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Foreword

Small businesses are an important part of Northern Ireland's economy. They provide employment opportunities, develop new ideas and provide essential services on which many larger companies depend.

Current statistics suggest that 98% of all businesses in Northern Ireland employ fewer than 50 people and 89% employ fewer than 10 people. (See note 1 below.) One of the main risks to the success of the small business is failing to manage health and safety in the workplace. It is estimated that work-related injuries, ill-health and non-injury accidents cost the Northern Ireland economy £250 million a year (see note 2 below). A non-injury accident is any unplanned event that results in damage or loss to property, materials, the environment or a business opportunity, but does not result in an injury.

The aim of this booklet

We have produced this booklet to help you understand exactly what it is that you need to do to effectively manage health and safety. The aim is to give you simple advice that you can easily understand and put into practice within your business.

¹ Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment
UK Business Activity Publication, 31 March 2008

² Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment. The cost of work-related injuries, ill-health and non-injury accidents to the Northern Ireland Economy 2004/2005

Introduction



Why should health and safety concern me?

It is a huge mistake to believe that accidents will never happen in your business or that health and safety only applies to larger or higher-risk workplaces. Research has shown that small businesses are likely to have twice the number of fatal accidents compared with larger ones. The Health and Safety Executive National Statistics report states that from 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009, in the UK:

- 180 people lost their lives while at work;
- 131,895 non-fatal injuries resulting from work activities were reported;
- 1.2 million people suffered from ill-health caused or made worse by their work; and
- over 29.3 million working days were lost.

Don't panic. Putting good health and safety measures into practice does not have to be complicated, expensive or take a lot of time. Most practices that you put in place will be as a result of good health and safety management. It makes good business sense and can actually save you money. Your business will not only be safer, but one that may develop and thrive well into the future.

Cost of poor health and safety management

Which of the following sums up your attitude to health and safety?

Safety is the most crucial investment we can make. The question is not what will good practice cost us, but what will it save us?

or

Accidents don't cost me anything - that is what insurance is for!

Be honest, the second statement is a more common attitude. However, in actual fact, insurance policies do not cover everything. Your policy may only pay out for a serious injury or illness or your policy excess may be greater than the amount you need to pay, leaving you to find the money out of your own profits.

Many of the extra costs associated with an accident or illness are not actually covered by your insurance policy, such as lost production time, sick pay, overtime, loss of a contract, legal costs, damage or loss of product, repairs to equipment and so on. These extra costs are often referred to as the hidden or uninsured costs as they are not immediately easy to see or accounted for. It has been estimated that these costs can be between £8 and £36 for every £1 covered by insurance.





The effect on your insurance premiums

A poor claims record will affect the amount that your business will pay in insurance premiums. Ultimately your premium will increase or, at worst, your insurance company may refuse to provide cover.

In reality most businesses do not know how much accidents and ill health actually cost them and most are often surprised at the true total.

Example

An employee in a small engineering company was injured when using an unguarded drill. This cost the company a total of £45,000. The company was working on a 3% profit margin and had to increase turnover by £1.5 million just to cover the costs.

Insurance cover – what do I need?

The law says that you must have employer's liability insurance when you employ members of staff, and motor insurance when you use a company vehicle on a public road.

People are confused over the three most common types of business insurance policy available.

Employer's liability compulsory insurance: You need this by law to make sure that all employees are covered by enough insurance during the course of their employment. The minimum cover you need is £5 million. You must display a copy of your certificate of insurance where your employees can easily read it. Since 1 April 2009, you have been allowed to display your certificate electronically, as long as your employees know how and where to find the certificate and they have reasonable access to it. Also, from this date you do not need to keep copies of out-of-date certificates. However, we strongly advise you to keep, as far as possible, a full record of your employer's liability insurance.

Public liability: This covers your liability to another person you do not employ such as a customer or visitor who is injured as a result of your business's activities (for example, they trip on a trailing cable or damaged carpet). Public liability will also cover you if one of your employees, through the course of their work activities, injures someone or damages their property. This particular cover is voluntary and you can choose the limit of insurance you need.

Product liability: This covers injury or property damage which has arisen from a product that you supplied. This cover is voluntary and you can choose the limit of insurance you need.

You can get more detailed information on the different types of insurance you may need for your business from the Business Link website at www.businesslink.co.uk

The British Insurance Brokers' Association can give you names of brokers who can advise you on getting insurance. See www.biba.org.uk or contact BIBA on 0870 950 1790.



Managing health and safety

Have I got it under control?

Business owners, directors and managers can be held personally responsible for failures to control health and safety.

Ask yourself:

**Can I really afford these failures?
Do I effectively manage health and safety? If not - why not?**

You need to manage the other areas of your business, so what is different about health and safety? The answer is nothing! Begin by thinking about how health and safety fits in with all the other important management systems in your business, such as finance, production and sales. Don't try to complicate things – most small businesses will have simple structures for managing their business.

Remember: effective management is no accident - organisation and planning are essential.

Checklist



- Do we have a health and safety policy?
- Is it up to date and relevant?
- Is it signed by the most senior member of the business and displayed where all employees can see it?
- Do all staff know their health and safety responsibilities?
- Are all staff trained well enough to be able to work safely?
- Do all staff know the risks and the control measures in place to reduce the risks? .
- Is everyone in the workplace involved in spotting hazards and solving problems? ..
- Is there enough written information and advice on health and safety displayed around the workplace?
- Is it available to everyone?
- Do we have a health and safety action plan with realistic aims?
- Do we carry out any checks, such as workplace inspections to make sure that we are keeping to the arrangements we set in the policy?
- Are accidents and incidents reported and thoroughly investigated?

To successfully manage health and safety, there are a number of things that you will need to do.

1 Assess the risks from your business's work activities, record the significant findings, develop an action plan and let your staff know the outcome.



2 Develop a written health and safety policy which outlines how you plan to manage health and safety. This should give details of who will be responsible for putting the policy into practice and outline the health and safety arrangements that you have in place.



3 Decide on user-friendly rules and procedures for things such as:

- fire safety and evacuation in an emergency;
- manual handling;
- using work equipment;
- using hazardous substances; and
- electrical safety.



4 Decide who is going to co-ordinate and manage your health and safety policy and procedures day-to-day. This may be you as the business owner or director or you may want to involve a senior member of staff. You need to make sure that whoever has the responsibility for health and safety, is able to carry out that role (in other words, they have enough skills, experience and knowledge in both the business and in health and safety). You or your staff may need some more training.

5 Communicate with your staff to make sure that they know about the health and safety policy and the arrangements that have been put in place to make sure you protect their health and safety while at work. You must also pass on the findings of your risk assessments and the controls that you have set up to all staff who may be affected. Remember that not all staff may come into contact with the same hazards. Staff meetings are an ideal place for passing on this information. You should encourage feedback from your employees on any health and safety improvements that could be made.



6 Monitor the arrangements against those you have set in your policy such as monthly workplace or equipment inspections, weekly fire equipment inspections and so on. This is to identify and deal with possible hazards before they become a problem and cause injury or ill health.



7 Carry out thorough accident or 'near-miss' investigations to learn from the experience and make changes where needed.



8 Regularly review your health and safety arrangements in other words, your policy, procedures and risk assessments, to make sure they are still effective and all staff understand them. Don't leave them on a shelf to collect dust! Reviews should take place at least every six to 12 months unless something significant changes in the meantime.



How do I carry out a risk assessment?

To manage health and safety effectively within the business, you need to know what the main hazards and risks are so that you can build in appropriate ways to control them. The first thing you need to do whether you are reviewing your systems or setting them up for the first time is to carry out a risk assessment.

Risk assessment, while sounding complicated, is in actual fact quite simple. Each of us assesses risk each day, for example when crossing the road. Every time we cross the road, we make our own split-second assessment as to whether it is safe or not based on:

- the speed and nearness of oncoming traffic;
- whether or not there is a gap in the traffic;
- the width of the road we need to get across; and
- our own ability, and the ability of others who may be with us, to cross the road in time.

If we decide that the risk is too great, we will decide to wait and use a pedestrian crossing which is a control measure to stop the traffic, allowing us to safely cross the road.

When carrying out a risk assessment the checklist below will help you identify all the areas you need to consider. See the five steps to assessing risk on page 10 for more detailed information.

Checklist



Set up a small working group of your most important members of staff who are experienced and knowledgeable in all or some of the working areas within the business.....

Give all those members of staff some basic training in assessing risks

Identify all of the main work areas or activities within the business (such as the warehouse, office, housekeeping, maintenance and so on) where you need to carry out a risk assessment.....

Draw up a timetable of when you want the assessments completed by

Discuss, review and record the significant findings of the assessments as a working group, making sure that you include employees and managers from each area and agree to the further action needed.....

Give all staff their own copy of the assessment or a summary of the significant findings, making sure that they understand what is needed from them

Continually review your assessments and update when needed, repeating the whole process at least every 12 months.....



Five steps to assessing risk

Carrying out a risk assessment can help you protect your workers and your business, as well as help you work within the law. It helps you focus on the risks that really matter – the ones that could possibly cause real harm.

A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what in your work could cause harm to people, so that you can decide whether you have taken enough precautions or if you should do more to prevent harm. The law does not expect you to get rid of all risk, but you must protect people as far as is reasonably possible.

