

Rochdale Occupational Health Service Ltd

Guide to Carrying out a First Aid Needs Assessment

The new First Aid at Work guidelines for Employers from the Health & Safety Executive came into effect in October 2009. The new type of First Aid Needs Assessment will identify what type of first aid training your first aiders will need, how many first aiders are needed and where they should be located.

How much first aid provision an employer has to make depends on the circumstances of each workplace. There is no fixed level but each employer needs to assess what equipment, facilities and personnel are appropriate.

To assess their needs, employers should consider:-

1. The nature of the work and workplace hazards and risks
2. The nature of the workforce
3. The organisation's history of accidents
4. The needs of traveling, remote and lone workers
5. Work patterns such as shift work
6. The distribution of the workforce
7. The remoteness of the site from emergency medical services
8. Employees working on shared or multi-occupied sites
9. Annual leave and other absences of first aiders
10. First aid provision for non-employees
11. The size of the organisation

1. The nature of the work and workplace hazards and risks

One of the most complicated areas of the new first aid needs assessment is considering “the nature of the work, the hazards and the risks “. You should consider the risks and identify what possible injuries could occur in order to ensure sufficient first aid provision is available

To help employers, the table below gives examples of a number of hazards commonly found in the workplace, the causes of accidents that might occur in working with them and the injuries that might arise.

Hazard	Causes of Accidents	Examples of injury requiring first aid
Chemicals	Exposure during handling; spillages; splashing; leaks	Poisoning, eye injuries, burns, loss of consciousness
Electricity	Failure to securely isolate electrical systems and equipment during work on them; poorly maintained electrical equipment; contact with overhead power lines; underground power cables or mains electricity supplies; using unsuitable electrical equipment in explosive atmospheres	Electric shock, burns
Machinery	Loose hair or clothing becoming tangled in machinery; being hit by moving parts or material thrown from machinery; contact with sharp edges	Crush injuries, amputations, fractures, lacerations, eye injuries
Manual Handling	Repetitive and/or heavy lifting, bending and twisting; exerting too much force; handling bulky or unstable loads; handling in uncomfortable working positions	Fractures, lacerations, sprains and strains
Slip and trip hazards	Uneven floors; trailing cables; obstructions; slippery surfaces due to spillages; worn carpets and mats	Fractures, lacerations, sprains and strains
Work at height	Overreaching or overbalancing when using ladders; falling off or through a roof	Head injury, loss of consciousness, spinal injury, fractures, sprains and strains
Workplace transport	Hit by, hit against or falling from a vehicle; being hit by part of a load falling from a vehicle; being injured as a result of a vehicle collapse or overturn	Crush injuries, head injury, fractures, sprains and strains

One reason for this exercise is to ensure that you provide the correct type of first aider(s). There are now two levels of workplace first aider:-

- **Emergency First Aider at Work (EFAW) - 1-day (6 hour) course**
- **First Aider at Work (FAW) - 3-day (18 hour) course**

You should ensure that your First Aiders are trained to deal with the injuries and illnesses that could occur. The table below will help you match your requirements to the most appropriate course:-

What Emergences are First Aiders trained to deal with?	EFAW 6 hours	FAW 18 hours
Acting safely, promptly and effectively in an emergency	•	•
Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)	•	•
Treating an unconscious casualty (including seizure)	•	•
Choking	•	•
Wounds & Bleeding	•	•
Shock	•	•
Major Injuries	•	•
Preventing cross infection, recording incidents and actions and the use of available equipment	•	•
Fractures		•
Sprains and strains		•
Spinal Injuries		•
Chest Injuries		•
Severe Burns and Scalds		•
Eye Injuries		•
Poisoning		•
Anaphylaxis		•
Heart Attack		•
Stroke		•
Epilepsy		•
Asthma		•
Diabetes		•

These topics are NOT covered on the EFAW Course, so if any of these injuries or illnesses could occur, a full First Aider at Work should be provided

Extra specialised training and provision may be needed for hazards such as chemicals, dangerous machinery, working in confined spaces etc.

You should also consider the possible illnesses that could occur in the workplace and ensure you have adequate provision.

2. The Nature of the Workforce

You should consider the needs and health of all workers and ensure that first aiders are available and trained to deal with specific health needs. You should consider things such as:

- The Young
- The Elderly
- Specific health problems (such as heart conditions, asthma, diabetes etc.)
- Disabilities

3. The Organisation's History of Accidents and Illness

You should look at the organisations history of accidents and illness to try and identify any needs or trends that may influence the location or type of First Aider. Different levels of provision may be required in different areas of the workplace.

4. The Needs of Travelling, Remote and Lone Workers

First Aid should be available wherever people work so you may need to consider providing personal first aid kits or training to travelling, remote or lone workers.

5. Work Patterns Such as Shift Work

Adequate first aid cover should be available whenever people are at work. There may be circumstances when a higher level of cover is needed when less people are at work, such as overnight maintenance work in a normally low risk environment.

6. The Distribution of the Workforce

First Aiders should be able to reach the scene of an incident quickly. Consider extra first aiders on large sites, sites with multiple buildings or buildings with multiple floors.

