



A Guide to
FIRST AID
in the
Workplace

No job is more important.

**Workplace
Safe**

An initiative of
WorkCover Tasmania
and Workplace Standards Tasmania

Acknowledgments

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INTRODUCTION

A guide to first aid in the workplace provides practical information for employers to meet the requirements of Section 9 of the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*.

Under this section of the Act, as an employer you may be required to provide:

- first aid facilities including a first aid kit, a first aid room and/or first aid equipment
- first aid services including training and information.

What actually needs to be provided flows from the risk management process which is described later.

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The information contained in this booklet is a guide only and should be read in conjunction with the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* (the Act) and its associated regulations.

Specialist practitioners and first aid training providers can help you decide the first aid facilities and services needed in your workplace.

They can also provide information about hazards, injuries and illnesses relevant to your workplace.

A good starting point is calling the Workplace Standards Tasmania Helpline on 1300 366 322.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

First aid in the workplace means providing the initial treatment and life support for people suffering injury or illness at work.

First aid facilities include a first aid kit, a first aid room and/or first aid equipment.

First aid services include providing first aid personnel and first aid training, information and supervision for workers.

Hazard identification means evaluating the hazards in a workplace to enable decisions to be made about appropriate control measures, induction, training, monitoring and health surveillance that may be required to protect the health of employees in the workplace.

Material safety data sheet (or MSDS) is a document that describes the properties and uses of a substance: its identity, chemical and physical properties, health hazard information, precautions for use and safe handling information.

A *workplace* is any premises or place (including any mine, aircraft, vessel or vehicle) where an employee, contractor or self-employed person is or was employed or engaged in industry.



USING THE SAFE STEPS TO DETERMINE THE FIRST AID REQUIREMENTS FOR YOUR WORKPLACE

First aid in the workplace means providing the initial treatment and life support for people suffering an injury or illness at work.

To determine what first aid facilities and services are appropriate for your workplace, you should apply the SAFE steps of risk management:

- Spot the hazard — identify the possible causes of injuries and work-related illnesses in your workplace
- Assess the risk — of workplace injuries or illnesses occurring
- Fix the problem — by working out the appropriate first aid facilities and training required for your workplace
- Evaluate results.

STEP 1 — SPOT THE HAZARD

Under the *Workplace Health and Safety Regulations 1998*, you will need to do a hazard identification assessment. Walk around your workplace and use the first aid assessment checklist (on page 7) to find the hazards in your workplace. It is recommended that you maintain written records of this information — for reviewing first aid facilities and training needs, and if any legal issues about first aid in the workplace arise.

As you assess the first aid needs of your workplace, consider the following factors:

- nature of hazards and level of risk
- size and layout of the workplace
- location of the workplace
- your workers in the workplace
- known occurrences of injury and illness.

Nature of hazards and level of risk

Certain workplaces have greater risks of injury and illness due to the nature of the work being done there. For example, a library may require lesser first aid facilities than a factory. There is no single first aid option that fits all workplaces.

Where a workplace stores or uses toxic or corrosive chemicals, additional first aid facilities and services may need to be provided to treat specific injuries, particularly if this is specified in the relevant material safety data sheet. Facilities may need to include emergency showers, eyewash stations, poison antidotes and additional first aid modules (examples of special modules are given in *First aid kits* on page 10 of this guide).

First aid personnel should also be trained to handle industry-specific injuries.

Size and layout of the workplace

Consider the kind of work being performed at different work areas.

Work out how far an injured or ill person has to be transported to first aid and how easily this can be done.



First aid facilities and services should be located at points convenient to workers. A workplace with a large physical area may need first aid facilities and services in more than one location, especially if:

- the workplace is a long distance from accident and emergency facilities
- small numbers of workers are spread over a wide area
- access to treatment is difficult
- a workplace is on more than one building level.

Where there are separate work areas, it may be appropriate to locate the main first aid facilities centrally and provide portable first aid kits in each work area.

Location of the workplace

The *time* taken for medical aid to reach the casualty is more significant than *distance*.

