



HEALTH AND SAFETY: A BRIEF GUIDE FOR 2016

You can't just ignore it

Health and Safety laws are there to protect you, your employees and the public from workplace dangers.

If you have 5 or more employees, you MUST have a written Health and Safety Policy.

If you have ANY employees, you must either display the HSE-approved law poster (right) or provide each of your workers with the equivalent leaflet, which can be downloaded here free of charge: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/lawleaflet.pdf

You can order posters at www.hse.gov.uk. Prices start at £9.

Bookselling is a low-risk business, so H&S can be managed inhouse.

Appoint a **Competent Person**. This is ordinarily the business or shop owner or manager, but can be any other member of staff prepared to take responsibility.

The Competent Person should then write a **Health & Safety Policy**.

It should clearly say who does what, when and how.

Your policy should include both day to day events, and special events, such as policy for book fairs, viewing auctions or house visits.

Think about when and where your employees do their work. For example, you may need to include sections on lone working or remote working.

Do a Risk Assessment

Consider your premises and usual business, noting objects, locations and situations that might pose a risk either to you, your staff, or members of the public.

Talk to members of staff to listen to their concerns and opinions about health and safety issues.

Consider previous incidents.

Note the demographic and particular needs of your staff, e.g. are there any mobility issues.

Possible hazards

Sorting Stock

Manual handling

Carrying loads

Slips, trips & falls

Falling objects

Working at height

Working alone, including visiting potentially hazardous premises

Working with toxic substances, solvents for cleaning, harmful pigments in old manuscripts, etc.

Violence or threatening behaviour of customers

Electrical

Fire (NB, Fire Risk Assessment must also be completed)

Record who could be harmed by the hazards and how.

List what you already do, or could additionally do, to manage these hazards.

Make staff aware of the Risk Assessment, and of any emergency procedures.

Revisit and update it regularly, at least annually.

Templates are available from the HSE website or the ABA Office.



Looking After Your Employees



Eyes and vision

If your employees need to use Display Screen Equipment (DSE) i.e. computers, for **any** part of their role, you are obliged to provide eye and eye sight tests on a regular basis as dictated by an optometrist (usually every 1-2 years, or immediately in case of a sudden problem which may be work related).

You **must** pay the full costs of an eye test and for the provision of basic spectacles where required for them to fulfil their role.

You can specify the provider of the eye tests, and that only the most basic styles of glasses are covered.

It is good practice to offer an eye test to new joiners.

Designing Workstations

Sitting awkwardly at a desk or computer can cause fatigue, eye strain, upper limb problems and backache, all of which can contribute to sub-optimal performance, and even long-term sickness.

You **must** ensure all of your employees have a suitable workspace, and that checks are carried out every time new equipment is introduced, or if the employee's needs change, for example, in case of pregnancy, temporary or permanent mobility requirements.

Seating should have

- support for the small of the back
- fully adjustable height settings
- footrests available if necessary, particularly for the short

At a Desk

- Make sure there is space under the desk to move legs.
- Avoid excess pressure from the edge of seats on the backs of legs and knees.
- Arrange your workspace to suit your working patterns. If you hold your phone in your left hand, keep it on the lefthand side of your desk.

When using a computer:

- Forearms should be approximately horizontal
- The user's eyes should be the same height as the top of the screen.
- Arrange the desk and screen to avoid glare, or bright reflections. This is often easiest if the screen is not directly facing windows or bright lights.
- A space in front of the keyboard can help you rest your hands and wrists.
- Try to keep wrists straight.
- Position the mouse within easy reach, so it can be used with a straight wrist.
- Adjust the brightness and contrast controls on the screen to suit lighting conditions in the room.
- Regularly stretch and change position.
- Look into the distance from time to time, and blink often.

Manual Handling Training

Books can be heavy and awkward. If your staff regularly need to lift and carry, the **Manual Handling Operations Regulations** apply.

This means you should instruct your staff in **Good Handling Technique**.

- Adopt a stable position. The feet should be apart with one leg slightly forward to maintain balance (alongside the load, if it is on the ground).
- Avoid tight clothing or unsuitable footwear.
- Get a good hold. Where possible, the load should be hugged as close as possible to the body for as long as possible.
- Start in a good posture. At the start of the lift, slight bending of the back, hips and knees is preferable to fully flexing the back (stooping) or fully flexing the hips and knees (squatting).
- Keep the load close to the waist.
- Keep the heaviest side of the load next to the body. If a close approach to the load is not possible, try to slide it towards the body before attempting to lift it.
- Avoid twisting the back or leaning sideways, especially while the back is bent.
- Shoulders should be kept level and facing in the same direction as the hips.
- Turning by moving the feet is better than twisting and lifting at the same time.
- Look where you are going, not at the load.
- Move smoothly. The load should not be jerked

or snatched as this can make it harder to keep control and can increase the risk of injury.

