

Health and Safety Advice Sheet 1:

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

BACKGROUND

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires you to ensure, so far as is “reasonably practicable” the health, safety and welfare of your employees and anyone else who may be affected by your operations (including contractors and members of the public for example).

THE LAW

- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (as amended)

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO COMPLY?

If you employ 5 or more employees, you must produce a written Health and Safety Policy, which sets out how you propose to manage health and safety within your organisation.

How to structure the policy

The basic structure of the Safety Policy is laid down in the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. It consists of **3 main parts**:

- *General Statement of Intent*
- *Organisation*
- *Arrangements*

1. General Statement of Intent

- This is where an employer makes his *broad commitment* to health and safety.
- The person(s) in overall charge of the company should accept *ultimate responsibility* for health and safety matters.
- The statement should be *signed and dated* by the person accepting responsibility for the company.

- Wording of the general statement is up to you, since it's your *commitment* and your company.

2. Organisation

- Essentially, this amounts to a list of health and safety *responsibilities* held by people in the company (i.e. people and their duties).
- This section contains details of *who* is responsible to *whom* and *for what*.
- Most health and safety responsibilities will be assigned when the next part of the Policy (*Arrangements*) is written.
- Where appropriate, provide instructions on how to meet specific responsibilities. These instructions could be detailed in the *Arrangements* section of the policy.

3. Arrangements

This part details the *systems and procedures* in place, which will enable the company to meet its stated aims and objectives. In other words, what the company needs to do on an operational basis to comply with the law and stop people being injured by the Company's activities.

In short, they will tend to revolve around *three main areas*:

- **Legal Requirements:** The specific health and safety laws and regulations that apply to your premises and line of work.
- **Hazards and Risks:** Details of the hazards associated with your business activity and the risks of injury connected with those hazards.
- **Control Methods:** In practical terms, how you go about eliminating or reducing those risks to acceptable levels. This is where you state what steps are being taken to achieve day-to-day control over health and safety.

SOME KEY POINTS

The most important thing is that the Safety Policy is *an operational document*. In particular:

- It should set out what practical steps the company is taking to effectively control health and safety.
- Managers and Staff should be able to *refer to the Safety Policy* and find out what health and safety responsibilities they hold and exactly how they are expected to meet those responsibilities.

- If *other* documents contain specific details on any relevant area of the Safety Policy, they should be *accurately referred* to and readily available.
- Relevant sections of Safety Policy (or documents specifically referred to) should be used as *part of staff training* so that the right information is being told to the right people. DO NOT just give the Safety Policy to employees and expect them to read and understand it.
- Use the advice sheets in this pack as a *starting point* and record the actual steps you are taking to tackle these issues.

FURTHER GUIDANCE

- An introduction to health and safety - Health and Safety in Small Businesses (INDG259(rev1)) HSE
- Managing health and safety – five steps to success (INDG275) HSE
- Starting your business – Guidance on preparing a health and safety policy for small firms (INDG275) HSE
- Free HSE leaflets: www.hse.gov.uk