- A **hazard** is anything that may cause harm, such as chemicals, electricity, working from ladders, an open drawer.
- The **risk** is the chance, high or low, that somebody could be harmed by these and other hazards, together with an indication of how serious the harm could be.

When you are carrying out your risk assessment, it may be helpful to divide your business into different activities or areas and deal with each of these separately. This will be less daunting than trying to carry out a risk assessment for the whole business. Follow the five steps below.

Step 1 What are the hazards?

First you need to work out how people could be harmed. When you work in a place every day, it is easy to overlook some hazards, so here are some tips to help you identify the ones that matter.

- Walk around your business and look at the work activities being carried out. Identify the activities that could cause harm.
- Ask your employees or their representatives what they think. They may have noticed things that you haven't. They may also have suggestions about how to improve the workplace. Including your employees from the beginning will also increase the chance of the measures you are introducing being effective, as they will understand how they came about and why they are needed.
- Visit the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) website (www.hse.gov.uk). There is lots of information here on hazards that might affect your business.
- Contact your trade association as they may have helpful information and advice.
- Check data sheets or manufacturers' instructions for the chemicals or equipment you use. These can be very helpful at pointing out hazards.
- Look back through your accident and ill-health records to identify other hazards.



Don't forget to think about health hazards, such as high levels of noise or working with harmful substances, as well as safety hazards.



Step 2 Decide who might be harmed and how

Identify groups of people who might be harmed and how they might be harmed, for example, shelf stackers may injure their back as they are repeatedly lifting boxes. Remember:

- vulnerable workers with particular needs, for example young people, new mothers, women who are pregnant and people with disabilities;
- people who might not be in the workplace all the time;
- members of the public; and
- if you share your workplace, think about how your work affects others.



Step 3 Evaluate the risks and decide what precautions to take

Once you have spotted the hazards, you then have to decide what to do about them. By law you must do everything that is reasonable to protect people from harm. You need to answer the following questions.

a What are you already doing?

Start by looking at what you are already doing, think about what controls you have in place and how you organise your work. Then compare these with what is accepted as good practice.

b What further action do you need to take?

If you have decided that there is more you could do to bring yourself up to standard, list the extra precautions you need to take. Firstly, ask yourself the following question.



- **Can I get rid of the hazard altogether?**

For example, instead of using a circular saw to cut wood, buy wood which is already cut to size. Or, instead of using a meat slicer, buy cooked meat that is already sliced.

If this is not possible, ask yourself this question.

- **Can I use a product that is safer?**

For example, buying diluted bleach solution instead of concentrated bleach.



If these options are not realistic because of the type of hazard or the cost involved, you will need to look at ways of controlling the risk. When you are controlling risks, consider each of the following and introduce all that apply.

- Prevent access to the hazard by adding a barrier or guard to prevent people getting close to the hazard. For example, put a fence around the gas-bottle store or add a blade cover on a meat slicer.
- Organise work to reduce the number of people who are exposed to the hazard or to reduce the length of time people are exposed to the hazard. Consider collective controls that protect everyone and not just individuals.
- Provide safe systems of work, written procedures, training and supervision to make sure your employees are aware of the dangers and can prevent themselves from being injured or becoming ill. For example, have lock-out systems for machinery, train your employees on how to use machines and equipment, put up a fire notice, practise evacuations and so on.
- Provide personal protective equipment (PPE), such as gloves, to protect against chemicals or hot food.
- Provide welfare facilities (for example, first aid) and facilities for people to wash their hands.



Using PPE is seen as the last resort, and you must never use it as the only control measure.

Improving health and safety doesn't need to cost a lot. For example, placing a mirror on a dangerous blind corner to help prevent vehicle accidents would not cost very much. Not taking simple precautions can cost you a lot more if an accident does happen.



Step 4 Record your findings and take action

Putting the results of your risk assessment into practice will make a difference when looking after people and your business. Writing down the results of your risk assessment and sharing them with your employees encourages you to do this.

If you have five or more employees, you must record the main points you found out from your risk assessment. When you write down your results, keep it simple. Here are some examples.

Hazard	Action taken
Tripping over rubbish	Provided bins Told staff Weekly checks
Fumes from welding	Use exhaust ventilation and check it regularly

For more help, see the example on page 15.

We do not expect a risk assessment to be perfect, but it must be suitable and effective. You need to be able to show that:

- you have carried out a proper check;
- you have dealt with all significant hazards and taken into account the number of people involved and how they may be harmed;
- the precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low; and
- you involved your employees or their representatives in the process.

No matter how big or small your business is, it is good practice to record what you find in your risk assessment and tell your employees. You can use a photocopy of the blank risk assessment template on page 16 to do this. You can also download a version of the template from the Health and Safety Works Northern Ireland (HSWNI) website at www.healthandsafetyworksni.gov.uk

If, like many businesses, you find that there are quite a lot of improvements that you could make, don't try to do everything at once. Make a plan to deal with the most important things first.

A good plan often includes a mixture of different things such as:

- a few cheap or easy improvements that you can make quickly, maybe as a temporary solution until you can put more reliable controls in place;
- long-term solutions for risks that are most likely to cause accidents or cause someone to be ill;
- long-term solutions for risks which have the worst possible consequences, for example a major fire;
- arrangements for training employees on the main risks and how to control them; and
- regular checks to make sure that the control measures stay in place.



Finally, make sure everyone knows what they are responsible for.

a Who needs to carry out the action?

You should make it clear who in the company is responsible for taking the lead on each action.

b When is the action needed by?

Make sure that you set a date by which the work should be finished.

c Done

As you carry out each action tick it off as 'done' on the risk assessment.

Step 5 Review your risk assessment and update when needed

Very few workplaces stay the same, so it makes sense to review what you are doing regularly. Every year or so, review where you are to make sure you are still improving, or at least not sliding back.

As a general rule you should always review your assessments:

- after an accident has happened;
- after you have just avoided an accident;
- when you bring in new equipment, substances and procedures;
- before a young or inexperienced employee starts working for you;
- once a female member of staff tells you that they are pregnant, or when a new mother returns to work; and
- during maintenance work.

If there is a significant change, don't wait. Check your risk assessment, and amend it when needed.

Even if nothing changes, it is still important to review your risk assessments each year, as your staff may be doing something that you are not aware of. It will also help you to make sure that your current controls are still working as effectively as you think they are.

When you are running a business, it's easy to forget about reviewing your risk assessment, until something goes wrong and it's too late. So, set a date for your review and put it in your diary so you don't forget it.

Example risk assessment for an office-based company

Title: Office risk assessment

Company name: ABC Office
 Assessment carried out by: J Bloggs
 Date the assessment was carried out: 1 August 2010
 Date of the next review: 1 August 2011

Activity or area	What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action do you need to take?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?	Done	
Main office	Slips and trips	Staff and visitors may be injured if they trip over objects or slip on spillages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General good housekeeping. All areas are well lit, including stairs. Staff keep work areas clear, for example no boxes are left in walkways. Offices are cleaned every evening. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better housekeeping in staff kitchen, for example, cleaning up on spills. Arrange for loose carpet tile on second floor to be replaced. 	All staff	From now on	----	
	Handling paper and office equipment	Staff may injure their back or suffer pain from handling heavy and bulky objects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We use a trolley to move boxes of paper and other heavy items. We only put light objects on high shelves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remind staff that they should not try to lift objects that look too heavy. 	Manager	5 August 2010	4 August 2010	
	Fire	If trapped, staff and visitors could suffer from burns or breathe in smoke.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are working with our landlord and we have carried out a fire risk assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out any actions identified by the fire risk assessment. 	Manager	Manager	From now on	----
	Display-screen equipment (DSE)	Staff may have problems with their posture or pain in their hands or arms because they are overusing poorly-designed workstations or not using them properly. Staff may also get headaches or sore eyes if lighting is poor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All new employees receive DSE assessments of their workstations and training. We will take any action needed as soon as possible. We will reassess the situation after any changes, for example, if we get new equipment, furniture or lighting. Our workstations and equipment are set to make sure that our employees have good posture and do not get glare and reflections on the screen. We assess shared workstations. When we plan our work we make sure we include regular breaks or a change of activity. We control the lighting and temperature. We have adjustable blinds on the windows to control the natural light on the screen. We keep noise to a minimum. We provide eye tests for people who need them, and we pay for basic spectacles for employees who need to use them with DSE. We may pay towards the costs in other cases. We make sure that anyone who uses a laptop is trained to carry out a DSE assessment so they can use the laptop away from the office. In the office, people should use laptops with a docking station, screen, keyboard and mouse. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervisors make sure staff continue to get breaks away from the computer. Check that we follow up actions from self-assessments as soon as possible. Tell staff that they must tell their manager about any pain they have which may be linked to using a computer at work. Send a letter to our landlord about the broken window blind near our accounts section. Remind anyone who uses a laptop to carry out regular DSE assessments to avoid problems and identify any issues. 	Supervisors	4 August 2010	4 August 2010	
					Manager	21 August 2010	5 August 2010	
					All staff	21 August 2010	20 August 2010	
					Company secretary	4 August 2010	4 August 2010	
					Manager	4 August 2010	4 August 2010	



How do I develop a health and safety policy and put it into practice?

