



Site Managers Guide to Health and Safety in Offices





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Introduction

This guide has been developed to assist site managers understand and fulfil their duties under health and safety legislation. It draws attention to the main hazards found in offices, and provides information and guidance to safeguard employees and other persons who may visit or share the site e.g. members of the public, contractors, etc.

It is the responsibility of the relevant group directorates to appoint site managers, and deputies if necessary. Group directorates should contact Corporate Estates Asset Management Team who will coordinate and maintain an up to date database of site managers. Site managers must be provided with relevant information, instruction and training regarding their role and responsibilities. In large multi-occupancy or shared sites it is likely that the site manager will have a coordinating role for the management of health and safety throughout the site. In general, the site manager will have responsibility for communal areas and ensuring that the relevant maintenance and servicing of equipment and systems is carried out in accordance with set standards e.g. fire extinguishers, emergency lighting, portable appliance testing etc. The day-to-day management of individual offices, storage areas, kitchens etc., used by individual sections will be the responsibility of the relevant section head.

In large multi-occupancy or shared sites it is possible that the site manager will need assistance and cooperation from other site users on issues such as fire, first aid, traffic management, accident reporting and security. These arrangements should be documented and agreed with the relevant section heads. Please note, there is a legal requirement that where different employers share a workplace they must cooperate and coordinate with each other on health and safety matters.

Legal Duties

As an employer, the Council has duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (the Act) to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees, and others who might be affected by its undertaking. This includes the provision and maintenance of:

- a safe and healthy place of work and working environment;
- safe plant, equipment and working systems;
- safe handling, transport and storage of materials and substances;
- information, instruction, training and supervision to enable employees to recognise and minimise hazards;
- adequate welfare facilities.

Employees of the Council also have duties under the Act, the most important of which are to take care of their own health and safety and that of others who might be affected by their work activities, and to cooperate with their employer in all matters of health and safety.

In order to assist in the process of managing health and safety, the Council has developed Health and Safety Policies covering a host of specific topics. The policies can be viewed and downloaded from the Council's intranet site at Council Policies.

The following pages provide information and guidance concerning the management of the main health and safety hazards likely to be encountered in an office environment.

Further advice and guidance can be found by either contacting the Health and Safety Team based at Ty Elai Williamstown and/or Corporate Estates based at Navigation Park, Abercynon.



Asbestos

Many offices will have or have had asbestos containing materials (ACMs) in various parts of the building. The Council has a legal duty to control and manage the presence of asbestos in properties under its control.

Corporate Estates have undertaken surveys of Council premises and have developed a framework for managing asbestos that includes:

- the identification of ACMs in the building;
- the assessment of the condition of the ACMs;
- either removal, or management in situ which would include the development of an Asbestos Management Plan;
- providing information to employees and contractors;
- training for employees where required; and,
- appropriate record keeping.

The site manager will follow the Asbestos Management Plan provided by Corporate Estates and will:

- keep the Asbestos Management Plan readily available and use it to manage and control any ACMs that may be present in the building;
- inform anyone who may work in the vicinity of the ACMs of their presence (e.g. maintenance staff);
- report any ACMs that might, or have become damaged to Corporate Estates for immediate action;
- contact Corporate Estates when any building works are planned including, refurbishments or demolition such as running computer cables, electrical cables, plumbing etc).

If your premise has not received an asbestos survey, or as the site manager you have not received training regarding your responsibilities, please contact Corporate Estates.

Additional Information/Guidance

- Council Policy HS24 - Control and Management of Asbestos
- The Council's Asbestos Management Guide for Building Managers*
- The Council's Asbestos Management Plan for Premises*

*Contact Corporate Estates for copy

Communication

It is the site manager's responsibility to ensure that there are clear and effective channels of communication throughout the site for information and guidance relating to its health and safety management, particularly in multi-occupancy / shared sites.

This can be achieved by holding regular meetings with other site users to discuss site based issues, circulating written information to ensure site users are kept apprised and ensuring safety signage is appropriate and adequate. Notice and information boards should be kept up to date.

The site manager must ensure that the HSE's health and safety law poster is completed appropriately and displayed where employees can easily read it. The poster includes basic health and safety information and lets people know who is responsible for health and safety on site.

Current legislation requires the employer to consult with employees on health and safety matters. Consultation involves not only giving employees information, but also listening to and taking account of what they say, particularly when they report problems, and before making any health and safety decisions. The Council's Employee Suggestion Scheme and Hazard Reporting Scheme can assist in this process.

