

# Be safe!

An introductory guide to health and safety

For individuals who are learning about health and safety

# If you are concerned about health and safety in your workplace.

A learner is a safe learner, if through the quality of their learning experience they:

- Become risk aware
- Gain an understanding of the importance of health and safety
- Understand how hazards are identified, risks assessed and the principles of control measures
- Develop a set of safe behaviours, which they can transfer into their future working life.

**Do  
you know  
who to  
ask**



if you are concerned about  
health and safety in your workplace.

# Be safe!

Each day, many people are injured at work. Some are permanently disabled – some even die.\* Don't let this happen to you.

This booklet will help you find out how to avoid accidents and ill health at work. It is only an introduction and you will need to add other information related to your own occupation, course, programme and personal circumstances.



Always find out who your supervisor/tutor is.

They will tell you how to work safely and arrange training for each job you do. Ask if you feel unsure about how to carry out a task.

Avoid hazards where you work – to stay safe you must be risk aware.

The exercises enclosed with this booklet can be used to help you provide evidence if you are taking a health and safety qualification.

\*In 2004, 945 young people were injured and 5 killed on work-based learning.

# Safety policy and risk assessment

If your employer has five or more people working for them they will have their own safety policy, which will state their organisation's commitment to health and safety.

It will spell out the procedures which are in place to ensure that you are working in safe conditions.

The organisation should also have produced an assessment of the risks to your health and safety. You should be told about the results of this assessment.

You may be given a leaflet or find copies of these documents on a notice board. Make sure you understand them. If in doubt, ASK.

**You are responsible too –  
be smart – think before you act.**

By law, you must not interfere with, or misuse, anything provided, for safety.

Learn how to work safely and obey safety rules.

Use all equipment and protective clothing provided.

Report things that seem dangerous, damaged or faulty.

Only use tools, machinery or substances after you have been trained and given permission to do so.

Never play practical jokes – they can kill.

# Tidiness and hygiene

## Tidiness

Slips, trips and falls are still the major cause of accidents.

To help prevent them:

Don't leave things lying around – keep work areas and gangways tidy and clear.

Clean up spills straight away.

Always close drawers.



## Hygiene

Dirt and contact with chemicals, oil, and so on, can make you ill and can cause unpleasant skin complaints.

Always:

Wash your hands, using soap and water or a suitable cleanser, before you eat a meal and before and after using the toilets.

Dry your hands with the towels or dryers provided. Don't wipe them on rags or on your clothes.

If they are supplied, use barrier creams to protect your skin when doing dirty jobs. You may also need to put on a cream after washing when the job is finished.

Get medical advice about any skin complaints, rashes, blisters, ulcers etc, and follow any treatment recommended to you. Tell your supervisor about your medical problem immediately.



# Protective equipment and clothing

Protective equipment and clothing, such as ear defenders and eye protectors, dust masks, overalls, safety shoes or boots and helmets, are supplied to protect you.

## Wear them.

It may feel strange and you won't win any fashion contests but you'll have a better chance of keeping out of hospital.

## Make sure you:

Know how to put protective equipment on correctly and how to look after it. If in doubt, ASK.

Ask your supervisor to replace anything that doesn't fit properly or any item that gets damaged or worn out.



# Moving about the workplace

## Remember:

Walk, don't run.

Use the gangways provided and never take short cuts.

Look out for, and obey, all warning notices and safety signs.

You are only allowed to drive vehicles for which you have been properly trained and have passed any necessary test.

Take particular care where vehicles like fork-lift trucks are operating.

Never hitch a ride on any vehicle not designed to carry passengers.



# Lifting and carrying

Back problems can cause a lot of pain, and may last a lifetime.

Always use trolleys, wheelbarrows or other appropriate lifting equipment if these are available.

You must be shown how to lift and carry items correctly.

Take care that you:

Only lift or carry what you can easily manage.

Can see clearly where you are going.

Get help with anything that you think might be too heavy or awkward to manage on your own.

**If in doubt, don't do it – ask for help!**





# Safety around the building

## Roofs

Roofs may be fragile or have loose tiles. Never go on a roof unless you have been trained to use the proper precautions. Tell the supervisor if you feel giddy, faint or unsafe when at heights.