Now that you have carried out your risk assessments, you can develop your health and safety policy. No matter how small your company, you will have certain arrangements, procedures or rules in place to make sure that accidents are prevented during the course of your day-to-day business. It is good practice to record all of these details in a policy document.

A documented health and safety policy is a legal requirement if you employ five or more people.

The main aim is to:

- show your employees and others that you are committed to their health, safety and wellbeing;
- identify those who are responsible for making sure that health and safety matters are seen to; and
- explain in detail the arrangements that are in place to control the main hazards shown in your risk assessments.

Your health and safety policy should have three parts, as explained below.

Part 1 - Statement of intent

In your statement you should list your company's aims for health and safety. You should use simple language. You, as the owner or the most senior person in the company, should sign and date the statement. You should also set a review date.

You must display your statement of intent where all the employees can read it, for example on the staff notice board.

Part 2 - Responsibilities for health and safety

This section of the policy lists the names, positions and roles of the people within your company who have a specific responsibility for health and safety.

Part 3 - Arrangements for health and safety

The arrangements section gives details of the specific systems and procedures you have in place. This part of your policy should describe in detail how you control the risks associated with your business activities. The arrangements must cover all of your work sites and activities.

You must tailor this to your specific business. For example, there is no point in describing your safety rules for dealing with chemicals if you don't use chemicals.

The sample policy given is only an example. The amount of detail you will need in your policy will depend on your business and your activities.



Example of a health and safety policy

Part 1 - Statement of intent

Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978

This is the health and safety policy statement for:

(Name of the company)

We will:

- control the health-and-safety risks of our work activities;
- consult with our employees on any issues which affect their health and safety;
- provide and maintain safe machinery and equipment;
- make sure we handle and use substances safely;
- provide information, instructions and supervision for employees;
- make sure all employees have the skills they need to do their job and give them the training they need;
- prevent accidents and stop people from becoming ill because of work;
- maintain safe and healthy working conditions; and
- regularly review and revise this policy.

Signed

(Employer)

Date

Review date



Part 2 – Responsibilities for health and safety

As the employer, you have overall responsibility for health and safety. You can give others, for example a manager or supervisor, responsibility for day-to-day tasks. Make sure they keep you informed about health and safety matters, as they are still your overall responsibility. You can ask people within your company to carry out specific tasks depending on the area or topic. You should make sure that everyone knows who's responsible for what, so that if people are worried about any health-and-safety issues they can report them to the right person. Employees also have legal responsibilities to take care of the health and safety of themselves and others, and to co-operate with you to help you work within the law.

You should also choose a person to be responsible for carrying out risk assessments, reporting what they find and making sure that the approved action has been taken.

All employees must:

- co-operate with supervisors and managers on health-and-safety issues;
- not interfere with anything provided to protect their health and safety;
- take reasonable care of their own health and safety; and
- report any health-and-safety issues they are worried about to an appropriate person.

Part 3 – Arrangements for health and safety

Consulting your employees

You must consult your employees. If you recognise a union and there is a safety representative from the union, you must consult them on anything that will affect the employees they represent. If you do not have trade unions, you must consult employees directly or through an elected representative.

Provide and maintain safe machinery and equipment

You will need to make sure that you identify all machinery and equipment that needs maintaining, and that the maintenance is done. You must also make sure that new or second-hand equipment meets health-and-safety standards before you buy it.

Handling and using substances safely

You must assess the risks from all substances which are a health hazard under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 (as amended). You should write down your arrangements for doing these assessments.

Information, instructions and supervision

In this section you should write down where you display the 'Health and Safety Law in Northern Ireland' poster, where employees can go for health-and-safety advice and what supervision you provide for young or new employees.



Part 3 (continued)– Arrangements for health and safety

Training

You must give all employees health-and-safety training when they start work, which should cover basics such as first aid and fire safety. You should also provide health-and-safety training which is specific to a person's job. You also have to provide training if risks change and refresher training when needed. Write down your arrangements for training, including arrangements for keeping records.

Accidents, first aid and work-related illness

For certain work, you must monitor your employees' health. Your COSHH assessments will highlight when you need to do this. You should keep a note of your first-aid arrangements.

Monitoring

You must be able to show that you are monitoring health and safety. You can monitor health and safety 'actively', for example by doing spot-check visits, or 'reactively', for example by investigating any accidents or illness.

Emergency procedures – fire and evacuation

Record your emergency procedures, how often you check them and who checks them.

**This is only a summary of a policy. The examples above are only a sample.
You may need to include separate detailed procedures for each area.**

Vulnerable groups



There are many groups of people at work who you should pay special attention to, to make sure that you maintain high standards of health and safety at all times.

New mothers and women who are pregnant

There are specific laws that say you must protect the health, safety and welfare of new mothers and women who are pregnant as there are many risks that may affect their health and safety and that of their unborn child. Working conditions considered acceptable beforehand may no longer be so during pregnancy and while breast-feeding. These risks will vary depending on the employee's health and at different stages of their pregnancy.

As an employer you should carry out a specific risk assessment, taking account of any advice the employee has been given from their GP or midwife. Some of the more common hazards might be:

- lifting or carrying heavy loads;
- standing or sitting for long periods of time;
- being exposed to infectious diseases;
- work-related stress;
- workstations and posture;
- long working hours; and
- working with chemicals.

Wherever possible, you should remove these hazards. If this is not possible, you should adjust the working conditions such as hours of work, or the duties of the employee.

Workers with disabilities

As an employer you can make reasonable adjustments within the workplace for workers with disabilities. Some adjustments which could be considered reasonable are:

- providing suitable fire-evacuation procedures;
- allowing time off for rehabilitation, assessment or treatment;
- buying or modifying equipment;
- adjusting the premises or workstations;
- providing a reader or interpreter; and
- providing appropriate toilet facilities.

You must also make sure that the services you provide are accessible to everyone and that any physical features of the building do not make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for people with disabilities to get in (for example, steps at the entrance of a building).

You can find more information in 'Balancing Disability Rights & Health & Safety Requirements – A guide for employers'. You can get this from:

**The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, 7-9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast, BT2 7DP.
Phone: 028 9089 0890 or go to www.equalityni.org**

**Or, contact Disability Action, Portside Business Park, 189 Airport Rd, Belfast, BT3 9ED.
Phone: 028 9029 7880 or go to www.disabilityaction.org**

**Or, you can contact HSENI, 83 Ladas Drive, Belfast, BT6 9FR.
Helpline: 0800 0320 121 or go to www.hseni.gov.uk**



Young workers

A **young person** is anyone above minimum school leaving age (they have to be 16 years old at the end of the school year) and under 18.

A child is anyone under the minimum school leaving age and there are restrictions on the type of work they may do and for how long. You can get more information from your local education and library board.

As an employer you must assess and control the risks to young workers before they start work. You must take account of the fact that young workers are inexperienced, unaware of health and safety risks and may be physically or mentally immature.

You may need extra control measures to make sure that you remove or reduce hazards to the lowest possible level.

A structured training programme with close supervision is very important for young workers while they are developing and learning new skills.

Keep a record of the findings of the risk assessment and provide a copy to the parents or guardians of any students and employees below minimum school leaving age.

You should protect young workers from work which is beyond their physical and mental ability or work which involves being exposed to hazardous substances, extreme hot or cold, noise or vibration unless it is part of their training.

People with communication difficulties

People whose second language is English or people with learning disabilities or literacy issues may be vulnerable at work due to communication difficulties. This can affect all areas of health and safety including training, instruction and in developing and putting into practice safe systems of work.

It is important to make sure that:

- employees can understand all health and safety messages that you are giving them (this may involve a translator or a trainer who speaks clearly to communicate the message);
- all warning signs or posters have pictures to communicate the message rather than depending on written warning signs;
- you use simple plain English where you need to give written instructions; and
- you provide appropriate supervision.



Temporary workers

You may employ temporary workers, for example, agency workers or staff on short-term contracts for a variety of reasons, for example, to cover for permanent employees who are off sick or on holiday, or to cope with seasonal increases in workload. Temporary workers are an important safety management issue because they are unfamiliar with the workplace and the company rules, and they are on site for a limited time.

As an employer who uses temporary staff you must:

- give all temporary staff information about the risks to their health and safety, the measures taken to prevent or control these risks and the action that they should take in an emergency;
- make sure that all temporary staff have the appropriate experience and skills to carry out the job safely; and
- provide appropriate training and keep appropriate records.

People working alone

Some people work by themselves without close or direct supervision. These employees are more vulnerable and cannot get help if an accident happens. Examples of situations where people may work by themselves include:

- working in separate or isolated areas of a larger premises, for example, warehouses and cold stores;
- working outside normal working hours, for example, security staff and cleaners;
- service workers, for example, postal staff, home helps, estate agents; and
- driving while at work, for example, sales reps and delivery personnel.

It is your duty to assess risks to people working alone and take steps to avoid or control the risk where necessary. Below are examples.

- Get rid of the need to work alone.
- Identify situations where working alone is not appropriate, for example, in confined spaces.
- If working alone cannot be avoided, reduce the risk by introducing a policy which should provide information, instruction and training to employees. This may include:
 - personal safety training;
 - a programmed schedule of work or 'check-in' system throughout the day;
 - a mobile phone and charger to make sure you can contact them at all times; and
 - a first-aid kit and basic first-aid training.



