

Health and Safety Policy Document

If you employ five or more people you must have a written statement of your health and safety policy to comply with the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

The statement must:

- state your general policy on health and safety
- describe the organisation and arrangements for carrying out your policy
- be brought to the notice of all your employees
- be revised when appropriate, and all revisions must be brought to the attention of all employees.

Content of the Health and Safety Policy

Your safety policy will be a unique document specific to your company. The length and content will vary according to the size and complexity of the undertaking.

The first section of the safety policy is a simple statement of the employer's commitment to health and safety. You may wish to refer specifically to the Health and Safety at Work etc Act and to other health and safety requirements relevant to your work or industry. You will wish to stress the importance of co-operation from employees and of good communications at all levels within the organisation.

The most senior person should sign and date the statement so as to make clear your commitment to the policy.

The second section will detail the organisation and responsibilities for implementing the policy and will identify who reports to whom and for what.

Key job titles (and/or individuals) should be named and their responsibilities and accountabilities for health and safety clearly defined.

In larger organisations it may be useful to include a management structure diagram to enable employees to see:

- How they fit into the system
- What their own duties are
- Who they should go to for advice
- How to report an accident or hazard
- Where to obtain first aid or personal protective equipment, etc.

The third section will detail the arrangements put in place to ensure the health and safety of employees, contractors and visitors or members of the public. These will include safe systems of work and safety rules relating to particular work activities, details of emergency procedures, arrangements for risk assessments, training programmes, procedures for accident reporting and first aid, and training and supervision necessary to ensure that the arrangements are always adopted and adhered to.



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Employees and/or their representatives should be consulted about the content of individual safety rules and procedures. In this way it is more likely that the policy will be successfully implemented and adhered to.

It is important that people within your organisation are actively involved. Managers, safety advisers, supervisors, safety representatives and employees may all have something to contribute.

Bringing the Policy to the Notice of Employees

The employer has to ensure that the safety policy statement and any other relevant information are brought to the attention of each employee. This can be achieved by:

- issuing a copy to each employee
- posting copies of the policy on notice boards
- publishing a copy on the company intranet

Whatever method is adopted, there must be suitable arrangements for issuing updates when necessary. It would also be advisable to obtain employees' signatures to indicate the receipt and understanding of the policy document.

Benefits

Apart from ensuring legal compliance, having a well-written safety policy, which has the backing of the senior management and is thoroughly put into practice, should lead to:

- Better health and safety standards
- Reductions in accidents and levels of risk
- Improvements in co-operation and working practices
- An overall improvement to the general efficiency of the company.

In addition to this, many companies require suppliers to provide copies of policy documents as one measure of establishing competence.

Key Action Steps

- Does your statement express a commitment to health and safety and make clear your obligations to your employees?
- Does it identify the persons responsible for ensuring that it is implemented and kept under review, and how this will be done?
- Does the statement make clear that employee co-operation is vital to the success of the health and safety policy?
- Is it signed and dated by the most senior partner or director?
- Does it clearly show the allocation of health and safety duties and responsibilities at the different management levels?
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- Does the policy state who is responsible for:
 - Reporting, investigating and recording accidents of all types.
 - Fire precautions, fire drills, evacuation procedures.
 - First aid.
 - Health and safety inspections.
 - Management and employee training programmes.
 - Ensuring that statutory requirements are complied with. e.g. periodic testing and inspection of lifts and lifting equipment, and notification of reportable accidents to the appropriate health and safety inspector.
 - Does it say how employees will be involved in health and safety matters e.g. by being consulted, by being involved in inspections, and by sitting on a safety committee?

A simple method of producing a safety policy for a small business can be found in the HSE document INDG259, An introduction to health and safety, which is available free from HSE Books.

References

INDG259, An introduction to health and safety



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