



Health and Safety in a Nutshell

Rebecca Russell > Goode Management
ISO9001:2000 > EFQM > H&S > Consultancy

Health and safety has taken quite a bashing in recent years and it is fair to say that it has sometimes been the scapegoat for an over zealous approach or an excuse to hide political correctness. In the midst of negative publicity it is easy to push health and safety aside and hope that it will go away. But all companies have a legal obligation to manage health and safety and take the actions appropriate for their company needs.

So, what are the key things that all companies need to consider in order to ensure they are within the law?

- **Register with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) or Local Authority**
Unless you are self-employed you will almost certainly need to register your company. Contact your Local Authority or the HSE infoline (08701 545500) for more advice if you are unsure whether or not your company needs to be, or is registered.
- **Employers Liability Compulsory Insurance**
If you employ someone then by law, you will need to take out Employers Liability Compulsory Insurance and display the certificate in the workplace.
- **Health and Safety Law Poster**
If you employ someone, then you must display a Health and Safety Law Poster (ISBN 0717624935). The poster is available from HSE Books (www.hsebooks.com) and should be annotated with the following company information:
 - Consultation and representation arrangements at the workplace
 - Appointed person(s) with H&S responsibilities
 - Address of local enforcing authorities
- **Risk Assessments**
No workplace is risk free and assessments must be carried out regardless of the size of the company. This is where things often go wrong. A risk assessment needn't be onerous or complicated. It is an evaluation of what, in the workplace, could cause harm to people, what provisions already exist and what more could be done to prevent someone being hurt or made ill.

All companies, including the self-employed, need to carry out risk assessments. The assessments need to be appropriate to the type of activities. If the risks are low then they don't have to be written down or they could be generic. If you employ more than five people then a record of significant findings must be recorded.
- **Training and Supervision**
Everyone who works for you, including self-employed people, need to know and understand the hazards and risks in your workplace. The level of training

should be appropriate to the business and could be as simple as an initial talk through of the emergency procedures, first aid provisions, etc for a new starter, through to a comprehensive, examined and certificated safety training course for a supervisor or manager. New starters, young employees, people with new responsibilities or changes in work methods must receive training, and training records should always be maintained.

➤ **Competent Advice**

A competent person or persons, must be appointed to help you comply with health and safety legislation. The competent person could be from within the company, external or a combination, but they must have the appropriate training, knowledge and experience appropriate to the business.

➤ **Consultation with employees**

You are required to consult with employees on health and safety matters. Employees carry out the activities and can often provide appropriate solutions to health and safety problems. It is a useful process for engaging employees, keeping them motivated and involved. Consultation does not have to be a formal process, but it is always wise to record discussions, even if it's in the staff meeting minutes.

➤ **Health, safety and welfare needs**

If you employ staff then you are required to provide basic health, safety and welfare arrangements. The requirements fall under the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations and cover temperature, lighting, cleanliness, safety and maintenance issues, provision of toilet facilities, drinking water, etc. The list is long and the legislation applies to most work environments, from offices to factories, so the application of the provisions can be selective, but must be appropriate.

➤ **Reporting of accidents, disease and dangerous occurrences,**

Whether you are an employer, self-employed or control work premises, you are legally required to report certain work-related accidents, diseases and dangerous occurrences.

The requirements are outlined in the Reporting of Injuries, Disease and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR). In simple terms, you must send a RIDDOR report to the HSE if someone dies, suffers a major injury, is off work for more than three days due to a work related injury or illness, if a member of the public is injured and is taken to hospital, someone suffers from a work related disease or a dangerous incident occurs.

RIDDOR forms are available on the HSE website - www.hse.gov.uk.

➤ **Health and Safety Policy Statement**

If you employ more than five people then you must produce a policy statement that describes how the company organises and manages most of the headings listed above.

Health and safety considerations should be integral to any company's decision-making process and applied at all levels. Ignoring health and safety is just storing up problems for the future. If managed sensibly, health and safety enhances the company's productivity and effectiveness and becomes second nature.

Health and Safety in a Nutshell