Managing accidents and emergencies

Preventing accidents

Accidents don't just happen. There is always a reason for them. You need to plan and control everything that is done in the workplace so that accidents don't happen. Remember that one serious accident could cost you your business!

Accidents mainly happen because of:

- poor management;
- poor working practices;
- dangerous machinery and equipment;
- lack of training; and
- the poor attitude of employers and employees.

The first step to preventing accidents is to carry out a risk assessment described earlier in this pack. You will then need to take action to control the risks that you have identified. For example, you could:

- add a guard to a dangerous machine;
- use a less hazardous chemical;
- put together a safe system of work;
- train staff; or, as a last resort,
- provide personal protective equipment (PPE).

Monitoring and investigating accidents

You must be made aware of all accidents and near misses (an incident which had the potential to cause harm) so that you can identify the hazard and take the steps needed to prevent it from happening again. Make employees aware of who they should report accidents and near misses to. Make sure that this person records the details in an accident book. Investigate the circumstances and recommend appropriate action to be taken.

You can buy accident books from:

The Stationery Office

16 Arthur Street, Belfast BT1 4GD Phone: 028 9023 8451

Website: www.tsoshop.co.uk



Research shows that for every accident resulting in a major injury, there were 29 resulting in minor injuries and 300 with no injuries.



Reporting injuries, diseases and dangerous events (see note 3 below).

It is good practice to record, in your accident book, the details of all work-related accidents. However, you may need to report some of these to the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland, HSENI or your local district council. (See page 44 and 45 for contact details.)

By law you must do the following.

You must report immediately, by phone, any accident or incident connected with work which results in:

- a death or major injury (see the examples below) to your employee or self-employed person working on your premises;
- a member of the public being taken to hospital from your premises; or
- a dangerous event. This could include:
 - part of a building collapsing;
 - gas storage containers exploding or a pressure system failing;
 - a fire or explosion which stops your business for more than 24 hours; and
 - a lift or other lifting equipment (for example a fork lift truck collapsing).



Report in writing or online

Within 10 days of the incident you must report it on a NI2508 form to:

- confirm any phone report you made;
- let your local enforcement authority know about an accident which results in a member of staff being away from work for more than three days (see below for a further explanation).

(See page 26 for an example of the form which you can download from www.hseni.gov.uk)

You must report, using a NI2508A form, diseases (see the examples below) confirmed in writing by a doctor, arising from specific types of work.

If you are reporting to HSENI, you can do this online at www.hseni.gov.uk

Major injury	Over three-day injury	Occupational disease
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broken bone (except fingers and toes) • Dislocation of the shoulder, hip, knee or spine • Loss of sight or serious injury to an eye • Loss of consciousness caused by electric shock, lack of oxygen or being exposed to a hazardous substance • Amputation • If a person needs to be resuscitated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is an injury that results in the injured person being away from work or unable to do their normal work for more than three days (including weekends or other non-work days) such as strains and sprains. It also includes acts of physical violence to an employee at work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand-arm vibration syndrome • Occupational asthma • Dermatitis is a skin disease which is caused by a person coming in contact with a hazardous substance.

³ In the regulations events are referred to as occurrences.

Filling in this form

This form must be filled in by an employer or other responsible person.

Part A

About you

- 1 What is your full name?
- 2 What is your job title?
- 3 What is your telephone number?

About your organisation

- 4 What is the name of your organisation?
- 5 What is its address and postcode?
- 6 What type of work does the organisation do?

Part B

About the incident

- 1 On what date did the incident happen?
- 2 At what time did the incident happen? (Please use the 24-hour clock eg 0600)
- 3 Did the incident happen at the above address?
Yes Go to question 4
No Where did the incident happen?
 elsewhere in your organisation - give the name, address and postcode
 at someone else's premises - give the name, address and postcode
 in a public place -- give details of where it happened

If you do not know the postcode, what is the name of the local authority?

- 4 In which department, or where on the premises, did the incident happen?

Part C

About the injured person
If you are reporting a dangerous occurrence, go to Part F.

If more than one person was injured in the same incident. Please attach the details asked for in Part C and Part D for each injured person.

- 1 What is their full name?
- 2 What is their address and postcode?

- 3 What is their home phone number?

- 4 How old are they?
- 5 Are they male? female?
- 6 What is their job title?

- 7 Was the injured person (tick only one box) one of your employees?
 on a training scheme? Give details:

- on work experience?
- employed by someone else? Give details of the employer:
- self-employed and at work?
- a member of the public?

Part D

About the injury

- 1 What was the injury? (eg fracture, laceration)
- 2 What part of the body was injured?

- 3 Was the injury (tick the one box that applies) a fatality

- a major injury or condition? (see accompanying notes)
 - an injury to an employee or self-employed person which prevented them doing their normal work for more than 3 days?
 - an injury to a member of the public which meant they had to be taken from the scene of the accident to a hospital for treatment?
- 4 Did the injured person (tick all the boxes that apply)
- become unconscious?
 - need resuscitation?
 - remain in hospital for more than 24 hours?
 - none of the above.

Part E

About the kind of accident
Please tick the one box that best describes what happened, then go to Part G.

- Contact with moving machinery or material being machined
- Hit by a moving, flying or falling object
- Hit by a moving vehicle
- Hit something fixed or stationary
- Injured while handling, lifting or carrying
- Slipped, tripped or fell on the same level
- Fell from a height metres
- How high was the fall?
- Trapped by something collapsing
- Drowned or asphyxiated
- Exposed to, or in contact with, a harmful substance
- Exposed to fire
- Exposed to an explosion
- Contact with electricity or an electrical discharge
- Injured by an animal
- Physically assaulted by a person
- Another kind of accident (describe it in Part G)

Part F

Dangerous occurrences
Enter the number of the dangerous occurrence you are reporting. (The numbers are given in the Regulations and in the notes which accompany this form).

For official use
Client number Local number Event number

Part G
Describing what happened

- Give as much details as you can. For instance
 - the name of any substances involved
 - the name and type of any machine involved
 - the events that led to the incident
 - the part played by any people

If it was personal injury, give details of what the person was doing. Describe any action that has since been taken to prevent similar incident. Use a separate piece of paper if you need to.

Part H

Your Signature

Signature

Date

Where to send the form

Please send it to the Enforcing Authority for the place where it happened. If you do not know the Enforcing Authority, send it to the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland, 83 Ladas Drive, Belfast BT6 9FR

Event number IVP REP Y N



First aid and emergencies

- Emergency plans** You need to plan for emergency situations such as accidents, fires, bomb alerts, chemical spillages, and so on. Once in place, you must let all staff know about the emergency plan by training them in the correct procedures to follow. In other words:
- how to raise the alarm;
 - what to do, for example, how to call the emergency services;
 - how to leave the building safely;
 - how to evacuate visitors safely;
 - where to assemble in an emergency;
 - the names of first aiders and people in control; and
 - essential action to take such as shutting down equipment in an emergency.

First aid **It is important that you can provide first-aid at all times to people who are at work. Accidents or ill health, such as a heart attack, can happen at any time.**

First-aid treatment can save lives and can also help someone to recover more quickly after an accident.

The minimum first aid you should provide in any workplace is shown below.

- **An appointed person** who is responsible for taking charge of the first-aid arrangements, for example, to call an ambulance and to look after first-aid equipment.
- **Information for employees about first-aid arrangements.**
At suitable places throughout the building, you should display the name of the appointed person or first-aider and details of where first-aid equipment is kept.
- **A suitably stocked first-aid box**



There is no set list of contents for a first-aid box as the contents should be based on an assessment of first-aid needs. The following list suggests a minimum stock of first-aid items.

- A leaflet giving general guidance on first aid at work
- 20 individually wrapped sterile adhesive dressings (assorted sizes)
- Four individually wrapped triangular adhesive dressings
- Two sterile eye pads
- Six safety pins
- Six medium-sized (about 12cm x 12cm) individually wrapped sterile unmedicated wound dressings
- Two large-sized (about 18cm x 18 cm) individually wrapped unmedicated sterile wound dressings
- Sterile water (if mains tap water is not readily available)
- One pair of disposable gloves.

You should not keep tablets or medicines in the first-aid box.

You may need other items depending on your first-aid assessment. For example, if there is a risk of chemicals coming into contact with a person, you may need facilities such as an eyebath, face wash or shower.

It is important to record the details of all first-aid treatment given.

You can use this information to identify accident trends and possible areas for improvement in controlling health and safety risks. You can also use it to help with future first-aid assessments.



What you provide

You need to assess what first-aid you need to provide to see what first-aid equipment or facilities you need. It will depend on the type of business you are in and the hazards that are present. However, all businesses including self-employed people, need first-aid provision. The number of trained first-aiders will depend on the nature of the work, the number of employees and the size of the workplace and where it is.

- In small, lower-risk environments such as offices and shops, you may only need the minimum first-aid provision shown on page 27.
- For larger or high-risk premises you may need to provide suitably trained first-aiders.

The table below gives some guidance on the number of trained first-aiders that you would need.