If it takes more than half an hour to get an injured or ill person to an ambulance, hospital, medical centre or occupational health services, you may need a suitably trained first aider in your workplace.

Workplaces in remote areas should have additional first aid facilities and services. You may need to:

- plan around poor roads
- plan around potential bad weather conditions
- organise aerial transport to evacuate an injured or ill worker
- make sure you have efficient and reliable communications systems, to ensure the best response time in any medical emergency situation.

Your workers in the workplace

You need to consider the number and distribution of your workers and arrangements such as shiftwork, overtime and flexible hours.

If workers work away from your workplace, you need to consider:

- if workers work alone or in groups
- what access they have to telephone or emergency radio communications
- the kind of work they are doing.

You could consider providing small portable first aid kits to these workers. They should be told about the kits':

- contents
- location
- access arrangements.

If languages other than English are used in your workplace, you must provide first aid information in these languages.

Do you have more than one shift in your workplace? First aid facilities and trained staff should be available whenever workers are working, and at an appropriate level for the number of workers on each shift. While the number of people working overtime may be fewer than on a regular shift, the additional work hours can heighten fatigue, which can increase the risk of accidents and injuries.

If your workplace is a school, museum, library or sporting venue where the public may be present, you may need to consider additional first aid services and facilities.



Known occurrences of injury and illness

Reviewing data of the following may help you identify problem areas:

- accidents
- injuries
- illness
- near misses.

However, you should not rely solely on this data, as it covers past occurrences that may not reliably indicate potential injuries and illnesses.

Types of hazards

A hazard is anything that can hurt your health and safety. The six major types of hazards are:

1 — Physical hazards

- electrical
- fire/explosion
- heat and cold
- machine guarding
- noise
- nuisance dust
- vibration
- working space

2 — Chemical hazards

- dust
- fumes
- gases
- liquids
- solids
- vapours

3 — Ergonomic hazards

- equipment design

- job design
- manual handling
- tool design
- work station design

4 — Radiation hazards

- infra-red
- ionising
- microwaves
- non-ionising
- ultra-violet

5 — Psychological hazards

- dealing with the public
- discrimination
- harassment
- low level constant noise
- shift work
- threat of danger
- work load

6 — Biological hazards

- bacteria
- infections
- viruses

This list is taken from Workplace Standards Tasmania's *Annotated Workplace Health and Safety Regulations 1998*.

To summarise, the following first aid assessment checklist will help you spot the hazard.



FIRST AID ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

- What type of workplace is it?
- What type of work is done here?
- What is the industry level of risk?
- What size is the area of the workplace?
- Is the workplace located on more than one level?
- What is the access in to and out from the workplace?
- What is the access in to and out from different levels of the workplace?
- How many workers work here?
- How many shifts operate here?
- How many workers are on each shift?
- Is overtime worked? How frequently? How much?
- Are there workers for whom English is a foreign language?
- Are there isolated areas in the workplace where employees are required to work alone?
- What communication and supervision is there with workers in isolated areas?
- Does the public have access to the workplace? If yes, where?
- Are there any controls in place to monitor third party access to the workplace?
- Do any of the six major types of hazards occur in your workplace?
- Have you checked MSDS and product labels?
- How long does it take for emergency services to reach the workplace?
- How long does it take to reach the nearest medical service or hospital?
- What is the current number of accidents and injuries that have happened in your workplace?
- Has this number increased or decreased from previous years?
- What are the most frequent injuries your workers suffer?
- Are there jobs in your workplace prone to more injuries or to particular injuries?
- What is the maximum distance to first aid within your workplace?
- Are first aid facilities identified in a manner understandable by all workers?
- Do workers have ready access to first aid facilities and first aid staff?
- Are there written procedures for medical emergencies?
- Have you told relevant personnel about these emergency procedures?
- Are extra modules required for the first aid kit to cover circumstances specific to your workplace?



STEP 2 — ASSESS THE RISK

Risk is the likelihood of a hazard actually harming someone in the workplace.