## Electricity

Electricity can kill or cause severe burns. Treat it with respect.

Make sure you:

Understand the instructions before using any electrical equipment.

If you don't understand, ASK.

Always switch off at the mains before connecting or disconnecting any electrical appliance.

Report any damaged electrical tools or equipment, including cables and extension leads.



# Working at heights

Falls, sometimes from quite low levels, can cause death or serious injuries. Following these rules can make you safer:

Make sure you are shown the correct way to place a ladder.

Do not use a ladder with split, missing or loose rungs.

Always make sure that the ladder is placed in the way you have been shown and cannot slip. If you are unsure, have it checked.

Don't overstretch. Keep your body within the frame of the ladder. If necessary, come down and move the ladder to a more convenient position.

Always use the correct access equipment such as passenger hoists or ladders to reach high places.

Never ride in a crane bucket or on the forks of a fork-lift truck.



# Machinery

Only operate a machine after you have been trained and given permission to use it. Follow exactly the safe way of using the machine, and use it only for the job it is intended to do. Do not take short cuts to save time.

Make sure that you know where all the controls are and what they do. When using any machine, know how to stop it in an emergency.

Safety guards are fitted to machines to protect you. They must be used. If you think that any moving part could cause damage, ask your supervisor if there should be a guard.

Always follow the systems set up for adjusting or cleaning machines. Make sure that no one else can switch a machine on again while you are working on it.

**Don't wear dangling chains or loose clothing, which could get caught in moving parts.**

Keep your hair tucked under a cap or tied back.

**Do not distract other people who are using machinery.**

Never use compressed air to clean machinery.

**Tell your supervisor at once if you think a machine is not working correctly or is unsafe.**



# Hand tools and knives

Imagine how difficult life would be if you lost one of your fingers!

Ordinary, everyday things like hand tools and knives can be dangerous. You should be trained to use the correct knife or tool for the particular job.

Never use worn or broken equipment.

Never misuse tools.

Clean equipment after use and store it correctly.



# Working with animals

Animals can pass on serious or fatal diseases to humans.

Treat all living creatures – domestic and farm animals, birds and fish – with care and respect. Both male and female animals can cause death or injury. You can avoid accidents by taking the following precautions:



Be aware of circumstances – animals under stress, who are ill or who have young are more likely to be dangerous.

Follow instructions exactly.

Do not enter areas containing animals unless it is necessary.

Be careful with personal hygiene – always wash your hands after contact with animals.

# Hazardous substances

There are regulations Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) to protect you from hazardous substances used at work. Some of the substances are so common you may not realise how harmful they can be.

Remember:

Follow the organisation's instructions –

**ask if you are unsure.**

Read all hazard warning signs and the instruction labels on containers. They should tell you if, for example, a substance is poisonous, easily set on fire, or can cause burns.

Before you use a substance, find out what to do if it spills onto your skin or clothes.

Overalls or protective clothing which are soaked or badly stained by hazardous substances must not be taken away.

Do not transfer small quantities of any liquids or substances into unlabelled or wrongly labelled containers – this is dangerous for everyone.

A dusty atmosphere can also damage your health – ask if there are any special precautions you need to take.



# Occupational Health

Workplace exposure to substances, including chemicals and dusts, can cause pain, suffering, ill health and sometimes death.

A hazardous agent is something used at work that may become harmful to you if not used correctly; this can be from prolonged contact with water, a chemical, biological agents such as plants / bacteria / fungus, coming into contact with things like UV radiation, or mechanical abrasion such as sand or rough edged tools. Remember though that not every substance used in the workplace is a hazardous one.

Hazardous agents may cause skin diseases or skin cancers, diseases that can affect your lungs and breathing, or cause cancer in the body. Some agents can cause cancer that doesn't occur until a long time after exposure, often more than 10 years after.

Good working practices (using correct method of work with correct equipment) and good personal hygiene practices (washing hands and face before eating and after work and washing immediately when skin contact has occurred with a hazardous agent) reduces any risks.



## Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).

The main cause of COPD is cigarette smoke – but exposure in the workplace can cause COPD in people who do not smoke. It is a long latency disease with considerable time between exposure and ill health effects appearing. Make sure you follow the right instructions to reduce the exposure and ill health effects. COPD cannot be cured, once developed in cannot be reversed.