Type of workplace and number of employees	Suggested numbers of first-aid staff
Lower risk for example, shops, offices, libraries and so on.	
Fewer than 50	At least one appointed person
50 to 100	At least one first-aiders
More than 100	One extra first-aiders for every 100 you employ
Medium risk for example, light engineering, assembly work, food processing or warehousing.	
Fewer than 20	At least one appointed person
20 to 100	At least one first-aiders for every 50 you employ
More than 100	One extra first-aiders for every 100 employed
Higher risk for example, construction, manufacturing, extensive work with dangerous machinery or sharp instruments.	
Fewer than five	At least one appointed person
5 to 50	At least one first-aiders
More than 50	One extra first-aiders for every 50 you employ
You may need more first-aid staff than set out above. You may need to provide more to cover staff absences or special circumstances such as shift work or sites with several separate buildings or if you are based a long way from emergency medical service.	

Training appointed people

In small firms where the assessment shows you do not need a fully-qualified first-aiders, it makes sense to train the appointed person in the basics of first aid – resuscitation, controlling bleeding and treating an unconscious patient.

Other information

You can get a list of all first-aid training providers registered with the Employment Medical Advisory Service (EMAS) from the HSENI website at www.hseni.gov.uk or by phoning 028 9034 7487.

The working environment



There are many different types of workplaces including factories, offices, shops, vehicles and the outdoors. In general, if you keep to the following guidance, we would normally consider that you have kept to the law. However, you should carry out an assessment for your workplace.

Temperature Inside workplaces you should provide a comfortable working temperature of at least 16°C, or 13°C if the job involves physical effort.

- If people work outside or in a cold environment, such as cold stores, and you cannot achieve a suitable working temperature, you must provide suitable protective clothing such as thermal clothing, waterproof coats and so on.
- If people work in a hot environment such as a bakery, you should try to achieve a reasonable working temperature. If this is not possible, you must provide adequate breaks, clean drinking water and suitable personal protective clothing such as light cotton overalls.

Lighting There must be enough lighting to allow work to be carried out safely and without risk of eyestrain. We would recommend natural light if possible, but you may need to use artificial lighting as well. You must maintain all lighting.

The types of artificial lighting you can use are:

- general – strip lighting which can cover large work areas;
- localised – uplighters in smaller work areas;
- specific – spotlights which shine directly on a machine part or for close, detailed work; and
- outdoor lighting – for traffic routes used by pedestrians which need to be lit after dark for both safety and security reasons.

Emergency lighting

You must provide emergency lighting if a person would be in danger if the artificial lighting failed, for example, at a dangerous machine. All escape routes, including outside ones, must have enough lighting to allow people to find their way out safely. Emergency lighting may be needed in poorly lit areas or if the workplace is used at night.

Ventilation Every enclosed workplace must be able to be ventilated with enough fresh or purified air. You can achieve this in the following ways.

- **Natural ventilation** – such as through windows or openings. If this is not possible or you need to add to the natural ventilation, consider the following.
- **General mechanical ventilation** – such as fans or air-conditioning systems.
- **Specific ventilation** – think about specific extraction systems in workplaces if you need to reduce dust, for example, wood dust, flour dust or fumes, for example, welding fumes. A competent person must maintain all specific ventilation systems regularly (at least every 14 months).



Housekeeping You must regularly clean premises, furniture, floors, steps, walkways and equipment, keep it well-maintained and tidy to help prevent accidents such as slips, trips and falls and to reduce the risk of fire. You must:

- provide suitable bins and clear waste and rubbish regularly;
- provide suitable cleaning equipment and cleaning materials and make sure that spillages are cleaned up immediately and warning notices are used during cleaning operations; and
- provide enough storage for cleaning materials. You should store those that are hazardous to health, for example, bleach, in a well-ventilated and locked store with clear signs.

Floors and gangways

The Health and Safety Executive state that over a third of all reported major injuries to employees, and half of all reported injuries to members of the public, are due to slips and trips in the workplace. We recommend the following precautions.

- Keep floors clear, clean, dry and maintained.
- Make sure gangways and walkways are well marked, lit and the edging is defined.
- You should clearly mark steps, corners and fixed obstacles, for example, with black and yellow diagonal stripes.
- Keep floor openings, for example, vehicle-examination pits and trap doors covered when not in use and clearly mark the edges.
- Salt, sand and sweep outdoor routes during icy or frosty conditions.
- Make sure there is good drainage in wet processes for example, food-preparation rooms.
- Keep electrical cables and trailing leads tidy, covered or taped down.
- Provide proper footwear if necessary.

Working at height

If anyone is working at height, they should do so from a platform with suitable protection at the edge. Occasionally this may not be possible and a ladder may have to be used. However, ladders are best used as a way of getting to a workplace. They should only be used as a workplace for light work which will not take long.

When deciding what equipment to use, think about what the job includes, how long it will last and where it needs to be done. It is tempting to use a ladder for all sorts of work but you should always consider a working platform first, for example, a properly erected mobile scaffold tower or a mobile elevated working platform (MEWP).

Jobs such as removing or installing guttering, installing replacement windows, or painting should usually be carried out from scaffolds or mobile-access equipment.

Noise

Being exposed to high levels of noise such as from a jack hammer or loud music, can cause permanent hearing damage. Noise from machines and radios playing can also cause distractions and make communicating difficult. You must decide if there is a noise problem – Do people have to shout to be heard when standing less than two metres away? If the answer is yes you will need to have the noise levels assessed by a competent person. You must take appropriate action to reduce the levels and keep a record of the results.



Transport Moving delivery vehicles and forklift trucks around premises and buildings accounts for a large percentage of accidents, for example, hitting people, other vehicles and overturning. We recommend the following precautions.

- Separate vehicles and people, for example, by using clearly marked, well-planned pedestrian and vehicle traffic routes both indoors and outdoors.
- Create a one-way traffic system if possible.
- Try to get rid of the need for large vehicles to reverse.
- Employ someone to supervise the vehicles.
- Display appropriate signs, for example, speed limits, customer parking, travel direction and so on.
- Fit warning lights and warning signals that can be heard, to vehicles where appropriate.
- Make sure only trained and authorised drivers use forklift trucks and other work vehicles.
- Do not leave keys in the ignition of vehicles when unattended.
- Restrict access to dangerous areas such as loading and unloading bays.
- Make sure surfaces over which vehicles pass are even.
- Check vehicles regularly and make sure you keep them properly maintained.
- Give visitors information and instructions, for example, on parking arrangements, signing in at reception.
- Provide suitable high-visibility clothing for people working in high-risk areas.

Mobile phones Mobile phones are often used at work. They can have benefits for safety, efficiency and convenience of employers and staff. However, it is illegal under road traffic laws to use a hand-held mobile phone while driving. You should tell your employees about your policy on using mobile phones and hands-free kits.

Welfare facilities

- You should provide toilet facilities for all staff including toilets for people with disabilities. These should be kept well ventilated, clean, and in working order. You must provide a wash basin close to every toilet. The basin must have hot and cold (or warm) running water, soap and towels.
- Provide an area for eating and drinking with a way of preparing or getting a hot drink, for example, provide a kettle or a vending machine.
- If it is not possible to buy hot food, on or nearby the premises, you should provide a way of heating food, for example, a microwave oven.
- Provide changing areas with lockers or hanging space for work or casual clothing.
- Provide clean drinking water either tap or bottled.
- You should also provide rest facilities for pregnant and nursing mothers.



Electricity

Electricity is used each day in all workplaces. However, it can severely burn, injure, kill or cause devastating fires. Electricity has its own particular risks – the two main risks are shown below.

Electric shocks

When electricity passes through the body it causes shocks, burns and can kill.

Fires and explosions

About 22% of all workplace fires are started by electrical appliances.

How can I prevent electrical accidents from happening?

General safety

- Know the age, condition, operating voltage and suitability of the electrical system in your premises. Make sure it is soundly built and that it has been properly installed. A competent person, such as a qualified electrician, should check it regularly (at least every five years or at shorter intervals as recommended by the Institution of Engineering and Technology). You can find more information on their website at www.theiet.org
- Keep switchboards, fuse boards and other dangerous parts of the system in a locked room or cupboard. Make sure that a responsible person holds the key to prevent unauthorised access.
- Make sure fuses are properly identified, rated and clearly labelled.
- Provide enough socket outlets to prevent overloading and the need to use adaptors.
- Choose equipment, including portable electrical appliances, which are suited to the working environment, especially if they might get damaged or wet or they are in a potentially explosive environment.
- When using an electrical supply outside, make sure that external cables are properly rated and protected against damage. Protect against the risk of shock by fitting a 30-milliamp residual current device (RCD) to the supply outside.
- Highlight to staff the dangers of using electricity in the workplace and show them how to switch the power off in case of an emergency.



User checks

If you carry out regular visual inspections of portable electrical equipment before it is used, you can find 95% of faults and damage. Train your staff to disconnect equipment at the switch and look for:

- damage, for example, cuts, splits or severe rubbing to the outer casing (sheath) of the cable;
- damage to the plug, for example, the casing is cracked or the pins are bent;
- make-do repairs and connections, for example, taped joints in the cable;
- damage to the casing of the equipment or obviously loose parts or screws;
- overheating in other words, a burning smell or burn marks on the casing, cable, plug or the socket from which the equipment was disconnected; and
- the cable not being properly gripped where it enters the plug or equipment. Look to see if the coloured insulation of the wires inside are showing.

If faults or damage are found or reported – remove the faulty item from use and clearly label it **'Do not use'** until it has been properly repaired and inspected by a competent person.



