

General Workplace Health and Safety

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Introduction

1.1 Context

The aim of this policy is to provide employees with accurate information regarding employers and employees responsibilities regarding general workplace health and safety. In general, employers are responsible for providing a safe place to work, however, it must be remembered that employees also have duties and responsibilities under the Health & Safety at Work Act and that specifically employees must take responsible care to protect the health and safety of themselves and of other people in the workplace. The company is committed to providing a safe place for both our employees and customers.

1.2 Purpose

The aim of this policy is to provide a guide to the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 and aims to deal with specific requirements employers must provide in relation to the workplace. It is not intended as a legal interpretation of the legislation. For full details of employees and employee responsibilities refer to the company safety statement within the documents folder.

1.3 Scope

This policy applies to Pharmacy Managers. The main points of this policy are included in the Pharmacy Safety Statement and Employee Handbook.

Procedure

2.1 Stability and solidity

An employer must ensure that all buildings which house places of work have a structure and solidity appropriate to the nature of their use.

The employer must be satisfied that the floors, walls etc. of the place of work are able to support both the weight of equipment and the pressure of additional forces which its use imposes on the structure.

In some workplaces there will be risks to the structure from impact damage cause by moving vehicles and measures need to be taken to protect vulnerable areas and to repair any damage before it poses a hazard to safety.

2.2 Ventilation of enclosed places of work

An employer must ensure that sufficient fresh air is provided in enclosed places of work, having regard to the working methods used and the physical demands placed on employees.

In most cases the natural ventilation provided through windows and doors will be adequate. In cases where, for instance, there are high dust levels or high temperatures or where the workplace is isolated from outside air, mechanical or forced ventilation may be necessary.

2.3 Room temperature

An employer must ensure that

1. During working hours, the temperature in rooms containing workstations is appropriate for human beings, having regard to the working methods being used and the physical demands placed on the employees.
2. For sedentary office work, a minimum temperature of 17.5 degrees C, so far as is reasonably practicable, is achieved and maintained at every workstation after the first hours work.
3. For other sedentary work, at every workstation where a substantial proportion of the work is done sitting and does not involve serious effort, a minimum temperature of 16 degrees C is, so far as is reasonably practicable , achieved and maintained after the first hours work.
4. Means are available to enable persons at work to measure the temperature in any workplace inside a building.

The fact that a maximum temperature has not been specified in the regulations does not mean that any temperature is acceptable. At high or uncomfortable temperatures, especially when not caused by temporary weather conditions, a means of cooling should be provided.

It is suggested that for most people an acceptable temperature for office work lies within the range of 18 – 23 degrees C.

2.4 Natural and artificial lighting

An employer must ensure that places of work receive, as far as possible, sufficient natural light and are equipped with artificial lighting adequate for the protection of the safety and health of the employer's employees.

Whilst the provision of natural lighting takes precedence over artificial lighting, in practice both will be required. Artificial lighting should be adequate and properly maintained for the safety and health of persons at work. To maximise the use of natural lighting, windows, skylights and glass partitions used for lighting workrooms should be kept clean on both inner and outer surfaces.

The lighting levels should be sufficient to enable persons to detect obvious hazards as well as being able to work without experiencing eyestrain. Lighting arrangements should be made so that brightness, unsuitable shading or poorly placed light sources or workstations cannot cause discomfort or injury from glare or from reflection of light into the eyes of the employees.

2.5 Floors, walls, ceilings and roofs of rooms

An employer must ensure that the floors of rooms have no dangerous bumps, holes or slopes and are fixed, stable and, so far as is reasonably practicable, not slippery.

The surfaces of floors and traffic routes should be free from any hole, slope or uneven or slippery surface which is likely to cause:

- A person to slip, trip or fall.
- A person to drop or lose control of anything being lifted or carried.
- Instability or loss of control of vehicles or their loads (or both).

Slopes should not be steeper than necessary. Moderate and steep slopes should be provided with a secure handrail, where necessary. Floor surfaces which are likely to become wet or to be subject to spillages should be of a type which does not become unduly slippery. Where there is likely to be danger, protection should be provided, for example through protective footwear, slip-resistant floor surfaces, barriers around areas being cleaned, proper cleaning techniques and adequate maintenance.

Floors, ceilings and interior walls should be painted, tiled or otherwise treated so that they can be kept clean.

2.6 Windows and skylights

An employer must ensure that where it is possible for employees to open, close, adjust or secure windows, skylights and ventilators that:

- It may be done safely, and.
- When open, such windows, skylights and ventilators are not positioned so as to constitute a hazard to employees, and it should be possible for employees to open, close, adjust or secure windows, skylights and ventilators in a safe manner. Where necessary, suitable equipment should be available to employees for opening/closing windows from floor level or from a secure platform, without having to use chairs or tables etc.

Windows, when open, should be such that they do not project into passageways at a height where they are liable to be struck by passers-by nor should they be located where persons could accidentally fall through them.

2.7 Doors and gates

An employer must ensure that the position, number and dimensions of doors and gates, and the materials used in their construction, are determined by the nature and use of the rooms or areas and are appropriate for the safety, health and welfare of employees.

Doors and gates installed in places of work should be suitable for the number of persons employed and the nature of the work carried on. Factors which should be taken into account are the traffic routes used by pedestrians and vehicles, access for people with disabilities, requirements in the event of an emergency, visibility issues, nature of vehicular traffic, the numbers of employees requiring access or egress, the size and quantity of material moving in and out of the workplace and the effort required to open/close gates.

In some instances doors may require a certain fire rating to maintain a secure means of escape in case of fire.

2.8 Fire detection and fire fighting

An employer must ensure that,

- A place of work is equipped with appropriate fire-fighting equipment and, as necessary, fire detectors and an alarm system, taking account of,
 - The dimensions and use of the buildings,
 - The equipment they contain,
 - The physical and chemical characteristics of the substances present, and
 - The maximum potential number of people present,
- Non-automatic fire-fighting equipment is,
 - Easily accessible and simple to use, and
 - Indicated by signs in that are placed at appropriate points and are adequately durable, and
- Fire detection equipment and fire-fighting equipment is,
 - Inspected and maintained annually to ensure that it is in good working order, and
 - Serviced by a competent person as frequently as necessary.

2.9 Emergency routes and exits

An employer must ensure that,

- Emergency routes to emergency exits and the exits themselves are kept clear at all times and lead as directly as possible to the open air or to a safe area,
- In the event of danger, it is possible for employees to evacuate all workstations quickly and as safely as possible,
- The number, distribution and dimensions of the emergency routes and exits are adequate for the use, equipment and dimensions of the place of work and the maximum number of persons that may be present,
- Emergency exit doors open outwards,
- Any sliding or revolving doors that are fitted are not used, or intended to be used, as emergency exits,
- Emergency doors and gates are not so locked or fastened that they cannot be easily and immediately opened by any person who may need to use them in an emergency,
- Specific emergency routes and exits are indicated by signs,
- Emergency routes and exits, and the traffic routes and doors giving access to them, are free from obstruction so that they can be used at any time without hindrance, and
- Emergency routes and exits requiring illumination are provided with emergency lighting of adequate intensity in case the lighting fails.

People often fail to appreciate how quickly a fire can spread. It is vital that fire exits are not blocked or obstructed and that any such obstructions are removed without delay. Floor markings and signs should indicate the areas to be kept clear.

3.0 Additional support

Additional support for managers and employees is available through the following:

- Business Manager
- Health & Safety Coordinator
- Maintenance Helpline 01-2924472