

How to Stay Health & Safety Legal

Your business has legal responsibilities to ensure the health and safety of your employees and other people affected by your business activities, such as customers and suppliers. But the right approach isn't just about doing the minimum required to comply with the legal requirements. It can also benefit your business.

Poor health and safety leads to illness and accidents and significant costs for your business. Effective health and safety practices pay for themselves. They also improve your reputation with customers, regulators and your own employees.

You have a legal responsibility for the health and safety of everyone affected by your business. Your duties include:

- carrying out a thorough health and safety risk assessment;
- drawing up a health and safety policy - this must be in writing if you have five employees or more;
- ensuring your workplace meets minimum standards of comfort and cleanliness;
- recording serious injuries, diseases or dangerous accidents in an accident book and in some cases reporting them to the relevant authority. As an employer, you must assess and manage health and safety risks - whether you are a big business, a small business or just a one-person operation.

Risk Assessments

Accidents and ill health can ruin lives and damage your business. You are not expected to eliminate all risk, but you are required to protect people as far as "reasonably practicable". A risk assessment is an important tool in protecting your workers and your business. It helps you focus on those risks that have the potential to cause harm. Most of these can be readily controlled by straightforward measures.

Once you've completed the assessment it is important to put your results into practice. If you need to make a number of improvements, you should produce an action plan to deal with the most important first. You should review your assessment on an ongoing basis to make sure that it remains up to date and effective.

Planning & Policy

A health and safety policy is a plan detailing how you are going to manage health and safety issues.

Your policy should set out your commitment to manage your risks and meet your legal duties. It should also inform people in your business of their duties and the steps that they need to take in order to fulfil those duties.

If you employ five or more people you must have a written health and safety policy statement and a record of your health and safety arrangements. You need a written document so that you and your workforce are clear about who's responsible for what.

If your business employs less than five people you are not legally required to have a written health and safety policy statement. However, you must still ensure that you work safely - a written policy can help you do this.

Reporting injuries Diseases & Dangerous Occurrences

If you are self-employed, employ other people or are in charge of work premises, you have a duty under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR) to report and keep records of certain types of **incident** or **accident** at work.

Meet Your Legal Obligations

All businesses must ensure their workplace - whether this is a factory, office or shop - meets minimum health and safety standards. Your responsibilities are likely to include:

- carrying out a risk assessment;
- providing clean toilets and sanitation facilities;
- meeting fire safety standards;
- health and safety training;
- ensuring employees use IT equipment safely and equipment is Portable Appliance Tested;
- report accidents or dangerous incidents in the workplace to the relevant authorities;
- ensure you policy and procedures are relevant and up-to-date;

By meeting the minimum standards required for health and safety you are better positioned to protect your employees and legal responsibilities of your business.

If you would like any further information or assistance, please contact a member of the A. H. Allen Ltd team on 01482 644632.