

# First-aid at work

## Your Questions Answered



This leaflet answers some basic questions about first-aid provision at work. It is aimed at employers in small and medium-sized workplaces, but may be useful to all employers, managers and others involved in first-aid at work.

## Q1: What is first-aid at work?

People at work can suffer injuries or be taken ill. It doesn't matter whether the injury or illness is caused by the work they do or not, it is important to give them immediate attention and call an ambulance in serious cases. First-aid at work covers the arrangements you should make to ensure this happens. It can save lives and prevent minor injuries becoming major ones.

## Q2: What do I need to do?

The Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1982 require you to provide adequate and appropriate first-aid equipment, facilities and people so your employees can be given immediate help if they are injured or taken ill at work.

What is 'adequate and appropriate' will depend on the circumstances in your workplace and you should assess what your first-aid needs are (see Q3).

The minimum first-aid provision on any work site is:

- a suitably stocked first-aid box (see Q4);
- an appointed person to take charge of first-aid arrangements (see Q5);
- information for employees about first-aid arrangements (see Q9).

**It is important to remember that accidents and illness can happen at any time. First-aid provision needs to be available at all times people are at work.**

## Q3: What should I consider when assessing first-aid needs?

Some small workplaces with low-level hazards may only need the minimum provision for first aid but, there are factors that might mean you need greater provision. The checklist in Table 1 covers the points you should consider including the results of your risk assessments, numbers of employees, working arrangements, your injury and ill health record and needs of non-employees.

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## Q4: What should I put in the first-aid box?

**There is no mandatory list of items to put in a first-aid box.** It depends on what you assess your needs to be. As a guide, where work activities involve low-level hazards, a minimum stock of first-aid items might be:

- a leaflet giving general guidance on first-aid (e.g. HSE's leaflet: *Basic advice on first-aid at work* - see Q11);
- 20 individually wrapped sterile plasters (assorted sizes), appropriate to the type of work (you can provide hypoallergenic plasters, if necessary);
- two sterile eye pads;
- four individually wrapped triangular bandages, preferably sterile;
- six safety pins;
- two large, individually wrapped, sterile, unmedicated wound dressings;
- six medium-sized, individually wrapped, sterile, unmedicated wound dressings; and
- a pair of disposable gloves (see HSE skin at work web pages: [www.hse.gov.uk/skin/employ/gloves.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/skin/employ/gloves.htm)).

**This is a suggested contents list only.**

**The contents of any first-aid kit should reflect the outcome of your first-aid needs assessment.**

Tablets and medicines should not be kept in the first-aid box.

## Q5: What is an appointed person?

If you decide you don't need a first-aider in your workplace, you should appoint someone to take charge of first-aid arrangements. This is the minimum requirement.

Even in a small, low-hazard business where first-aiders are not considered necessary, there is always the possibility that an accident or sudden illness may occur. It is therefore important that there is always someone available to take charge of these arrangements.

The role of this appointed person includes looking after first-aid equipment and facilities and calling the emergency services when required. They can also

provide emergency cover where a first-aider is absent due to unforeseen circumstances (annual leave does not count). Appointed persons do not need first-aid training, though emergency first-aid courses are available. Appointed persons training courses are not regulated by HSENI and HSENI has no legal requirement to ensure that refresher training takes place for an appointed person.

Appointed persons are not necessary where there are an adequate number of first-aiders.

## **Q6: What is a first-aider?**

A first-aider is someone who has undertaken training and has a qualification that HSENI or HSE in Great Britain (HSEGB) has approved. This means that they must hold a valid certificate of competence in either:

- first-aid at work (FAW), issued by a training organisation approved by HSENI or by a recognised Awarding Body of Ofqual/Scottish Qualifications Authority.
- emergency first-aid at work (EFAW), issued by a training organisation approved by HSENI or by a recognised Awarding Body of Ofqual/Scottish Qualifications Authority.

You can obtain lists of suitable training providers and Awarding Bodies from the HSENI website or by phoning HSENI's Helpline Number (see Q11 for contact details).

Use the findings of your first-aid needs assessment (see Q3) to decide whether first-aiders should be trained in FAW or EFAW. EFAW training enables a first-aider to give emergency first-aid to someone who is injured or becomes ill while at work. FAW training includes EFAW and also equips the first-aider to apply first-aid to a range of specific injuries and illnesses. As a guide, Table 2 suggests the first-aid personnel to provide under different circumstances.

## **Q7: How often do first-aiders need to have their skills refreshed?**

Formal refresher training (with renewal of FAW and EFAW certificates) is required at intervals of three years. This formal requalification training is carried out by HSENI approved training organisations or by a training organisation of a recognised Awarding Body.

You can obtain lists of suitable training providers and Awarding Bodies from the HSENI website or by phoning HSENI's Helpline Number (see Q11 for contact details).

To help keep their basic skills up to date, it is strongly recommended that your first-aiders, including those trained in emergency first-aid, undertake annual refresher training although this is not a legal requirement. This training can be given by suitably qualified in house personnel or HSENI approved training organisations (list in Q11).

## **Q8: How many appointed persons or first-aiders do I need?**

There are no hard and fast rules on exact numbers. It will depend on the circumstances of your workplace. After working through the checklist in Table 1, refer to Table 2 which provides a general guide on how many appointed persons or first-aiders you might need. **The numbers given in Table 2 are suggestions only.** You should assess your first-aid needs in the light of your particular circumstances.