Additional Information/Guidance

- The Council's Employee Suggestion Scheme
- The Council's Hazard Reporting Scheme



Control of Contractors

The control of contractors within a site is very important. Contractors in an office environment may be involved in long-term major refurbishment work or everyday maintenance, such as servicing of the heating system, repairing damaged guttering, maintaining the emergency lighting system etc.

The site manager should always liaise with Corporate Estates and also follow the Council's Policy HS23 - Managing Contractors, for the planning, selection, appointment and monitoring of anyone undertaking works. This includes:

- having clearly identified personnel who are points of contact for contractors and visiting workers;
- having all significant and unusual hazards and risks on site clearly identified;
- exchanging information on hazards and risks.

The site manager will ensure effective communication is established and maintained through:

- regular workplace meetings with contractors;
- providing contractors with copies of appropriate hazard registers, such as the asbestos register;
- informing employees and visitors about hazards on site;
- having effective signing in and out procedures for contractors;
- informing contractors of emergency site procedures e.g. fire evacuation plan
- sharing findings of risk assessments with contractors;
- asking contractors about the hazards and risks which they are bringing on site (e.g. creating noise, dust, fumes);
- informing employees and visitors about any possible interference with normal working practices (e.g. re-routing of emergency escape routes);
- monitoring the work against agreed methods.

Additional Information/Guidance

- Use of Contractors - A Joint Responsibility - HSE
- Council Policy HS23 - Managing Contractors

Electricity

Electricity can kill. It can also cause shocks and burns and can start fires. The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 cover the use of electricity in offices. These regulations require employers to maintain electrical systems and electrical equipment within their control. Electrical systems include the lighting and power circuits, and portable electrical equipment such as vacuum cleaners, power tools etc. All work carried out on electrical circuits and equipment such as installation work, inspection, testing and maintenance, must be carried out by a competent person. Fixed electrical installations must be inspected and tested at regular intervals. Corporate Estates have contracts in place for both fixed and portable electrical equipment.

All portable electrical equipment should be subject to periodic portable appliance testing (PAT). The frequency of the testing varies according to the appliance and its usage, although it is generally undertaken on an annual basis for office type equipment such as printers, computers etc. You will find stickers or labels on the equipment indicating when it was last inspected and the date when the next inspection is due. If you are unclear as to when the fixed electrical systems or portable equipment was last checked you should contact Corporate Estates.

Employees using portable equipment must visually check it prior to use, and report any damage or defects. For example broken plugs, frayed flex, discoloured or overheated cables. Defective or unsuitable equipment should be immediately withdrawn from service and labelled until it is either repaired or destroyed.

Employees should be discouraged from bringing in their own electrical equipment, but where it is accepted this equipment must form part of the regular maintenance and inspection procedures.

Electrical switch-rooms must be kept free from combustible materials and never used as storage areas.

Additional Information/Guidance

- Electricity at Work - Homepage
- Council Policy HS10 - Electricity at Work



Fire

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 places a duty on the Council to ensure its buildings are fire risk assessed. If a current fire risk assessment is not available on site, the site manager should liaise with their direct line manager to establish whether or not an assessment has been undertaken, and to request a copy of the resulting report. In the absence of a report, arrangements must be made for a risk assessment to be completed. Corporate Estates can assist in this matter.



The site manager is responsible for overall management of the day-to-day fire precautions on site and will ensure that systems and arrangements are developed to:

- identify any significant findings from the fire risk assessment and implement any actions required;
- check escape routes to ensure they can be used and are not obstructed;
- check the emergency exit devices on doors to ensure they work correctly;
- test fire alarm systems, including weekly alarm tests and periodic maintenance by a competent person;
- test and maintain emergency lighting systems, fire extinguishers, hose reels and fire blankets etc., including periodic maintenance by a competent person;
- record the training of relevant people;
- ensure a coordinated site based emergency evacuation plan is developed;
- liaise with other site users to ensure personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPS) are developed for disabled persons;
- maintain the fire log book.

The site manager must also;

- update the fire risk assessment as required;
- liaise with Corporate Estates on building and maintenance issues; and,
- undertake an annual review of the fire risk assessment.

As stated previously, in large multi-occupied or shared sites many of the fire related maintenance and procedural arrangements will need to be coordinated with other site users.

