



UNITED KINGDOM

Workplace Health and Safety Guide



Elements of a Health and Safety Policy

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Elements of a Health and Safety Policy

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 requires UK employers with five or more employees to have a formal, written health and safety policy. However, even without the legal requirement, every business should want to do all they can to prevent injuries from occurring on the job. A serious fire, a permanent injury, or the death of an employee or owner can cause a loss of profits or even the loss of the business itself. To prevent such losses, you don't need to turn your business upside down. You may not have to spend a lot of money either. You do need to use good business sense and apply recognised prevention principles.

There are reasons why accidents happen and it may take some investigating to determine what went wrong, but an accident always has a cause. Once you know why an accident occurred, it is possible to prevent future incidents. You will need some basic facts—perhaps some help from others—and a plan to prevent accidents in the future.

Not all dangers require an accident to cause harm. Worker exposure to toxic chemicals or harmful levels of noise or radiation may happen in conjunction with routine work as well as by accident. You may not realise the extent of the exposure or harm that you and your employees face. The effect may not be immediate. You need a health and safety policy that reduces the risk of health hazard exposures and accidents.

It is not difficult to develop such a policy that should address the types of accidents and health hazard exposures that could happen in your workplace. Since each workplace is different, your policy should address your specific needs and requirements.

THREE ELEMENTS OF A GOOD WRITTEN SAFETY AND HEALTH POLICY

There are three main sections to most health and safety policies.

1. **The Statement of General Policy.** This section should state that you are committed to keeping everyone involved in your business safe, assigns specific responsibilities for staff members and engages employees. This document also should state that you understand that you have a legal duty to provide a safe working environment. There are no set rules on what must be included, but it must be signed and dated.
2. **The Responsibilities/Organisation Section.** In this section, you must appoint someone (or several people) competent to manage your health and safety duties. A competent person is someone with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to manage health and safety. You can appoint yourself, one or more of your workers, or someone outside your business. Their duties will include conducting risk assessments, making workplace inspections and ensuring safety during work activities. If you do need external help, there are numerous available resources such as: health and safety training providers, local councils, safety groups, trade associations, trade unions, consultants and specialists.
3. **The Arrangements Section.** This section should state how you will meet your commitments and goals from the Statement of General Policy. It should contain information on how you will eliminate or reduce the risks and hazards found in your workplace during your risk assessment. Arrangements can include training, workplace

posters/signs, improved equipment and PPE, or anything else to reduce risks and hazards.

Regardless of the size of your business, you should use each of these elements to prevent workplace accidents, possible injuries and illnesses.

Developing a health and safety policy following these three points is a key step in preventing accidents in the workplace. If you already have a policy, reviewing it in relation to these elements should help you improve what you have.

Another aspect to consider when developing your policy is the use of incentives to promote safety and health at your organisation. Creating an Employee Safety Incentive Programme can help you ensure that all employees closely follow guidelines and thus reduce the number of preventable on-the-job injuries. The implementation and use of an incentive-based programme does not have to be expensive and it has the potential to greatly increase employee morale at your workplace.

The key to the success of a safety and health plan is to see it as a part of your business operation and to see it reflected in your day-to-day operations. As you implement the plan and incorporate it into your business culture, health and safety awareness will become second nature to you and your employees.

Consult with a certified health and safety expert to ensure compliance with all Health and Safety Regulations. A very short, basic sample health and safety policy from the HSE and more general guidance can be found at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/write.htm>.

[Download a sample health and safety policy.](#)