

First aid

What do we need to do about first aid in our workplace?

Every workplace should have a good basic first aid kit, including a resuscitation face shield, so rescue breathing can be performed without risk of infection, disposable gloves and supplies to cater for common types of injuries, including sprains, strains, cuts, grazes, bruises, stings, burns, nose bleeds and eye injuries. You will also need people on site who have been trained to deal with medical emergencies and to care for patients until professional help arrives.

All staff should know where to find both equipment and people should the need arise.

Workplaces with more than 100 staff are also required to have a designated first aid room.

What should we have in the kit?

There are no mandatory requirements about what should be in a workplace first aid kit. The exact content and size will depend on the number of workers on site, the type(s) of work involved, and the sorts of hazards to which workers are exposed. In any workplace some types of injury are more likely than others, so you will need to think about the specific hazards associated with your work to determine what sorts of injuries are likely to happen, or likely to be serious if they do occur. If, for instance, people are regularly handling hot substances, you will need extra first aid supplies to deal with burns. Check your incident records (see To Begin With... SG 86) to see what sorts of injuries/near misses are occurring and make sure they are well catered for.

If workers are handling chemicals, consult the relevant material safety data sheets to identify first aid procedures for dealing with any injuries or harmful expo-

sure that may occur. In some cases specialist equipment, such as emergency showers or eye-wash stations, will be needed.

See the web addresses below for a suggested list of contents for a generic workplace kit.

Never put anything other than first aid supplies in a kit.

What do we do with the kit?

It is important that everyone on site knows where the first aid supplies are kept and can get to them quickly in an emergency. Ideally a kit should be wall-mounted, or its location signposted in some way, so that a would-be user can find it without delay.

One kit can cater for up to 50 workers, but on many sites you will need more than one to make sure that each work area has ready access to first aid materials. A multi-storey workplace, for instance, will need one kit for each level.

They should be kept in the areas where injuries are most likely to occur.

Make sure the kit is in a container that will protect the contents from damp, dust and other contaminants, and that it is clearly marked. The correct label is a white cross on a green background.

It is also important to keep it well stocked. Someone should be given responsibility for checking

the kit at regular intervals, and after any significant first aid incident, to replace all materials that have been used or are close to expiry date.

What else do we need?

There should be ready access to hot and cold running water, soap and clean towels. If running water cannot be provided, a supply of saline solution or sterile wipes should be included with the first aid kit.

A supply of plastic bags, for the disposal of soiled dressings, used gloves and other equipment, should be kept with the kit.

As mentioned above, some workplaces will also need emergency showers and/or eyewash facilities.

How many trained first aiders do we need?

No matter how small or "safe" your workplace, whenever work is in progress, the Department of Labour recommends having at least two trained first aiders on site.

Offices and shops can generally cater for up to 50 staff members with this level of support, while other workplaces will need two or more first aiders for up to 25 people. One extra trained person is recommended for every additional group of up

to 50 office/shop workers and up to 25 other workers.

Worksites which do not have easy access to medical services should have at least two first aiders for every 10 staff.

Remember, also, to provide enough trained first aiders to cover shiftwork, overtime, people who regularly or occasionally work in scattered locations, and any other work patterns that could restrict access to support personnel.

If we are working alongside another employer's staff at a single location (eg a construction site), can we share first aid facilities?

Yes, provided you have made sure that there are enough first aid supplies and trained first aiders to cater for all on site, and that everyone knows what arrangements have been made.

What about mobile workers?

Each work vehicle should be supplied with a suitable first aid kit.

What sort of training is required?

There are a number of approved courses for workplace first aid providers (see links below). The



LINKS

Want to know more?

- *Guidance Notes on Providing First Aid Equipment, Facilities and Training* can be found at www.osh.dol.govt.nz/order/catalogue/252.shtml
- Suggested minimum content lists for workplace first aid kits and those used by mobile workers are at www.osh.dol.govt.nz/order/catalogue/252a.shtml#a4
- A checklist to help assess workplace first aid needs is on the same page.
- Information about NZQA-approved first aid training suitable for workplace first aiders is available at www.redcross.org.nz/index.php?page=fa_training.php and at www.stjohn.org.nz/education/

standard first aid certificate course takes two days (or 16 hours), and shows how to deal with a wide range of injuries and illnesses. A one-day refresher course is needed every two years.

Before organising training, however, remember that there may be people on your site who have already done first aid training with another employer, a sports group or other organisation. Ask around before arranging training, but remember that refresher training is needed every two years to keep skills up-to-date.

If your workplace has unique hazards, associated with toxic chemicals or other significant hazards, additional training may

be needed to ensure the first aiders can respond appropriately.

Make sure staff know who the trained first aiders are, and that the first aiders know who else on site has been trained, so the right people can be summoned quickly in an emergency.

What is needed in a first aid room?

The room, which must be used exclusively for first aid treatment, should be clearly signposted and available whenever people are at work. A designated person must be responsible for the room and its contents. There should be both a bed or couch and a chair, as well

as first aid supplies. It should be accessible by stretcher and must be clean, adequately heated, ventilated and lit. Contact details for first aid personnel and emergency services should be provided on the outside of the door.

What else is required?

Reassess your first aid needs at regular intervals, and following any changes to workplace proc-

esses and equipment, to ensure that you continue to provide good cover.

Keep a diary or electronic record of first aid training to ensure that refresher courses are done as required, and that any first aider who leaves is quickly replaced.

Ensure all new staff know where to find first aid equipment and personnel, and what to do in an emergency, and issue regular reminders, especially when staff change duties or move to a new work location. ■

This article is intended to provide only a broad overview of its topic. Our thanks to Patrick Seaman of Patrick Seaman Workplace Safety Ltd. Any errors, however, are Safeguard's.

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