Combined inspection and testing, portable appliance testing programme. (PAT) testing

You will not pick up all faults during a visual inspection and some portable equipment will need a PAT test by someone who has been trained and competent to do so, such as a qualified electrician.

When you carry out the PAT testing will depend on the equipment, the wear and tear it receives and where you use it. For example, an angle grinder with a metal body, which is used outdoors and is frequently dropped or damaged needs more frequent testing than a plastic bodied, double-insulated computer that is rarely moved from its office environment.

The following table gives suggested intervals for user and PAT checks.

Suggested maintenance intervals

Type of business	User checks	Formal visual inspection	Combined inspection and test
Equipment hire	Does not apply	Before it is issued and after it is returned	Before issue
Construction	110V - every week 230V mains – every day of every shift	110V - every month 230V mains - every week	110V - before it is first used on the site, then every three months 230V mains - before first used on site then every month
Light industrial	Yes	Before it is first used then every six months	Every six to 12 months
Heavy industrial equipment with a high risk of equipment damage	Every day	Every week	Every six to 12 months
Office information technology, for example desktop computer, photocopier, fax machines	No	Every one to two years	None if double-insulated, otherwise up to five years
Double-insulated equipment not hand-held for example, fans and table lamps	No	Every two to three years	No
Hand-held, double-insulated (class II)	Yes	Every six months to a year	No
Earthed (class I) equipment, electric kettles, some floor cleaners	Yes	Every six months to a year	Every one to two years
Equipment used by the public, for example, in hotels	By member of staff	Every three months	Every year
Cables and plugs and extension leads	Yes	Every year	Every two years

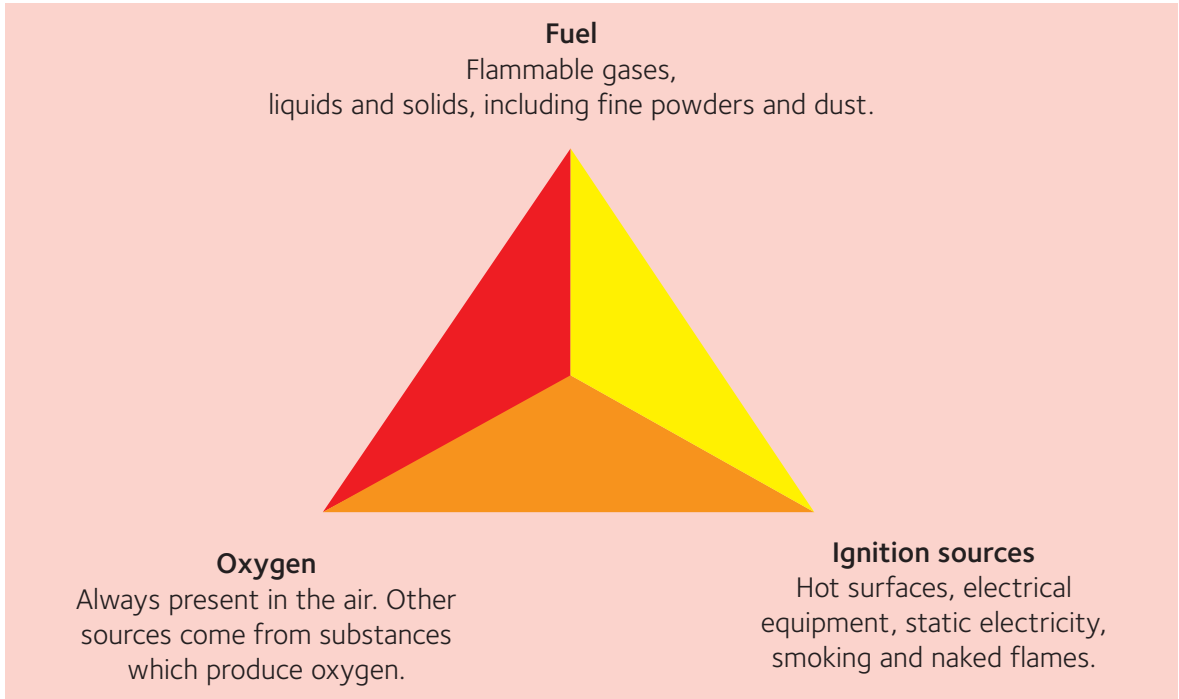
You should keep records of all maintenance and inspections on file.



Fire

The fire triangle

For a fire to start, the three things in the triangle below are needed.



If any one of these is missing, a fire cannot start. So, taking steps to avoid the three coming together will reduce the chances of a fire happening.

Prevent a fire from starting

- Keep work areas clean and tidy.
- Get rid of waste regularly.
- Store goods and equipment tidily.
- Keep electric lamps and light bulbs away from items which can catch fire (for example, by not stacking goods too high).
- Regularly inspect and repair any worn or damaged electrical equipment or wiring. A qualified electrical contractor should carry out inspections regularly.
- Secure any portable electrical heaters so that they cannot fall over.
- Never put items such as books, papers or clothing over heaters or ventilation openings on equipment.
- Develop a system for checking work areas at the end of the day, for example, checking that equipment is switched off.
- Have a smoking policy. Make sure that smoking is not allowed in areas where flammable material is stored.
- Prevent a build-up of dust, grease or oil around equipment.
- If you use flammable substances, keep them in their proper storage containers and store these in a fire-resistant cabinet or a fire-resisting store for larger quantities.
- Make sure that you service liquefied petroleum gas appliances regularly and that you store or install cylinders outside in a well-ventilated area.
- Make sure you provide good ventilation to areas where flammable vapours or dust may be created, for example, during welding or battery-charging operations.



Prevent a fire from spreading

- Keep fire doors closed – if fire doors are on automatic door-release units, make sure they are not obstructed.
- Make sure that any smoke detectors, sprinkler systems and so on are well maintained.
- Check that fire dampers in ventilation ducting and extraction hoods operate efficiently.
- Think before carrying out any alterations to your premises (let your local Building Control Service know).
- Have enough fire extinguishers of the right type to deal promptly with small outbreaks of fire.
- Have the extinguishers serviced each year and keep them in prominent positions and near high-risk activities, for example, welding.



Fire extinguishers – their colours and uses

Water – red

For fires involving wood, paper, fabrics and so on.

Foam – red with a cream band

For fires involving flammable liquids, oils, fats and so on.

Powder – red with a blue band

For all fires, including those involving electrics, flammable liquids and gases.

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) – red with a black band

For fires involving flammable liquids and electrics.

Make sure everyone can get out safely

- Everyone must know what to do in a fire. Create an emergency procedure and have drills regularly.
- Display fire action instructions.
- Make sure staff know how to raise the alarm.
- Make sure fire escape routes and doors are clearly marked and are kept clear at all times.
- Make sure you provide and maintain emergency lighting.
- Fire-escape doors must be able to be opened easily from inside whenever anyone is on the premises.
- Make sure you check and maintain fire-alarm systems.

Never underestimate fire.

What may appear to be a small fire can spread rapidly throughout the building, producing intense heat, smoke and toxic fumes which can kill in minutes. Even if nobody is injured, the damage caused can close a business.



Workplace health

Drugs and alcohol

Any business, however small, can take practical steps to reduce, as far as possible, the risks associated with inappropriate drinking or drug misuse.

You should have a drugs and alcohol section within your health and safety policy. You may also need disciplinary procedures if the problem carries on or interferes with the health and safety of your employees or anyone or anything within the workplace.

If you fail to manage drug and alcohol misuse, it can affect your business through:

- loss of productivity;
- lateness and time off;
- safety concerns;
- effect on team morale and employee relations;
- bad behaviour or poor discipline; or
- poor company image and customer relations.

Signs of substance misuse may include:

- sudden mood changes;
- unusual irritability or aggression;
- impaired job performance;
- poor timekeeping;
- increased short-term sickness absence; or
- absence after having been paid.



Think about communication and training:

- How will current staff and any recruited in the future know your rules about alcohol and substance misuse?
- Does anyone need more information or training?

Supervisors and other managers need to be clear about company rules and what to do if they believe an employee's drinking or substance misuse is affecting their work. You may think about encouraging those with a problem to get help.

For more information contact the Employment Medical Advisory Service (EMAS), Longbridge House, 16/24 Waring Street, Belfast BT1 2DX. Phone: 028 9034 7487

Smoking

You are no longer allowed to smoke at work or in work vehicles if more than one person uses a work vehicle (even if at different times). Also, if you use a vehicle to carry members of the public, whether for payment or not, you must not smoke inside it. You must also put up no-smoking signs at the entrance to each building and in vehicles.

You do not have to provide an outdoor smoking area for your staff or customers, but if you do you must make sure that any area is not enclosed. Also, you should make sure it is well away from flammable materials and that people can easily see that it is the smoking area. You should provide fire resistant waste bins or sand bins in the smoking area for people to put their cigarettes.



While the law does not stop you smoking in your own home, you should show consideration if someone is carrying out work there. If you work from home and more than one person works



there or the public visit you, you must not smoke in the rooms or areas where you work. For example, if you are an accountant or a beautician and your clients call at your home, you can not smoke in the rooms where you meet your clients.

You should let people know the rules about smoking in the workplace and the consequences of smoking in unauthorised areas.

For more information on smoking shelters and the law, contact your local council's Environmental Health Department.

