

'Hot Topics' provide basic guidance on common workplace Health & Safety requirements. They use a simple 'Q&A' approach to convey key messages, but are not intended as an authoritative interpretation of every aspect of the applicable Health & Safety legislation.

### 1. What is meant by 'welfare facilities'?

Welfare facilities are the collective name for a number of workplace provisions that are aimed at ensuring the welfare at work of employees, including:

- washing facilities;
- toilet facilities;
- supply of drinking water; and
- rest areas (including those used for meals).

There are a number of other issues that relate to employee welfare, such as workplace heating, lighting, ventilation, seating and working space, but these are not covered in this 'Hot Topic'.

### 2. Is there any law that covers welfare facilities in the workplace?

Yes. Welfare facilities in the workplace are subject to the Workplaces (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 and further guidance is contained in its supporting approved code of practice, L24.

### 3. How many toilets or sanitary conveniences must be provided?

Suitable and sufficient toilets and/or urinals should be provided at readily accessible places in the workplace. Rooms that contain sanitary conveniences should be adequately ventilated, well lit, and kept clean and free from spillages.

An adequate supply of consumables, such as toilet paper, must be maintained and, for reasons of personal hygiene, sanitary conveniences should have readily accessible washing facilities.

The following table provides guidance on the number of sanitary conveniences that should be provided based on the number of persons at work.

No. of persons	Mixed use (or use by women only)	Men only	
	No. of toilets	No. of toilets	No. of urinals
1 to 5	1	1	1
6 to 25	2	2	1
26 to 50	3	2	2
51 to 75	4	3	2
76 to 100	5	3	3

In addition, appropriate arrangements should be made for the disposal of sanitary products, such as a 'Sani-bin'.

### 4. What washing facilities must be provided?

Suitable and sufficient washing facilities should be provided at readily accessible places in the workplace. Where necessary, due to the nature of work or for health reasons, showers should also be provided.

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Washing facilities should be provided in the immediate vicinity of all sanitary conveniences and changing rooms, whether or not they are provided elsewhere. Washing facilities should include a supply of clean hot and cold, or warm, running water.

An adequate supply of consumables, such as soap and/or other means of cleansing, and towels or other means of drying, such as warm-air dryers, should be provided.

In addition, it is recommended that an appropriate post-washing hand conditioner is provided, especially where regular and/or routine hand washing is required.

The following table provides guidance on the number of washbasins that should be provided based on the number of persons at work.

No. of persons	No. of washbasins
1 to 5	1
6 to 25	2
26 to 50	3
51 to 75	4
76 to 100	5

The rooms containing washing facilities should be sufficiently ventilated, well lit and kept clean. Either separate facilities or separate use should be provided for male and female employees.

#### **5. Must separate washing and toilet facilities be provided for men and women?**

In relation to washing facilities, separate facilities are not needed if they are only provided and used for washing the hands, forearms and face, such as a communal washing station. In addition, where there are five or less employees, shared facilities can be provided for use by males and females where they are contained in a separate room and the door can be locked from the inside.

In relation to toilet facilities, these are provided as separate facilities. However, where there are five or less employees, shared facilities can be provided for use by males and females if they are contained in a separate room and the door can be locked from the inside.

#### **6. Are special arrangements needed when personal protective equipment, PPE, is required to be worn?**

Suitable, sufficient and secure accommodation for employee clothing not worn at work or for any special clothing, such as PPE, must be provided. Such accommodation should be in a suitable location and, where necessary, include drying facilities.

Facilities must be provided for employees to change clothing if:

- special clothing is required to be worn for work; and
- for reasons of propriety, they cannot change in another room.

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Changing facilities should be readily accessible from the work areas and eating facilities and, if provided, should have ready access to clothing accommodation, showers, etc.

### **7. What provisions must there be for drinking water in the workplace?**

An adequate supply of wholesome drinking water, at readily accessible places, should be provided. Drinking water, whether from the mains or an alternative supply (such as water coolers), must be clearly marked by an appropriate sign, e.g. 'Drinking water only'.

Drinking water supply points should be provided with sufficient and suitable cups unless the water is from a jet that people can drink from easily. Where running drinking water is not available, an adequate supply of bottled water must be provided.

### **8. Must eating facilities and rest rooms be provided?**

Suitable and sufficient rest facilities and rest rooms should be provided at readily accessible places.

Rest facilities and rest rooms should include appropriate areas in which to eat meals if food, when eaten in the workplace, would otherwise be contaminated.

In addition, provision must also be made to enable new or expectant mothers, as defined, to rest at work and, if applicable, breastfeed their child.

Following the Health Act 2006, arrangements must be made to provide areas outside of 'enclosed public places' (including buildings, workplaces and vehicles) for use by smokers. Except in very limited circumstances, it is no longer permitted to allow any smoking inside buildings and 'No smoking' prohibition signs must be displayed at all building entrances.

This prohibition sign means 'No smoking', and should be displayed at all entrances to workplaces.



Consequently, it is no longer permitted to protect non-smokers from any discomfort caused by tobacco smoke by providing separate smoking areas or rest rooms inside buildings.

### **9. Where can I find out more about welfare facilities?**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has published a leaflet, 'Welfare at work. Guidance for employers on welfare provisions', IND(G)293, that provides further guidance on welfare facilities in the workplace.

A copy of the leaflet and checklist can be downloaded free from HSE's website.