Your checklist may be surprisingly long, with some hazards posing more safety risks than others. That's why you must work out which hazards are more serious than others, so you can deal with those first. The most important questions to ask are:

- how likely is the hazard to cause someone harm? Could it happen at any time? Or is it unlikely to ever happen?
- what could a potential injury or illness be?
- how severe could this injury or illness be? What is the worst possible damage the hazard could cause to someone's health? Would it require simple first aid only, or could it kill or cause permanent ill health or disability?

STEP 3 — FIX THE PROBLEM

You should now have enough information to help you determine:

- the first aid facilities you need to select, provide and maintain, including the number, location and contents of first aid kits and any additional modules, and whether a first aid room or health centre is required

- the first aid services you need, including how many first aiders you need, the training workers need to know about the first aid facilities and service in their workplace, and the training workers need to become first aiders in their workplace
- the policies, procedures and processes for using first aid facilities and services.

Information about first aid facilities and first aid services is provided on pages 10-15.

STEP 4 — EVALUATE RESULTS

Use the first aid assessment checklist (on page 7) as part of a regular review to make sure your first aid facilities and services continue to meet your workplace requirements.

You should also ask questions such as:

- how many first aiders are needed? More than are currently trained?
- what are the first aid skills and competencies required?
- are more first aid kits required?
- should first aid kits be located in different places?
- are first aid kits well maintained and identifiable?
- are first aid rooms or health centres well maintained?



COMMUNICATING FIRST AID IN THE WORKPLACE

The health and safety committee

Section 26 of the Act states that where there are more than 20 workers at a workplace an employer, if asked to, must form a health and safety committee.

A health and safety committee should:

- aid consultation and co-operation between the employer and workers
- initiate, develop and put into practice the solutions for protecting workplace health and safety.

Consultation

Consultation with the health and safety committee, employees' safety representative and workers is an important part of assessing the first aid needs of your workplace. Consultation should:

- address all aspects related to providing first aid in the workplace
- happen as early as possible when you are planning to introduce new first aid facilities and services or change existing ones. This allows any issues that arise to be incorporated into your plans, and gives everyone involved plenty of time to consider the information and discuss it with you.

Informing your workers

What information is needed

You should provide information and instructions to workers about:

- the arrangements for first aid facilities at the workplace
- the location of first aid kits
- the names and location of trained first aiders.

How to provide this information

You should provide this information at all inductions and whenever there is a change in the kind or type of duties performed which may impact on the first aid requirements.

Signs are a way of providing this information. See the Australian Standard AS 1319 — 1994 Safety signs for the occupational environment.

If languages other than English are used in your workplace, you must provide first aid information in these languages.



FIRST AID KITS

Who is responsible

Following your first aid assessment of your workplace, you are responsible for providing first aid kits appropriate to your workplace.

You should nominate someone — usually the trained first aider — to be responsible for:

- using the kit
- making sure the kit is in good condition
- making sure the kit's contents are restocked or replaced when necessary. Items past their use by or expiry date must not be used and must be properly disposed of.

How many and where

Remember the physical size and location of your workplace and the location of your workers across the workplace. Your workers should be able to easily access these kits.

As a guide, there should be one first aid kit for every 100 workers in an area at any one time.

Portable first aid kits should be provided for those working away from your main workplace.

Container

The container should protect the contents of the kit from dust and damage. If any extra first aid modules are included, the container should be large enough to hold them, though preferably in separate compartments.

The container should be easily recognisable: for example, with a white cross predominantly displayed on a green background. It should not be locked.

Contents of a basic kit

While first aid kits should meet the specific safety needs of your workplace (as highlighted in your first aid assessment of your workplace) and will therefore vary from one workplace to the next, a basic kit should include:

- adhesive tape
- antiseptic cleaning solution
- antiseptic cream
- approved type of EAR mask or similar
- basic first aid notes
- burn dressings
- conforming roller bandages
- cotton wool
- crepe bandage
- disposable gloves
- drinking vessel
- elastic dressing strips
- emergency services telephone numbers and addresses
- eye wash solutions (single use only)
- gauze swabs
- hygienically clean plastic bags
- name and telephone number of workplace first aiders
- notebook and pen (for recording treatment given)
- scissors
- splinter forceps, tweezers

- sterile eye pads
- triangular bandages
- waterproof adhesive tape.

