



# FACTSHEET 16

## Health & Safety

Health and Safety rules and regulations form a part of how you operate your services. You have what is termed a duty of care to your volunteers and members of the public to avoid personal injury.

If you employ staff, you have to meet legal health and safety requirements. Health and Safety is quite a complex issue; we cannot hope to cover it all here. This Factsheet aims to give you some of the basics.

### Health and Safety Policy

It is good practice for all organisations to have a health and safety policy, although the law which requires it only applies to organisations with five or more employees.

#### 1: Risk Assessment

All organisations should undertake this process as good practice, whether you have paid staff or not. Your responsibility is to the users of the service, your committee, and your volunteers. Undertaking a risk assessment shows that you have carefully considered all possible hazards and implemented methods of avoiding accidents.

- Look for potential hazards
- Decide who may be harmed and how
- Evaluate these risks and decide whether your existing precautions are adequate or whether more should be done
- Record your findings
- Review your assessment and revise it if necessary

#### 2: Registering Your Premises

If your organisation has paid

employees, you are required by law to register the existence of your premises and activities. Most voluntary organisations would need to register with the environmental health department within your local authority. Only if your activities involved manufacture or repair (this includes printing), are you required to register with the local Health & Safety Executive.

#### 3: First Aid

Different organisations will need different first aid arrangements, according to their needs and activities. For example, an organisation running outdoor activities for children will need very different first aid to an office-based advice agency. Just as you would do a risk assessment, you should undertake a first aid assessment to consider the likely need. As a minimum you must have someone who has basic first aid knowledge and is available to take charge in an emergency. This is known as an Appointed Person. Your assessment may show that you need a trained First Aider; this is someone who has completed a 4 day Health & Safety Executive approved course.

Some first aid training providers:

- **St. John Ambulance**
- **British Red Cross Society**

#### 4: First Aid Box

You must have a first aid box, although there are no rules to say what you must have in it. Some of the basics would include: sterile plasters, bandages, wound dressings, a leaflet of basic first aid. You must have a notice indicating where the first aid box is, who the first aider or appointed person is and where

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they can be found.

## 5: Fire Certificate

If your premises are open to the public, you must display a fire certificate or if the Fire Brigade decide that you qualify for exemption, as being a low risk, they may issue you with an exemption certificate. This will be given to you in writing. If you are the owner or sole tenant of the premises, it is your responsibility to apply for the fire certificate. If your premises are only partly leased by your organisation then the landlord is responsible for doing this. The Fire Certificate outlines:

- details of the use of the premises
- fire escape routes
- fire fighting equipment that is required
- fire drills and other fire precautions

Make sure you have clear guidelines for your staff, volunteers and visitors about procedures in the event of a fire. Everyone should know where the nearest fire exit is, how the alarm will be raised (not all premises have a fire alarm), where to assemble, how the roll call will be done and who will do it. If you hold an event, you should make these procedures clear before you start.

## 6: Insurance

Insurance is very important to ensure your organisation is covered in the event of an accident, but it is complex and covered in more detail in Factsheet 17 on Insurance.

## 7: Hazardous Substances

There are regulations which require you to do an assessment of any substances such as chemicals that are used on your premises and which are hazardous to health. Most voluntary organisations will not use many of these, beyond cleaning agents perhaps. In which case, you need to ensure those people who use them are aware of:

- any potential hazards to skin, hair, eyes etc.
- how to store the substances
- how to deal with any spillages

The Health & Safety Executive has further information on such assessments.

## 8: Food Hygiene

If your organisation prepares and serves food on your premises, whether it is for sale or not, then food safety regulations apply. These require that people handling food must be properly trained and properly supervised. There are also specific

requirements regarding clean work areas and equipment, suitable premises, suitable arrangements for food waste and so on.

## 9: Recording Accidents and Incidents

You should record any accidents that occur on your premises as good practice. By law, any workplace that has more than 10 employees must have an Accident Book. This can be used to record, not only accidents, but illness possibly caused by work and any **near-miss** accidents.

Serious injuries have to be reported to the **Health & Safety Executive** or the local **Environmental Health Division**, depending on who you are registered with (see **Registering Your Premises** above). These are defined as

- death or major injury (including assault)
- an injury that means the person is off work for three days or more
- work related disease
- dangerous occurrences - these include things that might have resulted in injury, even if it did not, such as a fire or explosion.

## 10: General Health and Safety Advice

In an office environment the following basic tips are useful (and should be picked up by your risk assessment!):

- Don't leave wires from electrical equipment and computers trailing.
- Don't keep lots of your paper for recycling piled up where they could be a fire risk.
- Ensure that you have appropriate desks and chairs for your computer workstations, to avoid poor posture and Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI).
- Ensure fire exits are clearly marked, kept unlocked and not obstructed in any way.
- Use a trolley for moving heavy objects. Bend at the knees when lifting, to avoid straining your back.
- Ensure your office is at an ambient temperature. People work more happily when they are comfortable!

### FURTHER HELP

Dudley Council for Voluntary Service  
7 Albion Street  
Brierley Hill  
West Midlands  
DY5 3EE

☎ 01384 78166

[www.dudleycvs.org.uk](http://www.dudleycvs.org.uk)