

Health & Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981

Guide to Carrying out a First Aid Needs Assessment

The current guidance of the above regulations states that employers should make an assessment of first-aid needs appropriate to the circumstances (hazards and risks) of each workplace. The aim of first aid is to reduce the effects of injury or illness suffered at work, whether caused by the work itself or not. First-aid provision must be 'adequate and appropriate in the circumstances'. This means that sufficient first-aid equipment, facilities and personnel should be available at all times people are at work to:

- give immediate assistance to casualties with common injuries or illness that arise at work;
- summon an ambulance or other professional help.

A First Aid Needs Assessment should consider the following:-

the nature of the work, the hazards and risks	the remoteness of the site from emergency services
the nature of the workforce	employees working on shared or multi-occupied sites
the organisation's history of accidents and illness	annual leave and other absences of first aiders
the needs of travelling, remote and lone workers	first-aid provision for non-employees
work patterns	the size of the organisation
the distribution of the workforce	assessment review and refresher training

The nature of the work, the hazards and risks

You should consider the risks and identify injuries that could occur in order to ensure adequate first aid provision.

The following table compiled using information from the HSE identifies some common workplace risks and injuries that could occur:-

Risk	Possible Injuries Requiring First Aid
Manual Handling	Fractures, lacerations, sprains and strains.
Slip and trip hazards	Fractures, sprains and strains, lacerations.
Machinery	Crush injuries, amputations, fractures, lacerations, eye injuries.
Work at height	Head injury, loss of consciousness, spinal injury, fractures, sprains and strains.
Workplace transport	Crush injuries, fractures, sprains and strains, spinal injuries.
Electricity	Electric shock, burns.
Chemicals	Poisoning, loss of consciousness, burns, eye injuries.

The table is not exhaustive and does not cover all possible risks. All areas of the workplace should be assessed and the risks and the possible injuries documented. One reason for this exercise is to ensure that you provide the correct **type** of first aid personnel. There are two levels of workplace first aider:-

- Emergency First Aider at Work (EFAW) – 6 hour course
- First Aider at Work (FAW) – 18 hour course.

You should ensure that your first aiders are trained to deal with the injuries and illness that could occur. The table on page 2 will help you match your requirements to the most appropriate course:

What Emergencies are First Aiders Trained to Deal With?			
	EFAW = Emergency First Aid at Work (6 hour course) FAW = First Aid at Work (18 hour course)	EFAW 6 Hours	FAW 18 hours
Acting safely, promptly and effectively in an emergency		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) & use of Automated External Defibrillator (AED)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Treating an unconscious casualty (including seizure)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Choking		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wounds and bleeding		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shock		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Minor injuries including small cuts, grazes & bruises, minor burns & scalds, small splinters		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Preventing cross infection, recording incidents and actions and the use of available equipment		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fractures	<div style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> These topics are not covered on the EFAW course, so if any of these injuries or illnesses could occur, a full First Aider at Work should be provided. </div>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Sprains and strains			<input type="checkbox"/>
Spinal injuries			<input type="checkbox"/>
Chest injuries			<input type="checkbox"/>
Burns and scalds			<input type="checkbox"/>
Eye injuries			<input type="checkbox"/>
Poisoning			<input type="checkbox"/>
Anaphylaxis			<input type="checkbox"/>
Heart attack			<input type="checkbox"/>
Stroke			<input type="checkbox"/>
Epilepsy			<input type="checkbox"/>
Asthma			<input type="checkbox"/>
Diabetes			<input type="checkbox"/>

Extra, specialised training and provision may be needed for specific areas of work/hazards such as chemicals, dangerous machinery, working in confined spaces etc. You should also consider the possibility that sudden illness could occur in the workplace and therefore you should ensure adequate provision.

The Nature of the Workforce

You should consider the needs and health of all workers and ensure that first aiders are available and trained to deal with specific health needs. You should consider things such as:

- The Young
- The Elderly
- Specific health problems (such as heart conditions, asthma, diabetes etc.)
- Disabilities

The Organisation's History of Accidents and Illness

You should look at the organisations history of accidents and illness to try and identify any needs or trends that may influence the location of equipment and/or type of first aider. Different levels of provision may be required in different areas of the workplace.

The Needs of Travelling, Remote and Lone Workers

First Aid should be available wherever people work so you may need to consider providing personal first aid kits or training for travelling, remote or lone workers.

Work Patterns Such as Shift Work

Adequate first aid cover should be available whenever people are at work. There may be circumstances when a higher level of cover is needed when less people are at work, such as overnight maintenance work in a normally low risk environment.

The Distribution of the Workforce

First Aiders should be able to reach the scene of an incident quickly. Consider extra first aiders on large sites, sites with multiple buildings or buildings with multiple floors.

Remoteness to the site from Emergency Medical Services

If the workplace is remote from emergency medical services you may need to make special transport arrangements should an incident occur. Consider how employees will summon help – do they have access to a phone?

Even in urban areas you should be aware that it often takes some time for ambulance/paramedic help to reach a casualty, so the correct provision of first aid is a vital link in reducing the effects of illness or injury.

Employees Working on Shared or Multi-Occupied Sites

On shared work sites it may be possible to share first aid provision, such as the security team providing first aid cover at a large shopping centre. It is important to fully exchange details of the hazards and risks so that adequate first aid cover is provided. Make agreements in writing to avoid misunderstandings.

