

HEALTH & SAFETY

Before undertaking any action or making any decisions relating to health and safety and your business, you should first seek advice from a professional.

The area of health and safety in the workplace is very wide and varied and so here we look at just some of the main areas, including:

- Employers' obligations & responsibilities
- Visitors to and customers of a business

Health and safety regulation in the workplace is governed by numerous pieces of legislation, with the principal one being the [Health & Safety at Work Act](#).

The Act dictates that companies must do everything possible to provide a healthy, safe environment for employees to work in (and enable good practices among employees, who have a legal responsibility too) and outlines businesses' obligations to customers and the public – visitors to the worksite.

You should register with the Health and Safety Executive (or local authority, depending on the type of business) if you employ five or more people.

Employers must do everything that is '*reasonably practicable*', and conduct an assessment (ideally using a qualified professional) to determine what risks are possible and take steps to deal with them where necessary.

All companies with more than five employees must have a visible written policy or statement in the workplace. Applying good practices and responsible management as a matter of course will help businesses provide a better working environment and fulfil legal obligations.

The potential responsibilities for employers are many and varied, depending on the business, and with this in mind, common sense is the order of the day and doing what would realistically be expected in terms of procedures and working practices.

For example, where employees use PCs, monitors or laptops, employers should take steps to minimise the risk to staff of suffering injury because of this usage. Similarly, those workers employed in factories must be protected from harm if they use tools or machinery.

This could mean better design of the office, supportive chairs for sitting at computers, better lighting to help avoid eyestrain, or perhaps protective clothing in a factory.

Businesses should also be aware of other implications, for example, employees covered by the law can ask their employers to pay for an eye test, if they use computer screens regularly as part of their work.

In addition, most employees are entitled to take rest breaks during the course of the working day (if they are to be paid for these breaks is dependant on the terms of their employment contract) and some industries regulate for this provision.

Businesses are also required by law to record accidents if related to work or in the course of conducting work, even if it is away from the workplace.

Remember to think about visitors to the business' premises and ensure they are given due consideration with regards to any policy and ensure provision is made for their safety too.

Employers failing to take appropriate steps can expose themselves to a claim from employees, so make sure you comply.

If you are at all worried about health and safety in your business there are consultants and organisations that will visit your business and draw up the plans and paperwork for you. These can be found in most areas of the country, for example there are [health and safety consultants in Lincolnshire](#) that cover Lincolnshire and the surrounding areas.

For more information visit [Business Information UK](#) at <http://www.business-information-uk.com/health-and-safety.html>

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