

Health and Safety Heads Up – Things to think about as a business owner

This is just a brief snapshot of some of the requirements and may not cover everything you need for your specific business or industry. HSE.gov.uk is a great source of information to ensure you have the latest legislative requirements covered.

[Health and Safety Policy or Statement templates that you can customise for your business are available on the website in Start Safe Safety Products along with many other useful documents and our Industry Specific Packs which give you templates, guidance and worked examples relevant to your industry. Check our free downloads regularly as they are always being added to.](#)

Health and Safety Policy or Statement – if you are a small business, with less than five employees you only need a H&S statement, not a full policy but if you have nothing in place and are going to be expanding soon it might be worth considering starting as you mean to go on and putting the full documentation in as you go.

Employer's Liability Insurance – This covers you for your employees contracting a workplace related injury or disease such as back injuries, occupational stress or work related asthma, dermatitis, cancers or more. It is a legal requirement that this is displayed prominently for all employees to easily read.

Health and Safety Law poster – It is a legal requirement to display this in a prominent place in your workplace. You can get the latest version of the poster (with the hologram; if it hasn't got one, it's an old version) and pocket cards (which are great if you have no workplace base) directly from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Safety Signs – These are a legal requirement. They should conform to legal standards and be clearly visible and easily understood. Pictograms are generally used. Generally they fall into four coloured categories:

- Prohibition (red) – e.g. no pedestrian access
- Warning (yellow) – e.g. vehicles reversing in this area
- Mandatory (blue) – e.g. hard hats must be worn
- Safe Conditions (green) – e.g. marking a fire escape route

Other signs such as hazard warning markers or other industry specific signs may be used.

Emergency Procedures – Make sure you have Risk Assessments and appropriate procedures in place to deal with any emergencies that might occur in or near your workplace. These might include; fire, floods, explosions, building collapse, pollution, gas leaks, hazardous chemical spillages, bomb threats, other terrorist attacks. Most organisations have an evacuation plan and procedures that are known to all and well documented and rehearsed, but it is worth thinking about an evacuation drill too, i.e. how to get everyone inside and accounted for in an emergency. Don't forget to consult with neighbouring business owners or others in a shared/communal working space. If they are doing something risky – think fire, explosions, nasty chemicals etc. you might want to know about it before a major issue arises – not as the gas cylinders come exploding through your shared wall!

First Aid – First Aid provision is a legal requirement and should be in line with the type of industry you are in. For example in a small office with a couple of people an appointed person to deal with First Aid and a First Aid kit and Accident Book may be sufficient. If your industry is complex, risky or several people are employed then additional provision should be made. If you are unsure, do double check with us. First Aid kits need to be BS8599 compliant, checked regularly and the right size and type for your workplace.

Please also make sure you know how and when to report an accident (and other significant events such as gas leaks) at work to the HSE and how to investigate the incident, along with how to review and change your documentation if it's required. Do contact us for accident investigation help and advice.

Fire – As with First Aid, the level of provision depends on the nature of your business. As a minimum a Fire Risk Assessment should be carried out at least annually by a qualified and competent person – we can help you with this and complete your Fire Risk Assessments for you.

Things you should also consider include:

- Means of escape in case of a fire
- Clearly displayed fire instructions or fire action notices
- Appropriate fire-fighting equipment and who is trained to use it
- A means of raising the alarm in the event of a fire and details of how you check this works
- Fire drills that mean a total evacuation of the building, fire warden/marshal duties and training, assembly points, information on emergency procedures for all, including visitors
- How you would contact the Emergency Services any key information they may need
- How you co-operate with others in a shared workspace or neighbouring properties/units in the event of an emergency, especially a fire

Information, Instruction, Training and Supervision – This covers things like induction training for new staff, ensuring all staff have the relevant information, instruction, training and supervision to carry out their duties safely, the information given to visitors, delivery staff, contractors and temporary workers and much more.

If staff are dealing with hazardous substances they need to know about them and the personal protective equipment (PPE) they need. This is where your CoSHH sheets and MSDS come in. Even day to day, household substances like bleach and toilet cleaner need to be considered if they are in the workplace, even if you wouldn't do this at home. If in doubt, check!

Risk Assessments need to be carried out for all risky activities or those that could cause people harm and Safe Systems of Work for some tasks or activities may need to be completed to ensure work is carried out safely. Templates for these and much more are in the Industry Specific Packs.

As an employer you also need to think about consulting with your staff as well as how you get key information out to them. They will often be the subject matter expert in their field or workspace and may see key issues a manager or owner does not!

Environmental Issues – Don't forget to look at the environmental impact of your business and your supply chain. This is also important, along with many other things, if you are looking for any accreditation such as CHAS, Safe Contractor, ISO9001 etc. An environmental statement or policy

is worth putting into place at the core of your business detailing how you will reduce, reuse, recycle and more. Simple things like using environmentally friendly substances and recycling your paper can have a huge impact over time.