## Chemical carcinogens

Chemicals can enter the body through inhalation (breathing them in), ingestion (by mouth reaching the stomach) or absorption (through the skin). When handling chemicals you must apply the correct methods for handling and use, including any protective clothing or equipment, and always use good personal hygiene practices.







## Asbestos

Asbestos is the greatest single cause of work related death in the UK. Working with asbestos has strict legal controls in place that must be followed. Your employer should ensure a suitable risk assessment and written plan of work is made before any work is done on parts of the building or structure – this is to ensure you are not exposed to asbestos containing material (ACM). Follow the instructions given and use any PPE/equipment you are provided with. If you are working and suspect the material is asbestos cease work immediately and inform your supervisor.



## Asthma

The Health and Safety Executive estimates that between 1500-3000 people in Britain develop occupational asthma each year.

Look on product labels/hazard data sheets for the risk phrase R42 'may cause sensitisation by inhalation', and ensure you follow the instructions for handling and using the product.



Be safe!

# Working with computers

There is no evidence to suggest that display screen equipment can cause you harm, provided that you:

Are trained how to use the equipment.

Adjust your chair correctly.

Use a footrest and a document holder, if you need them.

Make sure that you have regular breaks or change to other work away from the screen.





You must report any problems with your eyes or any aches and pains in your wrists, arms or neck to your supervisor.

Sometimes health problems can occur if you are carrying out repetitive tasks using computers.

Use this checklist to make sure you can work safely:

**Can you adjust the equipment or tools to suit your needs?**

Is the work environment, for example, heating, lighting, workspace, work position, suitable for you?

**Can you change activities/tasks at regular intervals to use different muscles?**

Can you adjust the pace or speed of the work you do?

**Have you been shown how to carry out the activities correctly?**

Do you know who to talk to if you have any concerns about the tasks?

# Fire

Do you know?

What to do if there is a fire

How to raise the alarm

What the alarm sounds like

Where the fire exits are

Where the assembly point is

Don't take risks. **If you don't know – ASK**

For a fire to occur there needs to be 3 elements present – **fuel** (or source), **heat** or **ignition**, and **oxygen**

Know and understand the organisation's fire instructions.

Keep away from flames or sparks when handling petrol or other flammable substances.

Find out about the smoking policy and obey 'No Smoking' rules.

Do not create a fire hazard by throwing cigarette ends in corners or under benches.

Keep fire doors unlocked and free from obstruction.



# First aid

Make sure you know about first aid arrangements.

Get to know the names of the first aiders and where they can be found.

Report to your supervisors any injury or any ill effects you suffer.



# Bullying and harassment

## What is bullying?

Constant fault-finding and criticism of a trivial nature.

A constant refusal to acknowledge you and your achievements.

Constant attempts to undermine you and your position and potential.

Being isolated, ignored, and separated from colleagues, excluded from what's going on.

Being humiliated, shouted at and threatened, often in front of others.

Having unrealistic goals set, which change as you approach them.

## Who gets bullied?

Nearly everyone is bullied at some time in their lives: by brothers and sisters, by neighbours, by adults or by other children. If you are being bullied, you may feel scared, vulnerable and quite alone but you owe it to yourself to try and sort out the situation so that the bullying stops. **Remember, no-one deserves to be bullied.**

## What is harassment?

Bullying tends to consist of many small incidents over a long period of time, whereas harassment may consist of one more serious incident. Harassment includes any unwanted behaviour that has the effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment. It can take many forms and occur for a variety of reasons. It may be related to age, sex, race, disability, religion, sexuality or any personal characteristic of an individual.

# Personal safety



Personal safety is also important. Learn to plan ahead and take practical precautions to keep yourself safe.

Be aware – trust your intuition and try not to be influenced by peer pressure.

Be alert – if you are going out, find out how to get to your destination and tell someone where you are going and what time you expect to return.

Plan ahead – what will you do if you face violence – your aim should be to get away from the situation quickly. Remember it is not weak to walk away.

Always report incidents – it may help others in the future.

Further useful information is available from the Suzy Lamplugh Trust