

MEDICAL OFFICERS OF SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION

FIRST AID IN SCHOOLS

Legislation:

The Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 require employers to provide adequate and appropriate equipment, facilities and personnel to enable first aid to be given to employees if they become injured or unwell at work. The regulations apply to *all* workplaces, no matter how small and even apply to the self-employed.

The Regulations do *not* place a legal obligation on employers to make first aid provision for non-employees such as the public or pupils in schools. However the HSE (The Health and Safety Executive) *strongly recommends* that non-employees are included in a first aid needs assessment.

In December 2005 a review of the Regulations was carried out and in particular the issue of extending the obligations to cover non-employees was examined in detail. The HSE concluded that it would *not* be seeking to make such cover a compulsory requirement for employers but would leave it voluntary-albeit with strong recommendations that employers should consider members of the public when making first aid needs assessments.

Who is Responsible?

The DfEE (Department for Education & Employment) states in its document "Guidance on First Aid for Schools" that the employer is responsible for the health and safety of their employees and "anyone else on the premises".

The LEA is the employer in county, controlled and special agreement schools. The owner, the trustees or the governing body is the employer in most independent schools.

The employer should ensure that the school has a health and safety policy to include arrangements for first aid based on a risk assessment of the school. It should include numbers of first-aiders/appointed persons; numbers and locations of first-aid containers; arrangements for off-site activities/trips and out of school hours arrangements.

First Aiders or Appointed Person?

An appointed person is someone who takes charge when someone is injured or taken ill. They are not first aiders and they should not give first aid treatment for which they have not been trained. They have responsibility for maintaining first aid equipment (eg restocking first aid boxes) and for ensuring that an ambulance is summoned when appropriate. An appointed person is the minimum legal requirement. Following risk assessment an employer may decide that a first aider is not required-but this is unusual.

A first aider will have undergone specific training as set out by the Health and Safety Commission. Following an evaluation in 2004 it was agreed that there would be 2 options for training:

- **Either** a 6hr emergency first aid course, with annual refresher training of 3-4hrs and a 6hr requalification course every 3yrs
- **Or** an 18hr first aid at work course, with annual refresher training of 3-4hrs and a 12hr requalification course every 3yrs.

A first aider must hold a valid certificate of competence, issued by an organisation whose training and qualifications are approved by the HSE. Note: standard first aid at work courses do not include resuscitation procedures for children.

How many First Aiders are required?

There are no rules on exact numbers but as a guide a lower risk place of work (eg shops, offices and libraries) would have at least one first aider for every 50-100 employees. A medium risk place of work (eg light engineering or assembly work) should consider having 1 first aider for every 50 employees (or part thereof). Schools generally fall into lower risk category but there may be parts of the school (eg certain sports, craft or design centres) where the risk falls into the medium risk group.

Consideration should be given to the geography of the school (one site or two?), specific hazards or risks on the site, and the proximity to emergency services.

Selection of First-Aid Personnel

Some posts (eg Sanatorium Nurse) will have first-aid cover as a part of the member of staff's contract of employment but for most people it is a voluntary arrangement. In selecting first aiders consideration should be given to reliability and communication skills, aptitude and ability to absorb new knowledge and skills, availability and the ability to cope with potentially stressful and physically demanding emergency procedures.

Schools may wish to have emergency first-aid training set into the contracts of all new members of certain category of staff.

First Aid Materials

As a minimum, employers are required to provide a fully stocked first-aid container at each site. The contents for such containers will vary according to the risks encountered at a particular site but a typical list is contained in the leaflet "First Aid at Work: Your Questions Answered". Consideration should be given to the need for travelling first aid containers (eg for teams playing away).

References:

1. First aid at work. The Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 L74
2. Update on the review of the Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981 www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid/review/dec05.htm
3. Guidance on First Aid for Schools DfEE
4. Evaluation of the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981- Proposals for Change. Health and Safety Commission.
5. First Aid at Work; Your Questions Answered <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg214.pdf>