Where particular hazards exist that are specific to your workplace, you should make sure medical services with the facilities to deal with these hazards are available. The following additional modules may also be required.

Eye module

This extra module should be included in first aid kits for any workplace where:

- chemical liquids or powders are handled in open containers
- spraying, hosing, compressed air or abrasive blasting operations are carried out
- there is any possibility of flying particles
- welding, cutting or machining operations are carried out
- wearing eye protection is recommended.

Even with an eye module in your first aid kit, you should still install eyewash facilities if your first aid assessment of your workplace showed a risk of eye injuries occurring.

An eye module should include:

- adhesive tape
- eye wash solution (single use only)
- guidance notes
- sterile eye pads.

You should clearly identify the eye module container's contents and purpose.

Burns module

This extra module should be included in first aid kits for any workplace with the risk of a worker sustaining a serious burn. For example, where:

- chemical acids or alkalines are used
- flammable liquids are used
- heat is used
- other corrosive chemicals are used.

Even with a burns module in your first aid kit, you should still install drench showers if your first aid assessment of your workplace showed a risk of burns occurring.

A burns module should include:

- burns dressings of assorted sizes
- clean sheeting for covering burns. The size of dressings and sheeting should be determined by the kind of the hazards in your workplace
- guidance notes.

You should clearly identify the burn module container's contents and purpose.

Remote location kits

A basic first aid kit for workers in remote locations might include the following extra items:

- broad crepe bandages for snake bites
- cervical collar for spinal/neck injuries
- emergency reference manual
- clean sheeting for covering burns
- thermal blanket for treating shock
- torch or flashlight
- whistle for attracting attention.

Again, the contents will vary depending on your first aid assessment of your workplace. A worker working alone in an isolated environment may need to carry an industry-specific kit at all times.

Other useful modules

Talk with first aid professionals or supply companies if the first aid assessment of your workplace shows other first aid modules are needed.

FIRST AID ROOMS

As a guide, there should be a first aid room if 150 or more workers are present at any one time.

The room should:

- be set aside for first aid purposes and no other use
- be well lit and well ventilated
- be at least 14 square metres in size
- have easy access to toilets
- be easily accessed by workers being moved or supported by a stretcher or wheelchair.

The contents of the first aid room should include:

- a container for soiled dressings
- a desk, telephone and emergency telephone numbers

- a first aid kit suitable for your workplace
- a medical examination couch with blankets and pillow
- a removable screen
- a sharps container
- a sink and wash basin with hot and cold running water
- a steriliser
- a stretcher
- a workbench or dressing trolley
- an examination lamp
- appropriate resuscitation equipment
- cupboards for storing medication, dressing and linen
- electric power points
- suitable seating.

You should nominate someone — usually the trained first aider — to be responsible for the room and its contents.

This person should be available at all times while the number of workers at the workplace exceeds 150.

If there are less than 150 people and the first aid room is closed, then first aid kits and the person responsible for first aid should be available. Workers should know about these changed arrangements.



HEALTH CENTRES

Where the number of workers at a workplace exceeds 300 at any one time, a health centre should be provided. This centre should be under the control of a general registered nurse. Depending on the industry, the number of workers employed and work schedules, you may need to have more than one general registered nurse on site at any one time.

A health centre should:

- be clear of any general thoroughfare
- be easily accessed by workers and internal and external transport (for example, an ambulance)
- be in a clean area away from hazardous operations
- be made of moisture-resistant materials; be free from cracks, ledges and sharp angles; and be easy to clean
- be at ground level
- be self contained
- have a floor area of at least 45 square metres
- have a treatment room at least 14 square metres in size
- have a separate office / consulting room
- have a separate recovery room
- have a separate waiting room
- be stocked with the same equipment listed for a first aid room
- have a storeroom or storage cupboards
- have a toilet with airlock and a wash basin with hot and cold running water.

FIRST AID MANUALS

These are valuable references for first aid in the workplace. However, having a manual does not replace having a trained first aider in the workplace.

