

Health and Safety Induction Training – Employer's Responsibilities

As an employer, you have a legal responsibility to ensure the health and safety of your employees. This includes providing them with appropriate information and training when they first start work and the provision of supplementary and/or more specific training on an ongoing basis thereafter but preferably prior to engaging in an activity that poses a known hazard or risk.

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1. Relevant legislation

Obligations are placed on employers by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 "to provide such information, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety at work of employees."

This requirement is supplemented by the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 which requires employers to provide health and safety training:

- When employees first start work
- When their work or responsibilities change
- When new equipment and/or technology is introduced
- When working systems change

These Regulations also say that training must be provided during working hours and at the employer's expense. Training needs should be reviewed periodically and revision training provided to ensure the employee's skill level is maintained.

2. Induction training

In order to comply with the law, certain health and safety information must be provided to your employees when they first start work. A practical way to do this is to provide a health and safety induction training package.

A health and safety induction training package should include information on:

- Existing Health and Safety legislation
- Employee's responsibilities under this legislation
- The company's Health and Safety Policy document
- Emergency procedures and any occupational health facilities
- Accident prevention and reporting procedures
- The company's Safety Rules
- Who to contact if Health and Safety issues arise
- Reference to other areas where the employee may receive training in the future

It should be noted that employees starting a new job have a lot of information to take on board so it is wise to assume that not all the information provided is being retained. To this end, it is good practice to provide periodic reinforcement sessions or segments of the training programme when it is of more relevance to the employee.

Benefits of Induction training

Induction training provides an opportunity to introduce new employees to the importance of health and safety matters in the workplace. It is an important stage in the training process as it sets the tone for the regard a company has towards the health, safety and well-being of employees. It also has the benefit of providing sufficient health and safety information to ensure new employees are aware of any specific hazards they face as soon as they start work rather than being vulnerable during an intermittent period. It raises awareness about health and safety issues, policies and practices which is an essential component in ensuring their effective implementation.

3. Health and Safety Policy

If you employ five or more employees, you must have a written Health and Safety Policy document which your employees have access to. A Health and Safety Policy document highlights the important health and safety issues in your company and provides an overview of how health and safety issues are implemented and managed. Your Health and Safety Policy is informed by a risk assessment of your premises and activities and is specific to your business. The Health and Safety Policy is thus a means to inform new employees of the hazards and risks they face and what control measures are in place to ensure their health and safety whilst in the workplace.

4. Emergency procedures

Emergency procedures are put in place to ensure the safety of occupants in the event of an emergency. An emergency can develop from a number of causes such as a fire, a bomb threat, a pollution incident or a flood. Emergency procedures should consider possible scenarios and take into account any special processes undertaken in the building. Emergencies are unforeseen events and therefore everyone must know what to do in advance to ensure a prompt and appropriate response. Familiarity with these procedures is essential for the welfare of new employees.

5. Accident reporting procedures

All new employees should be introduced and trained in the operation of a company's accident/ incident procedure. Accidents and incidents occur even in well managed sites that adhere to Health and Safety legislation and best practice. An effective accident/ incident procedure is the best way to ensure the identification of actions necessary to rectify the problem and prevent a recurrence. An important part of this process relies on the employee reporting accidents and incidents, particularly near-misses, to the appropriate person. Near-misses are manifestations that something fundamentally is wrong and if not addressed could lead to an accident in the future. Employees must understand the difference between the terms 'accident', 'incident' and 'near-miss'.

An "accident" is defined by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as "any unplanned event that resulted in injury or ill health of people, or damage or loss to property, plant, materials or the environment or a loss of business opportunity".

Example: Someone trips over a trailing cable which results in a sprained ankle

A "near-miss" is an incident "which under slightly different circumstances, may have resulted in injury or ill health of people, or damage or loss to property, plant, materials or the environment or a loss of business opportunity".

Example: Someone trips over a trailing cable but it does not result in any injury

A "dangerous occurrence" is "any incident that has a high potential to cause death or serious injury" and are specified by the Reporting of Incidents, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995.

6. Special considerations

When devising an Induction training programme, special attention should be given to the needs of the more vulnerable and high risk groups who may need a more detailed induction or a programme more tailored to their needs. Some of these groups include:

- Young people lacking in experience and maturity
- People with disabilities, impairments, medical conditions
- Elderly workers (60+)
- Pregnant employees/nursing mothers
- Lone and mobile workers
- Contractors and visitors

Some of the areas to consider for these groups include:

- Will any specialist facilities need to be provided?
- Age considerations – Young and elderly workers have different levels of maturity and experience which need to be taken into account . For example, younger workers may need a higher level of supervision and training than elderly workers
- Are there any language barriers?

- Do you need to consider contractors and visitors? Where contract staff perform tasks for which training is considered necessary for full time employees, the employer is required to give those temporary staff the same training. Contractors and visitors alike must be told of any particular risks they may face whilst on the premises and be sufficiently informed to avoid those risks

7. Responsibility for training

As part of the general 'duty of care' employers must provide all necessary training to ensure the health and safety of employees. Thus, overall responsibility for health and safety lies with the employer. However, these duties may be delegated to various levels of management who are given suitable authority to meet them. Departments or individuals may be assigned the responsibility for arranging and providing the induction training programme.

8. Records of Induction training

To provide a comprehensive audit trail, training records must be maintained for all training undertaken, (on and off-site) and documented in a training record form.

A typical training record would contain the following information:

- A brief description of the nature, duration and method (for example, facilitated or self-paced) of training provided
- Date when training took place
- Details of those in attendance
- Name and position of training provider
- Any certification of training or completion date

The availability of training records will be of prime importance in the event of intervention or an inspection from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) or in the defence of a civil claim against the company.

9. Additional training

Manual handling

Unless an employer can eliminate the need for manual handling tasks (such as moving a box of photocopying paper) from the workplace, The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 require employers to:

- Avoid manual handling activities wherever possible (i.e. use mechanical aids)
- Where manual handling is unavoidable, employers must carry out a risk assessment covering the task, load, working environment and individual capacity
- Provide information and training to employees appropriate to the risks they face

Display Screen Equipment (DSE)

In addition, any employee who uses DSE (practically all office and any home based employees) must be provided with appropriate training upon commencing. The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 as amended by the Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2002 require employers to:

- Inform employees of the associated risks with workstation use and provide training on how to avoid these risks
- Carry out risk assessments of workstations
- Provide eye and eyesight tests as requested

10. Sources of further information

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/index.htm>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/essentials.htm>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg345.pdf>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg259.pdf>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg268.pdf>

<http://www.rospa.com>



About EssentialSkillz

EssentialSkillz is a leading provider of Online Learning solutions and specialise in the area of online Health & Safety training. Their flagship product, Workstation Essentials, is used by many of the world's leading organisations to educate their workforce on good workstation ergonomic practices. The training is accompanied by a comprehensive workstation self-risk assessment which helps to identify at risk individuals and ensures compliance with the Display Screen Equipment Regulations.

An additional 12 titles from Manual Handling to Driving Safely allow companies to create a modular and cost effective Safety Induction training programme. Software tools allow customers to easily customise the content and create their own, company specific online training courses.

Customers include Rolls-Royce plc, AVIVA, EDF Energy, HM Treasury and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

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