

Safety First Aid



A brief guide to workplace first aid

Employers are legally required to provide “such equipment and facilities as are adequate and appropriate” for the rendering of first-aid to employees who are either injured or become ill at work.

The law doesn't explicitly spell out what these equipment and facilities are, nor does it provide a minimum for legal compliance across all workplaces. As all workplaces differ in terms of size and risks, the onus is placed on the employer to conduct a thorough risk assessment and implement a first aid policy which is sufficient based on this assessment – this needs to be able to stand up to scrutiny should the HSE ever be required to investigate an incident. A first aid policy is a vital part of your wider health and safety policy.

30.7 million working days lost due to work-related illness and workplace injury

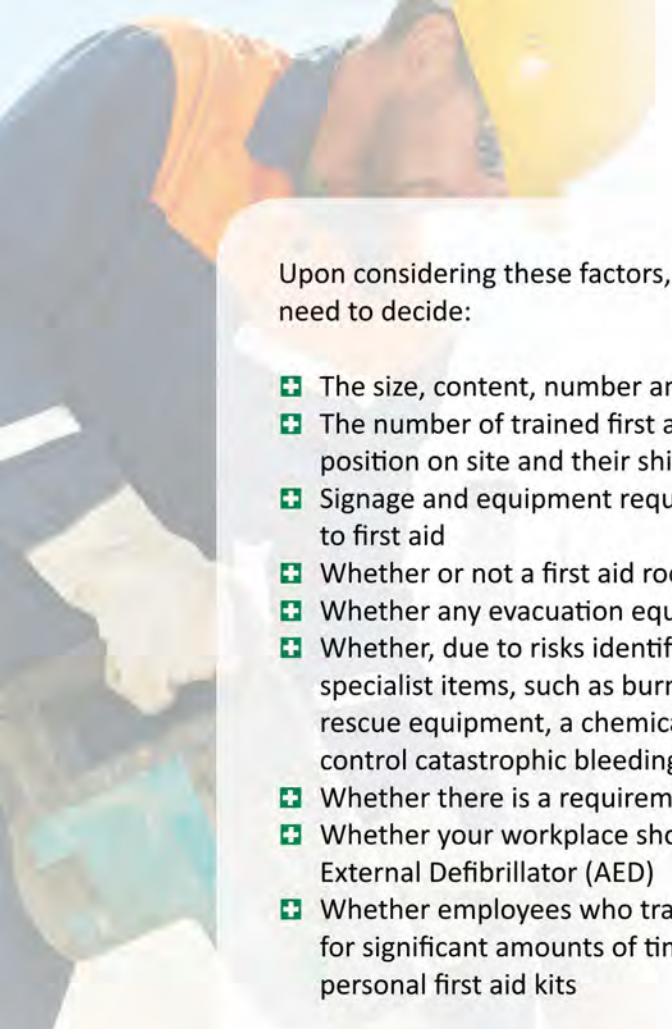
HSE estimate for 2017/18

What will determine the nature of first aid provision required?

Factors to consider when deciding upon your workplace's first aid needs include:

- ✚ The size of the workplace
- ✚ The number of employees
- ✚ Separate buildings or storeys
- ✚ The average age of the workforce
- ✚ Known medical conditions of employees
- ✚ The level of risk resulting from work undertaken
- ✚ The expected response time from emergency services
- ✚ The number of non-employees on site
- ✚ The organisation's history of accidents
- ✚ Shift patterns of the workforce





Upon considering these factors, you will need to decide:

- ✚ The size, content, number and location of first aid kits
- ✚ The number of trained first aiders, level of training, their position on site and their shift patterns
- ✚ Signage and equipment required to facilitate easy access to first aid
- ✚ Whether or not a first aid room is required
- ✚ Whether any evacuation equipment is required
- ✚ Whether, due to risks identified, there is a need for specialist items, such as burn treatments, electric shock rescue equipment, a chemical shower or equipment to control catastrophic bleeding
- ✚ Whether there is a requirement for emergency eye wash
- ✚ Whether your workplace should have its own Automated External Defibrillator (AED)
- ✚ Whether employees who travel and work off-site or alone for significant amounts of time should be provided with personal first aid kits

The HSE's First Aid at Work: Guidance on Regulations document can provide useful guidance concerning your workplace's level of risk and the nature of first aid provision required.

What should be in my first aid kits?

There's no mandatory list of items which need to be inside a workplace first aid kit. In their Guidance on Regulations, the HSE do suggest a minimum stock of first aid items for low-hazard work. They go on to state that:

"Employers may wish to refer to British Standard BS 8599 which provides further information on the contents of workplace first-aid kits. Whether using a first aid kit complying with BS 8599 or an alternative kit, the contents should reflect the outcome of the first-aid needs assessment."

British Standard first aid kits provide a good selection of generic first aid supplies which are suitable for most workplaces, and are a dependable benchmark for your first aid provision. However, your risk assessment may have identified a need for more extensive, or more specialist, first aid supplies in addition to your standard first aid supplies.

555,000 workplace injuries in 2017/18

According to the Labour Force Survey

Burns first aid

Accidental burns are a hazard in many workplaces, especially in kitchens and industrial workplaces. These can range from minor burns to the fingers to serious burns which constitute a medical emergency. The standard first aid advice for treating burns is to run them under clean water for at least 20 minutes, however this isn't always practical; for example, the casualty may not be mobile.

Burn gels and dressings are a great alternative as they cool the burn as effectively as water whilst protecting the wound and allowing the casualty to be moved. You can supplement your regular first aid kits with individual burn treatments, or purchase dedicated burn kits to sit alongside them.

Eye wash

Whenever there's an identified risk of harm to the eyes, eye wash facilities should be in place to flush contaminants out of the eye. Substances which are hazardous to eyes could include particulate matter such as cement dust or harmful chemicals like sulphuric acid. While it may be necessary to have a special eye shower in place, emergency eye wash bottles are also useful for providing first aid and can be easily installed close to the identified risks. HSE guidelines state at least a litre of eye wash should be available wherever there is a hazard.

Traumatic Injury

Regular first aid kits are not designed to treat serious injuries which result in life-threatening bleeding. For some workplaces, either the work undertaken (e.g. with power tools or cutting equipment) or the nature of the site (e.g. a site with large numbers of visitors which may experience violent crime or terrorism) may result in there being a realistic, foreseeable risk of serious injury taking place.

In these circumstances employers may wish to supplement their first aid kits with trauma dressings, haemostatic dressings and tourniquets which are specifically designed to stop fatal bleeding and preserve life until emergency services arrive.