The current fire related maintenance contracts in place and managed through Corporate Estates include:

- fire fighting equipment e.g. extinguishers - 1 service per year;
- fire detection and alarm systems e.g. smoke/heat detectors, alarm repeater - 4 visits per year;
- emergency lighting - 4 visits per year;
- heating systems - 2 visits per year (summer / winter) (the summer visit will include a gas safety check); and,
- gas safety check – annual (see reference to heating systems above).

The site manager must ensure that the maintenance is undertaken in line with the above contracts. Any discrepancies or uncertainties must be reported to Corporate Estates.

Additional Information/Guidance

- Fire Risk Assessment Guide - Means of Escape for Disabled People
- Fire Risk Assessment Guide - Offices and Shops
- Fire Log Book



First-Aid

The Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981 require all places of work to have first-aid provision. The extent of the provision will depend on a number of factors, such as the types of hazards present, the number of employees, the history of accidents, the proximity of medical services etc. This can be determined by carrying out a first-aid needs risk assessment. The approved code of practice (ACoP) for the regulations provides guidance to help employers meet their obligations.

The site manager will liaise with other site users to ensure that the required numbers of first-aid trained persons or appointed persons are available during the hours of work.

Sufficient and adequately stocked first-aid boxes must be provided and maintained by authorised personnel. The location of the first-aid boxes and the name(s) of the person(s) responsible for their upkeep must be clearly displayed throughout the site.

Records should be kept by the first-aiders/appointed persons of all treatment administered, and should include the name of the injured person, date, time and circumstances of the accident, and details of the injury sustained. This information must also be recorded on the incident / accident form.

Additional Information/Guidance

- Council Policy HS9 - First-Aid at Work
- First-Aid at Work - ACOP - HSE
- First-Aid at Work - Your Questions Answered - HSE

General Working Environment

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 cover a wide range of basic health, safety and welfare standards. These regulations aim to ensure that workplaces meet the health, safety and welfare needs of all employees, including people with disabilities. The standards include:

- **Health** - ventilation, temperature, lighting, cleanliness, waste materials, room dimensions and space, workstations and seating.
- **Safety** - maintenance, floors and traffic routes, doors, gates, walls, windows.
- **Welfare** - sanitary conveniences, washing facilities, drinking water, accommodation for clothing, changing facilities, facilities to rest and eat meals.

It is probable that the majority of queries received by site managers will be in some way related to these areas. The site manager should therefore make themselves aware of these standards.

Additional Information/Guidance

- Council Policy HS12 - Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare
- Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare - A Short Guide for Managers - HSE





Incidents / Accidents

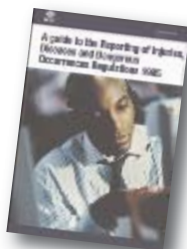
It is the responsibility of all employees to report incidents and accidents that occur on Council premises or which arise from work carried out on behalf of the Council. Incidents and accidents must be reported on the Council's Incident / Accident Investigation and Injury Record form HS5 (A).

Certain incidents / accidents are also reportable to the Health and Safety Executive under The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR).

What needs to be reported under RIDDOR?

The following are reportable if they arise 'out of or in connection with work':

- accidents that result in the fatal injury of an **employee or member of the public**;
- accidents that result in an **employee** suffering a major injury (fracture, dislocation etc.)
- accidents that result in an employee being absent from work or unable to do their normal duties for more than three days;
- accidents that result in a **member of the public** suffering an injury and being taken to hospital directly from the scene of the accident;
- an **employee** diagnosed with one of the specified work-related diseases; or,
- one of the specified 'dangerous occurrences' – these do not necessarily result in injury but have the potential to do significant harm.



Reporting Arrangements

In the event that a work-related accident occurs on the site, the relevant manager must notify the health and safety team in line with the timescales identified in the Accident Reporting Arrangement Guidelines.

Where an incident/accident occurs on site and involves an employee, it is the direct line manager's responsibility to investigate, not the site manager. However, the site manager must be notified in order that hazardous areas and trends can be identified and any repairs or remedial work can be organised. Where the incident/accident involves a visitor, member of the public or contractor then the site manager should investigate unless there are obvious reasons why the responsibility rests with a different manager.

Additional Information/Guidance

- Council Guidance - Accident Reporting Arrangement Guidelines
- Council Policy HS5 - Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995
- Reduce risk - Cut costs - HSE



Interview Rooms

Interview rooms have an important role within the Council's office facilities as they provide an area of privacy where employees and members of the public can meet.

Where possible it is important that the interview room is in a location that prevents unauthorised access by the visitor(s) to the rest of the building. The design of the room should be such that it affords the employees a means of removing themselves from any violent situation, should it occur.

