and training has been provided and to whom.

Emergency procedures

Managers need to think about emergency situations such as fire and bomb alerts. Written guidance will need to be in place detailing how employees and others affected will stop work and get to a safe place.

For Education, Learning and Skills and Specialist Children's Services, advice is contained within Kent Trust Web at www.kenttrustweb.org.uk. Search for "Emergency Procedures".

Managers may require certain employees to carry out particular tasks in an emergency (e.g. fire wardens). They must therefore make sure employees and others affected are capable of doing what is required of them. Fire, first aid and emergency co-ordinators must be made known to everyone and highlighted in notices that should be posted in readily assessable places.

What training is available for managers?

There are a number of health and safety training courses available through your Directorate Training Team or Learning and Development.

An introduction to health and safety is included in the induction that individuals receive after joining KCC. After the induction both manager and staff member should identify general and more specific health and safety training they require to do their job.

Some of the general health and safety training available includes:

- Basic Health and Safety Awareness
- Display Screen Equipment
- Risk Assessment
- Manual Handling

More specific health and safety training is available. Details are available from line managers, [Health and Safety Advisers](#), your Directorate Training Team or Learning and Development.

Where can managers get health and safety help and advice?

Health and Safety Advisers are available to help managers carry out their responsibilities. Help is also available from a number of individuals or departments e.g. Staff Care Services (Occupational Health), Facilities Management, Property Management and Trade Unions. Advisers will assist managers and tell them if more specialist help is required.