FIRST AIDERS

A first aider is a worker with first aid training and responsibilities on top of their normal work duties.

First aiders make the initial treatment of people suffering injury and illness at work. They are not responsible for ongoing medical care. The treatment they provide can only equal the level of first aid training and competence they have — no more. When in doubt, a first aider should always seek medical help.

You the employer should keep records of all first aid treatment given.

How many

While there is no rule for the number of first aiders in a workplace, it's recommended you train at least two workers to be first aiders.

FIRST AID TRAINING

Information from your first aid assessment of your workplace will help you decide what training your first aiders will need to suit your workplace and its particular risks of injury and illness. Topics should include:

- first aid kits: their contents and use
- eye irrigation
- poisons
- purchasing first aid supplies
- recognising illness
- resuscitation
- simple record keeping
- standard precautions to minimise the spread of infectious diseases when treating wounds (refer to the National Health and Safety Council's website for relevant publications at www.nohsc.gov.au/OHSInformation/NOHSCPpublications or contact the Department of Community and Health Services)
- transporting casualties
- treating and controlling bleeding
- treating burns and scalds
- treating injuries to bones, muscles and joints
- treating minor injuries
- treating shock in an unconscious casualty.

First aiders need regular training programs to ensure their knowledge and skills are kept up to date. Regular training also ensures first aiders use currently accepted first aid practices and techniques.

LEVELS OF WORKPLACE FIRST AID CERTIFICATES

Level 1 Workplace First Aid Certificate — Emergency Life Support — 6 hour minimum

This course trains first aiders in the emergency first aid procedures to be used in the first few minutes after a life threatening incident.

Where the risk of serious injury or illness is low, first aiders should have competencies in first aid procedures for the type of injury and illness they are most likely to have in their workplace and in first aid procedures for life threatening situations and emergencies.

They will learn how to record details of any first aid treatment given, and become familiar with the relevant legislation.

Level 2 Workplace First Aid Certificate — Basic First Aid — 16 hour minimum

Where there is a higher risk of serious injury or illness, first aiders should (in addition to those skills gained at level 1) have broader competencies. This includes a wider knowledge of the hazards of the working environment, OHS legislation, first aid room requirements and equipment use.

First aiders at these higher-risk workplaces are also responsible for advising their employer on first aid procedures and facilities (including first aid kits, rooms and equipment) and maintaining these facilities. They will learn how to record details of any first aid treatment given, and become familiar with the relevant legislation.



Level 3 Workplace First Aid Certificate — Occupational First Aid — 28 hour minimum

In certain high-risk situations, you should consider providing an occupational health service for managing injuries and adverse health effects of workplace exposures to substances such as lead, pesticides and infectious diseases. In these workplaces (and particularly where the number of workers exceeds 300) you may consider employing a full-time occupational health professional with relevant first aid experience, such as a registered nurse or medical practitioner.

This course further develops the skills gained from levels 1 and 2. First aiders will gain a broad knowledge of the hazards of the working environment, revise emergency care techniques, and learn OHS legislation and first aid room requirements.

The course should focus on first aid in specific industries and be flexible enough to meet the needs of first aiders from different workplaces.

TRAINING CRITERIA

- Workplace first aid training courses must be approved by the Tasmanian State Training Authority (TASTA).
- Training instructors should hold current accreditation issued by approved national authorities.
- Certificates required for levels 1, 2 and 3 should be current and achieved by successfully completing an approved course.
- Criteria and mechanisms of approving the above courses and lists of approved course providers are available from TASTA.
- First aiders renewing, upgrading or obtaining further qualifications should undertake the appropriate certificate level as discussed above.
- Level 1, 2 and 3 certificates are valid for three years. First aiders must complete a refresher course before their certificate expires in order to validate their certificate for a further three years.
- In accordance with Australian Resuscitation Council Policy 9.1.1, first aiders must complete an annual refresher course in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation to maintain their proficiency.
- Refresher courses may be shorter than a standard course, provided the course objectives are achieved. Additional subjects may be included where appropriate.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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