Annual leave and other foreseeable absences

You should ensure that adequate first aid cover is available at all times, including when a first aider is on annual leave, a training course, a lunch break or other **foreseeable** absences. This generally means that workplaces need more than one first aider to ensure that cover is maintained. If your first aid needs assessment identifies the need for a 'First Aider at Work' (18 hour course), it is not acceptable to provide an 'Emergency First Aider at Work' (6 hour course) to cover foreseeable absences. You should also consider what cover is needed for non-planned absences such as sick leave.

First Aid Provision for Non-Employees

The HSE recommend that you include non-employees in your first aid needs assessment. You should consider the duty of care that you assume when a non-employee visits your site. This is particularly relevant if you provide a service for others such as schools, places of entertainment, shops etc. Consider both the injuries and illnesses that could occur.

The Size of the Organisation

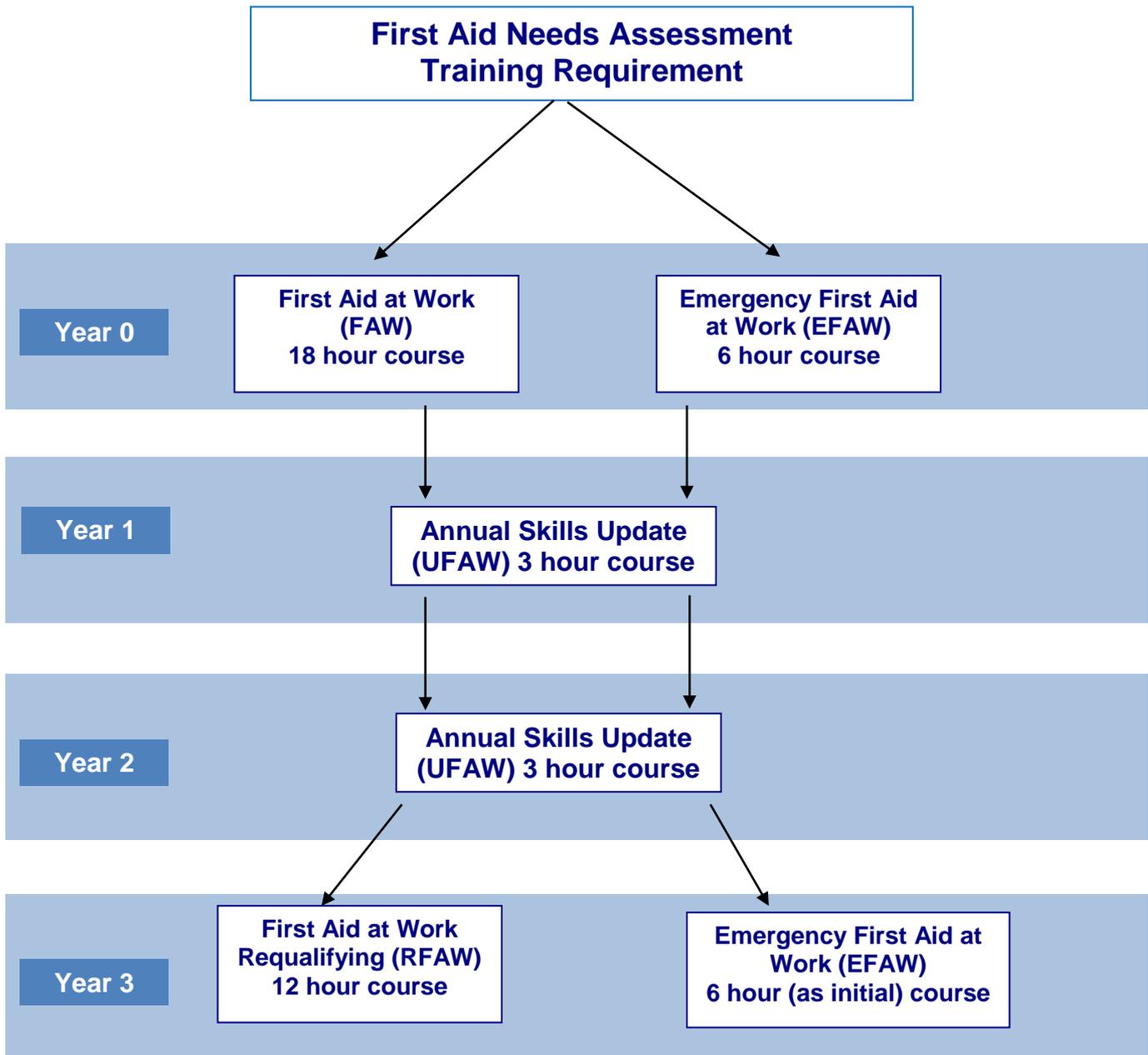
The number of people on a site should not be the primary basis for determining first aid needs; all the areas of the first aid needs assessment should be carefully considered. However, in general terms the larger your organisation is, the more first aiders you are likely to need.

Reviewing the First Aid Needs Assessment

You should review your first aid needs from time to time, particularly if you have operational changes in your workplace. It is recommended that a record is kept of incidents dealt with by first aiders to assist in this process.

Annual Refresher Training

Due to evidence of 'first aid skill fade', the HSE now strongly recommends that all First Aiders attend annual refresher/skills update training. The following chart shows the current sequence of recommended training:



Contact us about our free service to help you with your first aid needs assessment either:-

- face to face in your work place or
- pre-arranged phone consultation

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