

## General Management Responsibilities

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The guidance given in the subsequent Advice Sheets relates to specific risks or legal requirements. However, there are certain statutory duties that apply to practically all businesses. These are based on the fact that employers and senior managers are the ones in control of the business. *They have the ability to prevent most accidents.* Likewise, acts and omissions at this level will be a likely cause of accidents.

There are a number of key responsibilities placed on employers and senior managers. They must:

### 1. Organise the work so that it is safe

- Develop a comprehensive *safety strategy* for your business.
- Plan out the areas you will have to consider. Use the guidance in *Advice Sheet 1: Safety Policies* to find out how to go about this.

### 2. Appoint Competent Persons

- The job of a competent person is to assist the employer in taking the necessary measures to comply with the relevant safety laws.
- Employers must appoint *one or more* competent persons if they do not possess the necessary competence themselves. If an employee fulfils the criteria then they should be appointed in preference to an external consultant.
- A competent person is someone who has sufficient *training, experience, knowledge* or other qualities to enable him/her properly to assist or undertake the protective and preventative measures. For example: a knowledge and understanding of the work involved; an understanding of risk assessment and prevention; a knowledge of current safety applications and a capacity to apply these precautions to the task required by the employer.

### 3. Provide adequate supervision

- The degree of supervision required for a task will depend on *the type of work, hazard and degree of risk involved* and *level of training and expertise* of staff involved.
- Sufficient checks must be made to ensure *rules are being followed* and necessary precautions are being taken.

- It is not acceptable to issue health and safety instructions and allow somebody to disregard them without appropriate action being taken. Allowing what amounts to illegal activities to take place is the same as endorsing that activity in the first instance. Therefore *individual managers may be personally liable for their own acts or omissions*.

#### 4. Provide information, instruction and training

- Important information must be effectively disseminated to the relevant people. It is not only staff that need to be included – anyone affected by your undertaking may need to be told certain safety information (for example visitors, members of public and your contractors).
- Information to be provided includes: who is at risk and why; how to carry out specific tasks safely; correct operation of equipment (see *Advice Sheet 7: Equipment For Use At Work*); emergency action; accident and hazard reporting procedures and individual's specific safety responsibilities.
- If you employ only a few staff simple instructions and briefing sessions may suffice. For larger companies a *formal in-house training programme* should be drawn up. It may be necessary to arrange for training to be provided by *external organisations* if you do not possess the relevant expertise.
- Keep a *record* of who has been trained; in what; by whom; and when.
- Any safety signs or notices should comply with the Health & Safety (Safety Signs & Signals) Regulations 1996<sup>1</sup>.

#### 5. Monitor and review health and safety performance

An essential part of any control strategy is the ability to identify hazards before they result in accidents. There are certain established ways of doing this:

- **Hazard Reporting Procedures:** Either formal or informal procedures whereby staff are informed of the need to report workplace hazards and defects. Managers should also know *the correct action to take* if they receive such reports from employees.
- **Workplace Inspections:** Formal inspections carried out at predetermined intervals. Workplace inspections are intended to *identify hazards* which have not been dealt with by the normal control measures.
- **Accident Rates and Investigation:** Routinely investigating workplace accidents to establish the cause is essential if accidents are to be avoided in the future. Apart from looking at the frequency of accidents, checks should be made for reporting accuracy and the development of patterns. (See *Advice Sheet 10: Accident Reporting and First Aid*).

- **Safety Policy Review:** The Policy should be reviewed from time to time. If there have been any significant changes to the organisation of the business or the responsibilities placed on people or the way in which work is carried out, the Policy should be revised.

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Further information

<sup>1</sup>Signs used to give a health or safety message must use a combination of pictorial symbols, geometric shapes and colours (blue for mandatory; red for prohibition; green for safe condition and yellow for warning) as set down in the Regulations. A guide to the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974: Guidance on the Act L1 (HSE) ISBN 0 7176 04411; Health and Safety At Work Act. Advice to employees. HSC5 (HSE).