- Don't lift or handle more than can be easily managed. There is a difference between what people can lift and what they can safely lift. *Only the extraordinarily muscular should ever aim to lift 25kg unassisted. A sensible target for a box of books to be carried by one person is no more than 10-15kg.*



First Aid

You are responsible for making sure that your employees receive immediate attention if they are taken ill or are injured at work.

As a minimum, you must have:
a suitably stocked first-aid box;

Basics:

individually wrapped sterile plasters (of assorted sizes)

sterile eye pads

individually wrapped triangular bandages

safety pins

large and medium-sized individually wrapped, sterile, unmedicated wound dressings

disposable gloves

a leaflet giving general guidance on first aid

you might also like to include

eye wash pods

SteriStrip wound closures

scissors

tweezers

an appointed person to take charge of first-aid arrangements;

for small businesses (less than 25 employees) they do not need to have first aid qualifications, but should be capable of taking charge in an emergency.

information for all employees giving details of first-aid arrangements.

make sure people know where first aid supplies are kept, and who the appointed person is

If you have employees who travel a lot, you should consider providing them with personal first aid kits.

Reporting Incidents

Some workplace accidents/incidents need to be officially reported to the HSE via an online form:

www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/report.htm

Reports should be made by the Competent Person.

Types of reportable injury:

- The death of any person

Specified injuries: (list not exhaustive)

- fractures, other than to fingers, thumbs and toes
- any injury likely to lead to permanent loss of sight or reduction in sight
- amputation
- any crush injury to the head or torso causing damage to the brain or internal organs
- serious burns (including scalding)
- any loss of consciousness caused by head injury or asphyxia
- any other injury arising from working in an enclosed space which: *leads to hypothermia or heat-induced illness; requires resuscitation or admittance to hospital for more than 24 hours*

If you have more than 10 employees you **must keep an Accident Book**

Employers' Liability Insurance

By law, employers are required to insure against liability for injury or disease to their employees arising out of their employment – it is compulsory for almost everyone.

Exceptions:

family businesses, ie if all of your employees are closely related to you. However, this exemption does not apply to family businesses which are incorporated as limited companies;

companies employing only their owner where that employee also owns 50% or more of the issued share capital in the company.

You need to have employers' liability insurance with an approved insurer for at least £5 million, ideally £10 million.

You must display a copy of the certificate of insurance where your employees can easily read it. This can be physically on the wall, or on a computer network.



Fire

As an employer, as a tenant, and as a property owner (with insurance), you are obliged to carry out a **Fire Safety Risk Assessment** and keep it up to date. This can be done as part of your general risk assessment.

Books are, obviously, highly flammable. Make your workplace as safe as can be by:

- **Installing and maintaining smoke alarms**

Have at least one alarm per floor.

Test your alarm regularly (guidelines suggest at least whenever the clocks are changed) and vacuum it gently to remove dust.

Replace batteries annually.

Replace alarms completely every ten years.

- **Installing and maintaining Fire Extinguishers**

As a rule of thumb you should have one extinguisher for every 200 metres squared of floor space with at least one on each floor.

- **Keep your exit route clear at all times**

If the stairs are your only way out, do not use them to store books or boxes on.

- **Raise awareness**

Make sure you and your staff are aware of fire escapes and where to find equipment.

Most fires are caused by **Electricity**

- Check the condition of your wiring at least once every ten years
- Check your sockets regularly – if you see burn marks or they feel hot, get a registered electrician to check them.
- Turn off and unplug any electrical equipment you are not using – especially at night
- Replace damaged or frayed cables as soon as you notice them
- Do not overload your sockets
- Use multiway extension leads, not block adaptors
Block adaptors are frequently not earthed
- Do not plug extension leads into each other
- If you smell burning that cannot be explained, call the Fire and Rescue service. They will have equipment such as thermal imaging cameras which will accurately detect objects that are overheating
- Do not obstruct airvents on computers or

heaters

- Keep heaters well away from other wiring or flammable materials
- Do not trail cables under carpets
- Tidy wires wherever possible

The **Electricity at Work Regulations** require you to safely maintain all electrical appliances on your premises.

PAT (Portable Appliance Testing) should be done regularly. As a broad rule, if you test everything electrical every year, you are meeting your obligations.

For most office equipment, such as computers and printers, this must be done every 2-4 years. Electric kettles should be tested every 6 months-1 year. Cables and leads every 6 months-4 years depending on usage.

Creating a Suitable Working Environment

Most of this is just common sense, but, it still needs to be done.

You need to provide:

- toilets and hand basins, with soap and towels or a hand-dryer;
- drinking water;
- a place to store clothing;
- somewhere to rest and eat meals.
- good ventilation;
- a reasonable working temperature (at least 16°C); while trade unions have called for a maximum temperature limit of 24°C, this is not currently the law
- lighting suitable for the work being carried out;
- enough room space and suitable workstations and seating;
- a clean workplace with appropriate waste containers

You also need to:

- properly maintain your premises and equipment;
- keep floors and traffic routes free from obstruction;
- have windows that can be opened and also cleaned safely;
- make sure that any transparent (eg glass) doors or walls are protected or made of safety material.