Hazardous substances

Chemicals and hazardous substances are used in nearly all businesses across all industry sectors, for example, in catering, construction, hairdressing, engineering and so on.

Using chemicals or other hazardous substances at work can put people's health at risk, causing diseases including asthma, dermatitis or cancer.

What is COSHH?

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 (as amended) – COSHH is the law that says employers must control substances that can harm their employees' health. You can prevent or reduce your employees coming into contact with hazardous substances by:

- finding out what the health hazards are;
- deciding how to prevent harm to their health;
- providing control measures to reduce harm to their health, and making sure that people keep to them;
- keeping all control measures in good working order;
- providing information, instructions and training for employees and others;
- monitoring your employees' health (if appropriate); and
- planning for emergencies.

What does COSHH cover?

COSHH covers chemicals, products which contain chemicals, fumes, dust, vapour, mist, gases and biological agents (germs). If the packaging has any hazard symbols on it, it is classed as a 'hazardous substance'.

COSHH also covers asphyxiating gases, for example argon and helium.

COSHH covers germs that cause diseases such as leptospirosis or legionnaires' disease and germs used in laboratories.

COSHH **doesn't** cover **lead, asbestos** or **radioactive substances** because these have their own specific regulations.

For more information on COSHH:

- download 'COSHH(NI): A brief guide to the Regulations' from the HSENI website at www.hseni.gov.uk;
- download 'Working with dangerous substances hazardous to health INDG 136' from the HSE website at www.hse.gov.uk; or
- visit the COSHH Essentials website to find ways of controlling dangerous substances (www.coshh-essentials.org.uk).



Stress and mental well-being

Work plays an important part in our mental well-being as it improves our self-esteem and gives us a sense of fulfilment and opportunities to meet other people. Most people work best under a certain amount of pressure, but when that pressure becomes too much to cope with, it becomes negative and can cause stress.

Work-related stress is when people cannot cope with the amount of pressure they have in their job. It is important that people have enough control and support to manage these demands. If someone thinks there is no balance between the effort they need to put in and the rewards of the job, feel they are not being treated fairly or they have problems in their personal life, this can increase stress and affect their mental health. Stress can also be caused, or made worse, by the working environment, for example if it is noisy, dirty or dusty.

Stress can affect the way someone does their job. They may stay off work or feel unhappy when they are there. If someone is suffering from stress at work, they might find it difficult to concentrate, which can cause them to have accidents. While stress is not an illness, too much pressure can cause mental and physical problems, such as anxiety, insomnia, depression, heart disease, back pain and high blood pressure. Stress can also make some existing health conditions worse.

What should my company be doing?

- Develop a well-being policy which explains your commitment to keeping your staff well.
- Encourage your employees to be open about mental-health issues.
- Assess the risk and possible causes of stress with your organisation by using the HSE's Management Standards process (see the diagram below and the Management Standards next to it). Research shows that the significant causes of stress at work relate to issues within the organisation. You are responsible for carrying out the five-step risk assessment. You can group the main causes of stress into six areas – demands, control, support, relationships, role and change.



- Put together action plans to promote mental well-being and reduce stress.
- Promote mental well-being or help staff suffering from stress using employee assistance programmes or cognitive behaviour therapy.
- Make sure that all of your staff know what you are doing in relation to mental well-being and everyone is aware of how they can help themselves.

For more information, go to www.hseni.gov.uk and choose stress as a topic.



The main factors causing stress	Principles of management standards
<p>Demands – such as workload and the work environment.</p>	<p>Make sure there are enough resources to do the work. Strike a balance and make sure that employees are not overloaded or underloaded.</p> <p>Give your staff suitable training to do their jobs.</p> <p>Assess the risk of physical violence and verbal abuse and take appropriate steps to deal with it.</p>
<p>Control – how much say the person has in the way they do their work.</p>	<p>Give more control to staff by allowing them to have a say in planning their own work and breaks.</p> <p>Encourage employees to develop their skills and help them carry out new and challenging pieces of work.</p>
<p>Support – includes encouraging staff and providing resources.</p>	<p>Support and encourage staff, even when things go wrong. Offer support such as coaching or emotional support. Listen to your staff and agree a course of action for tackling any problems.</p> <p>Employees know how to get the resources to do their job.</p> <p>Involve your staff.</p> <p>Encourage a healthy ‘work-life balance’.</p>
<p>Relationships – covering issues such as bullying and harassment.</p>	<p>Work with staff to make sure that bullying and harassment are never an issue.</p> <p>Have disciplinary and grievance procedures in place to deal with unacceptable behaviour.</p> <p>Value difference – don’t discriminate against people for any reason.</p>
<p>Role – whether the individual understands their role in the organisation, and whether you make sure that the person does not have conflicting roles.</p>	<p>Make sure your staff have clear roles.</p> <p>Make sure that new members of staff receive a thorough induction to your organisation.</p> <p>If your organisation has gone through change, check with staff to make sure they understand their new roles.</p>
<p>Change – how organisational change is managed and communicated in the organisation.</p>	<p>Explain what the organisation wants to achieve and why it is essential that the change takes place.</p> <p>Communicate new developments quickly to staff.</p> <p>Give staff the opportunity to comment and ask questions.</p>

You can get more information on Management Standards and guidelines on work-related stress on HSE’s website at www.hse.gov.uk



Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs)

MSDs are the most common workplace illness in Northern Ireland and 19% of all injuries reported to the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland from 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010 were the result of manual handling activities. Work-related upper-limb disorders (WRULDs) and manual-handling injuries are two specific types of MSDs experienced by workers. They affect the muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves and other soft tissues and joints, with the back, neck and upper limbs being at most risk.

Work-related upper-limb disorders (WRULDs)

Many employees, including assemblers, supermarket checkout assistants and keyboard operators are affected by upper-limb disorders at some point in their working lives. The term covers a number of related medical conditions, for example, tennis elbow, which affects the arms, particularly the hands and forearms. The symptoms of upper-limb disorders include pain or soreness and limited movement of affected parts. Typical causes are incorrect posture, too great a workload, over-forceful movements and not enough rest breaks.

You can prevent injury by:

- improving design of working areas (position of keyboard and display screens, heights of workbenches and chairs, lighting);
- adjusting workloads and rest periods;
- providing special tools; and
- better training and supervision.

See the section on workstations for more information.

Manual handling

Manual handling is not just about lifting. It includes using the hands or bodily force to push, pull, carry, move or support any object, person or animal. Because nearly every job involves some manual handling, it has become the most common cause of 'over-three-day' accidents in the workplace.

Most injuries involve pain in the back, but the hands and feet are also vulnerable. In many cases, the damage builds up gradually rather than being caused by a single incident. This damage can be very debilitating, making everyday activities painful and causing lengthy time off from work.

It is not only moving heavy loads that can harm people. Other factors include:

- restricted space for movement;
- awkward postures; or
- unstable loads.

Managing the risk from manual handling is based on the principles of **avoid**, **assess** and **reduce**. In the first instance, identify all the activities in your workplace that involve staff moving materials.





Avoid

The best solution is to avoid the need for any manual handling. It may be possible to achieve this by redesigning tasks or the layout of the workplace so that hazardous manual handling is not necessary. You can introduce equipment such as forklift trucks, conveyors and sack trolleys. This equipment must also be suitable for the task and kept in good working condition. If it is not reasonably possible to do this, you need to assess the risk of harm.

Assess

Your assessment must take account of the following four things, which you can remember as the acronym TILE.

- Task
- Individual
- Load
- Environment

Do not forget that introducing handling aids and mechanical equipment, such as roll cages and forklift trucks, may create new hazards (for example, moving vehicles) and these will need to be assessed.

Reduce

Consider the following solutions to common problems.

The task

- You can reduce stooping and reaching by storing items at waist height or by using scissor lifts or suitable stepladders or platforms to get to high shelves.
- Reduce the need to carry items over long distances by arranging to have them delivered and stored as near as possible to the place you are going to use them. Also, you could consider using conveyor belts to move items.
- Vary work activities to avoid tasks becoming repetitive.

The individual ability of your staff

- Make sure that staff can perform the tasks you give them. Pay particular attention to those who are pregnant or those you know have a physical weakness.
- Train all staff in safe lifting techniques and in the safe procedures you have identified for moving materials.
- Tell staff what clothing and footwear to use.
- Provide protective shoes, hats and gloves if necessary.

The load

- You can break up heavy loads or order smaller packages.
- You can place loads that are difficult to hold or that could move while being transported in a container or tie them together before you move them.
- If loads are awkward, you can get help or use a trolley.

The working environment

- Remove any obstructions that restrict movement or create dangers from tripping.
- Make sure that lighting levels are appropriate.
- If possible, avoid steep steps and ramps.
- If possible, provide a warm environment.

For more help with handling activities download:

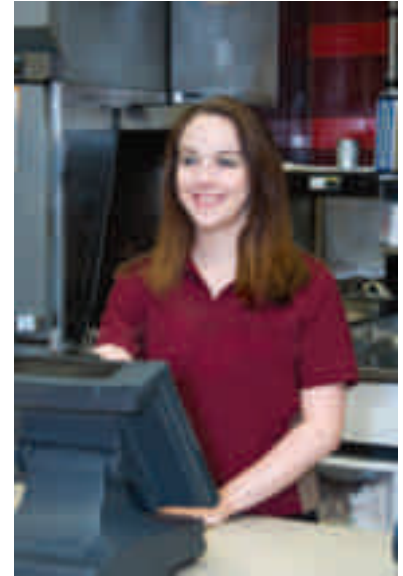
- 'Manual handling assessment charts INDG383'; or
 - 'Are you making the best use of lifting and handling aids? INGD398';
- from the HSWNI website at www.healthandsafetyworksni.gov.uk.



