

# Health and Safety Policy

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Your health and safety policy statement is the starting point to managing health and safety in the workplace and sets out how you manage health and safety in your organisation. It is a unique document that shows:

**WHO** does what  
**WHEN** they do it  
**HOW** they do it

If you have five or more employees you will need to have a written health and safety policy statement.

**Note:** not all businesses are required to have a written health and safety policy (if you have under 5 employees). However, for the purposes of submitting tenders or the gaining of a contract, you may find that you are asked to produce a health and safety policy, even if you have less than 5 employees. Other organisations may view your health and safety policy as an indication that you are fully aware of what health and safety rules apply to your business.

## Risks

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You have a legal duty to carry out a risk assessment.

The results of your risk assessment will form the part of the arrangements section of your policy, and will help you to make sure that you cover the main risks within your policy.

## What should be in your Policy

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Most businesses set out their policy in three parts:

- the **statement of intent** section sets out your commitment to managing health and safety effectively, and what you want to achieve
- the **organisation** section states who is responsible for what
- the **arrangements** section contains the detail of what you are going to do in practice to achieve the aims set out in your statement of intent

## The Statement of Intent

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This says what your commitment to health and safety is and how you are going to manage it. There are no set rules on what you should include in your statement, but statements of intent are often only one page long. The **most senior** person in the business must sign and date the statement.

Most statements of intent will say:

- you are committed to ensuring the safety of your employees, customers and anyone else affected by your business' activities

- who has ultimate responsibility for health and safety in the business
- which staff have special responsibilities - give the name of the person in charge of health and safety
- that all employees are responsible for taking care of their own health and safety and that of the people they work with
- that you recognise the legal duties your business is bound by and that you will provide a safe working environment, safe work equipment and safe methods of work
- what organisation and arrangements will be made to support the policy

### **The Organisation Section**

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The organisation section of your policy clearly says who is responsible for what. The overall responsibility for safety rests on the employer, but day-to-day responsibility can be **delegated** to others within the business.

In smaller businesses, it may be very easy to decide who needs to do what for health and safety.

You can identify who will:

- undertake risk assessments
- make workplace inspections
- ensure the safety of specific tasks or work activities or areas of the workplace

The duties of the person you have designated to take responsibility for health and safety (the competent person) should be mentioned in this part of the policy, along with their contact details.

If you do not have anyone within the business able to fulfil this role, you may consider using an **outside consultant**.

### **The Arrangements Section**

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The arrangements section of your policy outlines how you will meet the commitments you have made in your statement of intent. It should give information on how you will reduce or remove altogether any risks that may occur in your workplace.

Your **risk assessment** will have highlighted the areas that pose a risk and any measures you currently have in place.

The extra arrangements you will make to remove or reduce any risks could include:

- staff training
- using signs to highlight risks
- improved safety equipment such as guards or additional personal protective equipment including goggles, safety boots or high visibility clothing
- replacing hazardous chemicals with less-hazardous alternatives
- improving pollution controls
- improved lighting or anti-slip flooring

### **Involve your Employees**

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You have a legal duty to consult with your employees on matters to do with their safety at work.

In practice, it can be useful to involve your employees in preparing and putting in to practice the safety policy. Where employees are involved in making safety rules, or drawing up safe working methods, they may be more likely to use them, because they will understand the reason why they are in place. Also, the person who is actually doing a job can be the best person to comment on whether any changes to the safe working method will work.

You have a legal duty to bring the **statement of intent** to the attention of your employees. They should also know where to find the more detailed **arrangements sections**.

Some of the ways that businesses bring the policy statement to their employees' attentions are by:

- including it in any employees' handbooks
- providing it at induction
- including a copy with the contract of employment
- posting it on their intranet sites
- posting it on notice boards
- making the duties in the policy part of the employees' workplace objectives

### **Monitor and Revise your Policy**

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You must be able to show that you are monitoring, or checking, health and safety issues in your workplace. It is a good idea for your policy to say how you will be checking that the systems you have in place are working correctly.

### **Ways to check your policy**

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- Where you have set out clear responsibilities for various employees, you can check that they have actually carried them out.
- You can monitor whether people are working in accordance with any rules, or safe methods set out in the arrangements.
- You can walk around the workplace and check for hazards - a sign that safety management needs to be improved.
- You can check whether any records or registers - part of your arrangements, are being used. For example, it is good practice to record workplace safety inspections and training given to staff.

**REMEMBER** your health and safety policy is a LIVE document and should be revised on a regular basis. There is no set requirement for revision but as a measure of good practice you may decide to undertake a review of your policy every 12-18 months. This will help you in making sure that a commitment to safety is maintained by your company.

A revision might consist of simply checking that all areas of the policy are still relevant and then having it re-signed and dated by the most senior person within your organisation who has responsibility for health and safety.