Where there are special circumstances, such as shift work or sites with several buildings, there may need to be more first-aid personnel than set out in Table 2. You will need increased provision to cover for absences.

## **Q9: What information do I need to provide for employees?**

You have to inform your employees of the first-aid arrangements. Putting up notices telling staff who and where the first-aiders or appointed persons are and where the first-aid box is will usually be enough. You will need to make special arrangements to give first-aid information to employees with reading or language difficulties.

## **Q10: If my first-aider holds a certificate issued by HSEGB what should I do?**

From the 1 October 2013 individuals approaching HSENI and who are in possession of a first aid at work or emergency first aid at work certificate for a regulated qualification awarded by an Awarding Organisation recognised by one of the qualification regulators in Great Britain (Ofqual, SQA or the Welsh Government) or issued by one of the Voluntary Aid Societies in Great Britain (St John Ambulance, British Red Cross or St Andrew's First Aid) will be considered able to act as first-aiders within the workplace for the purposes of the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1982.

## **Q11: Where can I get further information?**

Training Organisations

Lists of first-aid training organisations and Awarding Bodies are available:

- on the HSENI website: [www.hseni.gov.uk](http://www.hseni.gov.uk)
- from HSENI 83 Ladas Drive, Belfast, BT6 9FR. Telephone: 0800 0320 121.

Information on first-aid at work is available on the first-aid web pages of HSENI's website at: [www.hseni.gov.uk](http://www.hseni.gov.uk)

More detailed practical guidance on complying with your first-aid duties is available in "*First-aid at work. The Health and Safety (First-aid) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1982, Approved Code of Practice and guidance*"  
[www.hseni.gov.uk](http://www.hseni.gov.uk)

You may also find the following publications helpful:

- *Basic advice on first aid at work* Leaflet INDG347(rev2) HSE Books 2011  
[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg347.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg347.htm)

*Two first aid posters:*

- *Basic advice on first aid at work* HSE Books 2011 ISBN 978 0 7176 6432 0  
[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/first-aid-poster.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/first-aid-poster.htm)
- *Electric shock: First aid procedures* HSE Books 2011 ISBN 978 0 7176 6433 7  
[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/electric-shock-poster.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/electric-shock-poster.htm)

**Table 1 Checklist for assessment of first-aid needs**

Point to consider	Impact on first-aid provision
<p>■ <b>Hazards</b> (use the findings of your risk assessment and take account of any parts of your workplace that have different work activities/hazards which may require different levels of first-aid provision)</p>	
<p>Does your workplace have low-level hazards, like you might find in offices and shops?</p>	<p>The minimum provision is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an appointed person to take charge of first-aid arrangements;</li> <li>• a suitably stocked first-aid box;</li> <li>• information for employees about first-aid arrangements.</li> </ul>
<p>Does your workplace have higher level hazards, such as chemicals or dangerous machinery? Do your work activities involve special hazards, such as hydrofluoric acid or confined spaces?</p>	<p>You should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing first-aiders;</li> <li>• additional training for first-aiders to deal with injuries caused by special hazards;</li> <li>• additional first-aid equipment;</li> <li>• precise location of first-aid equipment;</li> <li>• providing a first-aid room;</li> <li>• informing the emergency services in advance.</li> </ul>







Point to consider	Impact on first-aid provision
<p><b>■ Working arrangements</b></p> <p>Do you have employees who travel a lot, work remotely or work alone?</p> <p>Do any of your employees work shifts or work out of hours?</p> <p>Are the premises spread out, eg are there several buildings on the site or multi-floor buildings?</p> <p>Is your workplace remote from emergency medical services?</p> <p>Do any of your employees work at sites occupied by other employers?</p> <p>Do you have enough provision to cover for your first-aiders or appointed persons when they are absent?</p>	<p>You should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• issuing personal first-aid kits;</li> <li>• issuing personal communicators/ mobile phones to employees.</li> </ul> <p>You should ensure there is adequate first-aid provision at all times people are at work.</p> <p>You should consider provision in each building or on each floor.</p> <p>You should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inform the emergency services of your location;</li> <li>• consider special arrangements with the emergency services;</li> <li>• consider emergency transport requirements.</li> </ul> <p>You should make arrangements with other site occupiers to ensure adequate first-aid provision. A written agreement between employers is strongly recommended.</p> <p>You should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• what cover is needed for annual leave and other planned absences;</li> <li>• what cover is needed for unplanned and exceptional absences.</li> </ul>
<p><b>■ Non-employees</b></p> <p>Do members of the public visit your premises?</p>	<p>Under the Regulations, you have no legal duty to provide first-aid for non-employees, but HSE NI strongly recommends that you include them in your first-aid provision.</p>

**Table 2 Suggested numbers of first-aid personnel to be available at all times people are at work**

1 From your risk assessment, what degree of hazard is associated with your work activities?	2 How many employees do you have?	3 What first-aid personnel do you need?
Low hazard e.g. offices, shops, libraries	Less than 25  25 - 50  More than 50	At least one appointed person  At least one first-aider trained in EFAW  At least one first-aider trained in FAW for every 100 employed (or part thereof)
Higher hazard e.g. light engineering and assembly work, food processing, warehousing, extensive work with dangerous machinery or sharp instruments, construction, chemical manufacture	Less than 5  5-50  More than 50	At least one appointed person  At least one first-aider trained in EFAW or FAW depending on the type of injuries that might occur  At least one first-aider trained in FAW for every 50 employed (or part thereof)

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The Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1982