Workstations

The workplace contains many workstations, often including computers and other display-screen equipment (DSE). Most workstations are generally safe, but incorrect use can give rise to a number of health complaints including back pain, upper-limb disorders, headaches, tiredness and stress, resulting in reduced work efficiency and lost working days. However, you can prevent these problems with suitable design, enough training, proper work planning and choosing appropriate software. As an employer you should:

- assess all workstations;
- take steps to reduce, as far as possible, any problems identified by your assessment; and
- encourage staff to report any discomfort, aches or pains they may be experiencing.



A workstation may include a chair and a table but may also include a computer. Consider the following when setting up your workstation.

Work environment

Make sure you provide a comfortable working environment, and make sure the temperature and humidity are acceptable and reduce any distracting noise.

Training

Let your employees know about the hazards associated with equipment positioned incorrectly. Give them training on the precautions that you can take including adjusting the workstation to meet individual needs. Emphasise the need to take frequent breaks from the workstation or to change their position often, especially if using DSE over long periods of the day.

Daily work routines

Plan work to allow for enough breaks away from the screen or changes of activity, such as filing. This is particularly important for staff who use display screen equipment for long periods. Short, frequent breaks are more effective than less frequent, longer breaks. Staff should be able to decide when to have their breaks.

Table

- Is the table large enough for the task, for example, is there room for a computer and paperwork?
- Is there enough leg room under the table?
- If someone is working with a computer, is the desk surface anti-reflective?



Chair

- Is the chair easy to move?
- Is the height adjustable?
- Is the back adjustable for height and does the back tilt to support the small of the back?
- Do arms on the chair prevent the user sitting close to the table?
- Is a foot rest needed?
- Is there a weight limit shown on the chair?

If you are using a computer or display-screen equipment, consider the screen, keyboard and mouse.

Screen

- Arrange workstations to avoid any glare or reflections on the screen.
- Position the screen at right angles to windows and between rows of fluorescent lights, using window blinds and desktop lamps to avoid problems with unwanted light.
- The monitor should swivel and tilt, be adjustable for brightness and contrast, clean and large enough to see the characters clearly.
- When sitting tall and looking straight ahead, is the user looking at the top edge of the screen?
- Is the screen at a comfortable reading distance?

Keyboard and mouse

- Is the keyboard separate from the monitor? (Laptops are not designed for extended daily use in the office.)
- Is it possible to tilt the keyboard?
- Is it possible to rest your forearms on the chair or desk while using the keyboard or mouse without overstretching or bending the wrists?
- Is the keyboard in good condition and the keys easy to read and use?
- Is the mouse suitable for left- or right-handed people to use?



Software

You should provide user-friendly software. The software you choose should be suitable for the task, easy to use and adaptable. You should give enough training on how to use it.

Eye tests

Organise an eye examination and eyesight test regularly for those employees who use display screen equipment a lot. You must only pay for spectacles if employees need special ones for this type of work and they cannot use their normal glasses.



Contact details for local District Councils

Antrim:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Antrim Borough Council
Antrim Civic Centre, 50 Stiles Way
Co. Antrim BT41 2UB. Phone: 028 9446 3113.

Ards:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Ards Borough Council
2 Church Street, Newtownards
Co. Down BT23 4AP. Phone: 028 9182 4000.

Armagh:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Armagh City and District Council
Council Offices, The Palace Demesne
Co. Armagh BT60 4EL. Phone: 028 3752 9600.

Ballymena:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Ballymena Borough Council
Ardeevin, 80 Galgorm Road, Ballymena
Co. Antrim BT42 1AB. Phone: 08456 581581.

Ballymoney:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Ballymoney Borough Council
Riada House, 14 Charles Street, Ballymoney
Co. Antrim BT53 6DZ. Phone: 028 2766 0200.

Banbridge:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Banbridge District Council
Health Office, Downshire Road, Banbridge
Co. Down BT32 3JY. Phone: 028 4066 0600.

Belfast:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Belfast City Council
The Cecil Ward Building, 4-10 Linenhall Street
Belfast BT2 8BP. Phone: 028 9032 0202.

Carrickfergus:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Carrickfergus Borough Council
Carrickfergus Museum and Civic Centre
11 Antrim Street, Carrickfergus
Co. Antrim BT38 7DG. Phone: 028 9335 8000.

Castlereagh:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Castlereagh Borough Council
1 Bradford Court, Upper Galwally
Belfast BT8 6RB. Phone: 028 9049 4500

Coleraine:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Coleraine Borough Council
Cloonavin, 66 Portstewart Road, Coleraine
Co. Londonderry BT52 1EY. Phone: 028 7034 7034.

Cookstown:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Cookstown District Council
Burn Road, Cookstown,
Co. Tyrone BT80 8DT. Phone: 028 8676 2205.

Craigavon:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Craigavon Borough Council
Civic Centre, Lakeview Road, Craigavon
Co. Armagh BT64 1AL. Phone: 028 3831 2400.

Down:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Down District Council Offices
24 Strangford Road, Downpatrick
Co. Down BT30 6SR. Phone: 028 4461 0800.

Dungannon:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council
Council Offices, Circular Road, Dungannon
Co. Tyrone BT71 6DT. Phone: 028 8772 0300.

Fermanagh:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Fermanagh District Council
Town Hall, Enniskillen,
Co. Fermanagh BT74 7BA. Phone: 028 6632 5050.

Larne:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Larne Borough Council
Victoria Road, Larne,
Co. Antrim BT40 1RU. Phone: 028 2827 2313.

Limavady:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Limavady Borough Council
7 Connell Street, Limavady
Co. Londonderry BT49 OHA. Phone: 028 7772 2226.

Lisburn:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Lisburn City Council
Lagan Valley Island, The Island, Lisburn
Co. Antrim BT27 4RL. Phone: 028 9250 9250.

Londonderry:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Derry City Council
Council Offices, 98 Strand Road
Co. Londonderry BT48 7NN. Phone: 028 7136 5151.

Magherafelt:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Magherafelt District Council
50 Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt
Co. Londonderry BT45 6EN. Phone: 028 7939 7979.

Moyle:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Moyle District Council
Sheskburn House
7 Mary Street, Ballycastle,
Co. Antrim BT54 6QH. Phone: 028 2076 2225.

Newry:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Newry and Mourne District Council
O'Hagan House, Monaghan Row, Newry,
Co. Down BT35 8DJ. Phone: 028 3031 3031.

Newtownabbey:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Newtownabbey Borough Council
Mossley Mills, Newtownabbey
Co. Antrim BT36 5QA. Phone: 028 9034 0000.

North Down:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
North Down Borough Council
Town Hall, The Castle, Bangor
Co. Down BT20 4BT. Phone: 028 9127 0371.

Omagh:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Omagh District Council
The Grange, Mountjoy Road, Omagh,
Co. Tyrone BT79 7BL. Phone: 028 8224 5321.

Strabane:

Chief Environmental Health Officer
Strabane District Council
47 Derry Road, Strabane,
Co. Tyrone BT82 8DY. Phone: 028 7138 2204.



Useful contacts

Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI)

Address: 83 Ladas Drive
Belfast
BT6 9FR

Phone: 028 9024 3249
Textphone: 028 9054 6896
General helpline number: 080 0032 0121
Fax: 028 9023 5383
Email: hseini@detini.gov.uk
Website: www.hseini.gov.uk

Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS)

Address: Headquarters
1 Seymour Street
Lisburn
County Antrim
BT27 4SX

Phone: 028 9266 4221
Fax: 028 9267 7402
Email: enquiries@nifb.org
Website: www.nifrs.org

Employment Medical Advisory Service (EMAS)

Address: Longbridge House
16-24 Waring Street
Belfast
BT1 2DX

Phone: 028 9034 7487
Textphone: 028 9054 6896
Fax: 028 9034 7488
Email: emasmail@detini.gov.uk

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

Address: Equality House
7-9 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast
BT2 7DP

Phone: 028 9050 0600
Textphone: 028 9050 0589
Email: information@equalityni.org
Website: www.equalityni.org

HSE Books

Address: PO Box 1999
Sudbury
Suffolk
CO10 2WA

Phone: 017 8788 1165
Fax: 017 8731 3995
Website: www.hsebooks.co.uk

Disability Action

Address: Portside Business Park
189 Airport Road
Belfast
BT3 9ED

Phone: 028 9029 7880
Website: www.disabilityaction.org

The Stationery Office (TSO)

Address: 16 Arthur Street
Belfast
BT1 4GD

Phone: 028 9023 8451
Fax: 028 9023 5401
Website: www.tso.co.uk

Labour Relations Agency (LRA)

Address: 2-8 Gordon Street
Belfast
BT1 2LG

Phone: 028 9032 1442
Fax: 028 9033 0827
Email: info@lra.org.uk
Website: www.lra.org.uk



NOTES

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