

'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.

Hot Topic 07: First-aid at work (v01, 02-Apr14)

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## 1. What is 'first-aid'?

'First-aid', in the context of a work activity, means:

- when a person will need help from a medical practitioner or nurse, treatment for the purpose of preserving life and minimising the consequences of injury and illness until such help is obtained; and
- treatment of a minor injury which would otherwise receive no treatment or does not need treatment by a medical practitioner or nurse.

## 2. Is there any law relating to first-aid at work?

Yes. First-aid at work is subject to the Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981 and further guidance is contained in its supporting approved code of practice, L74.

Employers, and the self-employed, have a duty to provide adequate first-aid provision in their workplaces, including mobile workplaces and where there may be lone workers or where people travel as part of their job.

## 3. What is the difference between a 'first-aid-er' and an 'appointed person' (AP)?

A 'first-aid-er' is a person, appointed in writing, to administer first-aid and who has attended a first-aid course<sup>1</sup>, either first-aid-er, usually of 3 or 4-days duration (FAW), or an emergency first-aid at work (EFAW), a 1-day, course.

An 'appointed person' (AP) is someone appointed by their employer to take charge in the event of an emergency, but who is not an appointed first-aid-er. Normally, an appointed person will have attended a 0.5-day awareness course.

Put simply, the role of a first-aid-er is to administer first-aid and an AP's role is to take charge in the event of an emergency by contacting the emergency services and meeting them on arrival at the premises. Both have a role to check and replenish the content of first-aid kits.

## 4. How many first-aiders or appointed persons should there be?

Employers must undertake an assessment of their first-aid needs in order to identify the first-aid facilities that are required. The assessment must have regard to:

- the nature of the undertaking;
- where appropriate, the number of employees at work;
- the location and layout of the establishment.

In effect, the assessment should consider the workplace hazards and risks, the size of the organisation, the accident history, the distribution of the workforce (e.g. whether there are any lone or isolated workers), and the remoteness of the site from the emergency services.

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<sup>1</sup> Following changes to Regulation 3(2), the HSE no longer approves first-aid course providers or course content, albeit the ACOP sets out the required content of first-aid courses.

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In addition, employers should consider what temporary arrangements they would put in place if the normal first-aider(s) or appointed person(s) were not on site, such as due to illness of a trained first-aider, or planned holidays, or out-of-hours working, etc.

The following table provides guidance on the likely numbers of first-aiders and appointed persons required for different levels of workplace risks.

Number of appointed persons, EFAWs or first-aiders	
Low-hazard work activities, such as in shops, offices and libraries.	
Fewer than 25 employees	At least 1 appointed person
25 to 50 employees	At least 1 EFAW
More than 50 employees	At least 1 first-aider, FAW, plus an additional first-aider for each 100 employed (or part thereof)
Higher-hazard work activities, such as light engineering and assembly work, warehousing, construction, work with dangerous machinery, chemical manufacture, etc.	
Less than 5 employees	At least 1 appointed person
5 to 50 employees	At least 1 EFAW or first-aider
More than 50 employees	At least 1 first-aider, FAW, an additional first-aider for each 50 employed (or part thereof)

In addition, FAW and EFAWs may require additional training where other, more specific, first-aid risks exist, such as attending a paediatric course for nursery first-aiders, management of a drowned person for lifeguards at a swimming pool, etc.

## 5. What should be in a first-aid kit?

There are no mandatory content for a first-aid kit, but the minimum content of a basic first-aid kit would, typically, include the following items:

- a leaflet giving general guidance on first-aid;
- 20 individually wrapped sterile plasters (assorted sizes);
- two sterile eye pads;
- two individually wrapped triangular bandages, preferably sterile;
- six safety pins;
- two large individually wrapped sterile unmedicated wound dressings;
- six medium-sized individually wrapped sterile unmedicated wound dressings;
- at least three pair of disposable gloves.

If clean running water is not readily available, alternative arrangements must be provided, such as a minimum of two 500ml of 0.9% sterile eyewash bottles.

The contents of first-aid kits should be regularly checked by the first-aider (or appointed person) to ensure they are complete and any sterile items are within their designated expiry date.

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## 6. What first-aid provisions should be provided for someone working away from the normal workplace?

Where employees are required to work away from their normal workplace, such as when travelling, they should be provided with a basic first-aid kit that, typically, would contain:

- a leaflet giving general guidance on first-aid;
- six individually wrapped sterile plasters (assorted sizes);
- two individually wrapped triangular bandages, preferably sterile;
- two safety pins;
- one large individually wrapped sterile unmedicated wound dressing;
- individually wrapped moist cleansing wipes;
- two pairs of disposable gloves.

Obviously, at major site locations where many employees work, e.g. construction sites, then it is more appropriate to provide a full first-aid kit and trained first-aiders.

## 7. What first-aid information should be provided in the workplace?

Safety signs are used to give information, including the location of the first-aid facilities.

This safety sign shows the location of first-aid facilities:



Employers should also display basic information on first-aid arrangements, such as the location of first-aid kits, the names of the appointed persons or trained first-aiders, the nearest emergency telephone and the actions to be taken in the event of an emergency.

## 8. Where can I find out more about first-aid at work?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has published a leaflet, 'First-aid at work. Your questions answered', IND(G)214, which provides further guidance on first-aid at work.

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