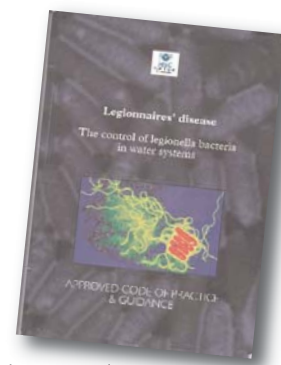
It is equally important that, where necessary, the interview room is fitted with a panic alarm for employees to summon assistance if needed. Arrangements should be developed for employees to follow in the event of the alarm sounding, and all employees must be aware of these procedures. Arrangements should include the need for the interviewer to check the room prior to the interview for any objects that could be used as weapons.

Additional Information/Guidance

Council Policy HS13 - Violence at Work

Legionella

Legionnaires' disease is a potentially fatal type of pneumonia, which is contracted by inhaling tiny airborne droplets or particles containing viable Legionella bacteria. Although healthy individuals may develop Legionnaires' disease, the elderly, smokers, alcoholics, and those with cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory or kidney disease would be more at risk. Legionella bacteria are common and can be found in water systems, wet air conditioning plant, whirlpool baths and hydrotherapy baths.



Corporate Estates have undertaken Legionella Risk Assessments of the water systems within Council premises and developed a site specific Legionella Risk Assessment/Site Log Book.

The site manager will follow the Legionella Risk Assessment/Site Log Book and will:

- keep the Log Book updated and readily available and use it to manage and control the water systems in the building;
- carry out the monthly temperature monitoring as instructed in the Log Book;
- carry out weekly flushing of any low-use water outlets as instructed in the Log Book and record actions accordingly; and
- record the findings and report any failings to the Legionella Team for investigation/rectification.

If your premise has not received a Legionella Risk Assessment, or you as the site manager have not received training regarding your responsibilities, please contact Corporate Estates.

Additional Information/Guidance

- The Council's Legionella Management Guide for Building Managers*
- The Council's Legionella Risk Assessment/Site Log Book*

*Produced by Corporate Estates



Moving and Handling

There are always occasions when employees working in an office will need to move equipment, furniture, boxes etc. It is therefore essential that before undertaking these tasks, a risk assessment is undertaken that considers the factors below:

- avoiding hazardous manual handling operations where reasonably practicable –
 - » *is the job necessary?*
 - » *can it be done in a different way?*
 - » *can it be mechanised?*
- assess any hazardous operations that cannot be avoided;
- reduce the risk of injury as far as is reasonably practicable -
 - » *add specialist sliders or wheels to furniture that has to be moved*
 - » *provide sack trucks or trolleys*
 - » *spread moving and handling tasks throughout the day*
- ensure employees have received suitable and sufficient training.

The most useful assessments are set out in a simple format so that it is possible to quickly assimilate what equipment, techniques and numbers of employees are required to carry out the task safely. Simple tasks only require simple assessments, e.g. dividing large boxes into smaller loads. More complex tasks will require detailed assessment and will need to be recorded. In some instances generic assessments are acceptable, however, all assessments should consider the task, the load, the working environment and the individual's capabilities.

Clothing, footwear and protective equipment are other factors that have a direct impact on movement and the ability to adopt the correct posture while moving and handling. They should allow employees to perform a full range of unrestricted movements.

Passenger Lifts

All lifting equipment, including passenger lifts, must be inspected at regular intervals by competent persons. Corporate Estates have contracts in place for the examination and maintenance of lifts.

Site managers should carry out basic lift related checks i.e.:

- check that there are "do not use the lift in the event of a fire" signs on the outside of the lift (unless the lift is specifically designed to be used in the event of a fire);
- if the lift is fitted with an emergency telephone, bell or other device, check to see it is functioning correctly and can be heard where assistance is available;
- check the inside of the lift to ensure there is a notice explaining what to do in an emergency.

Additional Information/Guidance

- Council Policy HS4 - Manual Handling
- Getting to Grips with Manual Handling - HSE



Slips, Trips and Falls

Most slips occur when the flooring or ground is wet or contaminated. Most trips are due to poor housekeeping. These types of accidents are seen by many as inevitable and many people may not take them seriously. However, the statistics prove that slip, trip and fall accidents cost employers and the NHS millions of pounds each year, notwithstanding the pain and suffering of those injured.