7. Remoteness to the site from Emergency Medical Services

If the workplace is remote from emergency medical services you may need to make special transport arrangements should an incident occur. Consider how employees will summon help – do they have access to a phone?

Even in urban areas you should be aware that it often takes more than 10 minutes for an ambulance crew to reach a casualty, so the correct provision of first aid is a vital link in reducing the effects of illness or injury.

8. Employees Working on Shared or Multi-Occupied Sites

On shared work sites it may be possible to share first aid provision, such as the security team providing first aid cover at a large shopping centre. It is important to fully exchange details of the hazards and risks so that adequate first aid cover is provided. Make agreements in writing to avoid misunderstandings.

9. Annual leave and other foreseeable absences

You should ensure that adequate first aid cover is available at all times, including when a first aider is on annual leave, a training course, a lunch break or other foreseeable absences. This generally means that workplaces need more than one first aider to ensure that cover is maintained.

If your first aid needs assessment identifies the need for a 'First Aider at Work' (18 hour course), it is not acceptable to provide an 'Emergency First Aider at Work' (6 hour course) to cover foreseeable absences. You should also consider what cover is needed for non-planned absences such as sick leave.

10. First Aid Provision for Non-Employees

The HSE recommend that you include non-employees in your first aid needs assessment. You should consider the duty of care that you assume when a non-employee visits your site. This is particularly relevant if you provide a service for others such as schools, places of entertainment, shops etc. Consider both the injuries and illnesses that could occur.

For large events such as concerts, organisers have a duty of care to ensure that adequate medical, ambulance and first aid cover is available. Organisers of such events should refer to The Event Safety Guide, published by HSE books, for further information.

11. The Size of the Organisation

The number of people on a site should no longer be the primary basis for determining first aid needs; all the areas of the new first aid needs assessment should be carefully considered. However, in general terms the larger your organisation is, the more first aiders you will need.

After identifying the locations / times that first aid cover is needed, the HSE recommend:

- That 'non-manual', low risk workplaces (such as shops, offices, libraries) have a minimum of one first aider on duty at all times per 100 people (or part thereof).
- That 'manual' workplaces (light assembly work, warehousing, food processing or higher risks), have a minimum of one first aider on duty at all times per 50 people (or part thereof).

It is likely that if your workplace is large you will have already identified the need for full FAW (18 hour) training for your first aiders, but in any case, due to the increased probability of illness and injury occurring in larger workplaces, the HSE recommend that full FAW (18 hour) training is provided if:

- 100 or more people are employed in a 'non-manual', low risk workplace; or
- 50 or more people are employed in a 'manual' or higher risk workplace.

Reviewing the First Aid Needs Assessment

You should review your first aid needs from time to time, particularly if you have operational changes in your workplace. It is recommended that a record is kept of incidents dealt with by first aiders to assist in this process.

Annual Refresher Training

Although it is not mandatory, the HSE **strongly recommend** that FAW & EFAW students attend an annual three hour Basic Skills Update (BSU) course to prevent 'skills fade'.

Examples of First Aid Needs Assessments

Example 1: An engineering company with 150 employees carried out a first aid needs assessment. They have 2 shifts with 75 employees on each shift. Because they are a larger employer with more than 50 staff on site they need full FAW (18 hour) training for their First Aiders (irrelevant of what risks are present). Taking account of the number of employees on each shift, the company need a minimum of 2 First Aiders on duty at all times (one for every 50 people or part thereof). To ensure that this level of cover is maintained during foreseeable absences, which in this case includes annual leave, changing shifts to attend meetings and regular staff training, the company decided to train an extra 3 First Aiders on each shift (total 5 First Aiders per shift).

Example 2: An accountancy company have 25 employees in an office. Manual work is limited to employees lifting small boxes. The hours of work are 9 to 5. Having considered the possible illness and injuries that could occur, the company decided to provide EFAW (6 hour) training for their First Aiders. To ensure that cover was provided at all times the company trained 2 emergency First Aiders. The holiday rota system was adjusted so that only one First Aider could book annual leave at a time.

Example 3: An electrical contracting company have a team of 20 electricians who work mainly on building sites, but sometimes they work for domestic clients. The electricians work in pairs. When the electricians work on building sites, the main building contractor always assumes responsibility for first aid provision (this is documented in writing). There is no First Aider provided when the electricians work for domestic clients. The company decided that due to the risk of electrical shock, electrical burns, slips, trips and manual handling injuries they would provide full FAW training for all staff. This ensured that they could send any electrician to any job without pre-arranging that first aid cover would be provided by the customer. The company provided a first aid kit in each company van and all the staff had access to a mobile phone which ensured that they would be able to call emergency services wherever they were working.

Example 4: A small office based company have an excellent health and safety record and found that the risk of *injury* to staff is minimal. When considering the likelihood of *illness* that could occur however, the company identified that a member of staff suffered from heart problems. The company decided to provide FAW (18 hour) training for the First Aiders to ensure that they were able to deal with the sudden illness that could occur.