

Health and Safety Training

What the Law Requires

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (HSAWA), employers are required to provide suitable information, instruction, training and supervision to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of their employees. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSWR) expand on this requirement by requiring employers to provide employees with information and training on;

- The foreseeable risks and hazards arising from their work, their working environment or planned changes to their work.
- The measures that have been put into place to eliminate or control these risks.
- What to do if they come across workplace hazards or risks.
- How to maintain and use work equipment, including PPE.
- The responsibilities of employees to comply with their duties under the HSAWA, company rules and safe working practices.
- The procedures to be following in the event of an emergency, such as a fire or security alert.

The MHSWR also set out a number of specific situations where health and safety training must be provided to employees. These include;

- When people first start work.
- If they are exposed to new or increased risks due to a change in their role or working environment.
- If their existing skills, or competency, has lapsed and needs updating (refresher training).

As part of the employers duties under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 (SRSCR) and the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996 (HSCER), employers must consult with their employees or employee representatives on matters of health and safety, including the safety training they provide at work.

Other Duties

Other health and safety regulations also require employers to provide their employees with suitable information, instruction and training on various health and safety hazards.

For example, the Control of Substances Hazards to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002 and the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 require employers to provide suitable information, instruction and training on the specific risks encountered by exposure to hazardous substances and asbestos respectively. In addition, HSE guidance on legislation such as the Manual Handling and the Work at Height Regulations stresses the importance of providing information, instruction and training to those at risk.

If as the employer, you choose to consult through elected representatives, you must ensure the representatives receive suitable training to carry out their role and paid time off to undertake the training. Employers also have to cover the reasonable expenses associated with elected representatives training, including travel and subsistence costs.

In particular, elected safety representatives should be given training on;

- The nature and extent of their role.
- How to communicate e.g. directly with colleagues, via committee meetings, with the employer on safety issues and with safety inspectors, if necessary.
- Health and safety legislation applicable to the work place and their role.
- How to identify and minimise risks, hazards and dangerous occurrences.
- Any health and safety issues posed by the introduction of new work procedures or technology.

In addition, although elected safety representatives are not legally entitled to carry out workplace inspections and accident investigations, they will require training on these functions if you decide to allow them to undertake these.

What Training is Required?

To meet your legal duties, employers must provide employees with information, instruction and training so they understand the hazards and risks they may face while at work, the precautions in place to deal with them and the emergency procedures to follow. The requirement to provide information also extends to non-employees, including temporary staff, contractors and those on work experience.

Consider using the HSE's five-step approach to health and safety training;

1. Decide who requires information and training and what the instructor should cover.
2. Decide on the organisations training priorities.
3. Choose the most suitable methods of providing information and training.
4. Deliver the training.
5. Check the training has worked.

Tips for effective health and safety training include;

- Keep induction training concise and relevant.
- Use real-life situations to explain how to deal with health and safety risks.
- Remember the potential of 'toolbox' (safety) talks: short talks on specific issues such as manual handling allow workers and managers to explore risks and ways of dealing with them.
- Encourage senior managers to attend training alongside staff to show management commitment to the training.
- Check that external trainers tailor their courses for your specific needs.
- Keep the training interesting by using a variety of training methods e.g. written hand-outs, visual aids and role play exercises.
- Get workers involved in the design and delivery of safety training e.g. suitably skilled workers may be able to help with induction training for new starters.

Additionally

Control measures such as safe systems of work, physical safeguards and PPE can play a vital role in preventing workplace accidents and cases of ill-health. However, these measures may be ineffective if employees are not provided with suitable training on how to identify and control risks at source.

By providing effective health and safety training, employers can ensure their workers have the right skills and knowledge to undertake their tasks safely, and help promote a positive health and safety culture where safe and healthy working becomes second nature to everyone.

Risk Safety Consultants Ltd