The solutions are often simple and cost effective. A suitable assessment of the risks should identify the necessary control measures. For example:

Internal Areas

- floor surfaces should be kept free from obstructions and holes and defects repaired promptly, particularly those on staircases;
- handrails should be fitted on stairs;
- stairs should be maintained in a safe condition, kept free of obstructions and well lit;
- spillages should be cleaned up immediately.

Section heads are responsible for ensuring that the work areas under their control are kept clean, tidy and free from defects.

External Areas

- steps and paths in outdoor areas should be kept in good condition and free from obstructions that could lead to tripping hazards;
- changes in surface levels such as on ramps and steps should be clearly marked and lighting should be suitable and sufficient;
- steps should have a suitable handrail, and paths that are used during the hours of darkness should be provided with outdoor lighting.

During the winter months it is likely that the risk of slips, trips and falls will increase. Arrangements should be developed to ensure that the increased risk is managed appropriately. For example:

- undertaking a pre-winter risk assessment/ inspection of pipes, guttering, drainage channels, traffic routes etc., to ensure leaks are identified and repaired before the onset of winter;
- ordering supplies of salt/grit, and developing procedures to ensure adequate stocks are maintained;
- prioritising pedestrian and vehicle routes for gritting;
- agreeing the timing and frequency of gritting;
- informing other site users of these arrangements.

Additional Information

- **HSE Guidance - Preventing Slips and Trips at Work**
- **Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare - A Short Guide for Managers - HSE**





Smoking

The Smoke-Free Premises (Wales) Regulations 2007 prohibit smoking in enclosed or substantially enclosed public places, including workplaces. There is no obligation on employers to provide designated areas where employees can smoke. However, if designated smoking areas are provided, they should be located outside the building and away from doorways, windows and pedestrian routes. Arrangements must be made to remove all smoking debris.

“No smoking” signs must be placed in prominent positions at or near each entrance, so that people entering can see them.



Traffic Management

Every year about 70 people are killed and 2500 seriously injured in accidents involving vehicles in the workplace. Being struck or run over by moving vehicles are the most common causes of these accidents. Although the likelihood of being struck by a vehicle in an office site is low, the potential still exists. Vehicles likely to be encountered on an office site include cars, vans, delivery vehicles etc. Additionally, there may be occasions where building or refurbishment works may impact on the regular traffic management arrangements on site.

It is therefore essential that a risk assessment be undertaken to identify the potential hazards and to ensure that appropriate control measures are adopted.

Additional Information/Guidance

- Council Policy HS18 - Smoking in the Workplace
- What you need to know about the new smoke-free law - A guide for employers, managers and those in control of premises and vehicles - WAG

Additional Information/Guidance

- Managing Traffic Safety on Council Premises
- Workplace Transport Safety - An Overview - HSE



Visitors

Visitors to Council offices could include members of the public, contractors and other visiting Council employees. To protect visitors from harm, it will be necessary to know they are on site.

The simplest way of recording visitors' presence is by using a register and/or issuing a visitor's badge. Where practical, visitors must sign in and out indicating who they are visiting, the time they arrived and the time they leave.



Visitors must be informed of the risks to which they may be exposed whilst on site and any emergency arrangements, including the location of assembly points. Where an emergency arises, measures must be taken by the responsible person to ensure the visitor is accompanied to a place of safety. The responsible person may not necessarily be the site manager, but is likely to be the person who is meeting the visitor. Adequate supervision must be maintained while the visitor is on site.

Where disabled persons access the site, the responsible person must ensure, where necessary, that personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) are developed for these individuals.

Additional Information/Guidance

- Council Policy - HS15 - Visitors

Work Equipment

The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER) require the risk to people's health and safety, from equipment that is used at work, be prevented or controlled. Generally any equipment which is used at work is covered by PUWER. Work equipment in an office environment includes items such as, shredders, stepladders, trolleys, and photocopiers.

Work equipment provided must meet the requirements of PUWER, and in doing so it must be:

- suitable for use, and for the purpose and conditions in which it is used;
- maintained in a safe condition; and
- in certain circumstances, inspected to ensure that it is, and continues to be, safe for use.

Any inspection/maintenance must be carried out by a competent person and records kept. Where appropriate, employees will be expected to undertake visual inspections of equipment before use.

Risks created by the use of the equipment must be assessed, and eliminated where possible or controlled.

Employees using work equipment must receive adequate training, instruction and information for the equipment they are using.

Section heads are responsible for work equipment used solely by their employees.

Additional Information/Guidance

- Council Policy HS21 - Work Equipment
- A Simple Guide to PUWER - HSE