

# Summary of UK Health and Safety Legislation

Business Information Factsheet

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## Introduction

Employers and self-employed people must comply with a range of health and safety legislation intended to protect anyone affected by their business and work activities. This factsheet summarises some of the key health and safety legislation that applies in England, Wales and Scotland, and equivalent legislation that applies in Northern Ireland.

The factsheet is a starting point only, and appropriate professional advice about health and safety legislation should be taken where necessary.

## Key health and safety legislation

**The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974** is the primary piece of health and safety legislation in England, Wales and Scotland. It places duties on employers and self-employed people in relation to the health and safety of anyone affected by their business and work activities, such as employees, customers, contract workers, suppliers, volunteers and members of the public. In Northern Ireland, the same duties are created by the Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978.

Under the terms of the 1974 Act and the 1978 Order, numerous regulations have been introduced that set out more detailed requirements covering every aspect of workplace health, safety and welfare.

For most employers, the most significant regulations are:

- **The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999**, which require all employers to assess health and safety risks, make suitable arrangements for managing health and safety, and provide information and training to employees. Equivalent requirements are made by the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000.
- **The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992**, which set out health, safety and welfare requirements in the workplace, for example relating to temperature, ventilation, lighting and the provision of toilets and washing facilities. Equivalent requirements are made by the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993.

Other key regulations include the following (listed in alphabetical order):

- **The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015** set out requirements for managing the health, safety and welfare of construction projects. Equivalent requirements are made by the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016.
- **The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005** require employers to minimise employees' exposure to noise, and to provide personal ear protectors where noise rises above a certain level. Equivalent requirements are made by the Control of Noise at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006.
- **The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002** require employers to prevent or control the risks associated with exposure to potentially harmful substances. Equivalent requirements are made by the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003.
- **The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989** require employers to ensure that all electrical equipment and systems in the workplace are suitably constructed, maintained and operated to prevent risks to health and safety and to avoid injury where risks exist. Equivalent requirements are made by the Electricity at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1991.
- **The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (General Duties of Self-Employed Persons) (Prescribed Undertakings) Regulations 2015** exempt some self-employed people in England, Wales and Scotland from health and safety duties if they have no employees and their work activities do not create any risk to others.
- **The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992** set out the actions that employers must take to protect the health and safety of employees who regularly use display screen equipment such as computers and laptops. Equivalent requirements are made by the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992.
- **The Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981** require every employer to make adequate first-aid provision in the workplace for all employees. Equivalent requirements are made by the Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1982.
- **The Health and Safety Information for Employees Regulations 1989** require employers to display a health and safety law poster, or to provide their employees with a leaflet containing the same information. Equivalent requirements are made by the Health and Safety Information for Employees Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1991.
- **The Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998** require employers to ensure that any work involving forklifts or other lifting equipment is planned by a competent person, appropriately supervised and carried out safely. Equivalent requirements are made by the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999.
- **The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992** require employers to take measures to reduce the risk of injuries arising from manual handling operations, such as lifting and carrying. Equivalent requirements are made by the Manual Handling Operations Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992.

- **The Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992** require employers to provide suitable personal protective equipment where needed and to ensure that it is correctly used and well maintained. Equivalent requirements are made by the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993.
- **The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998** require employers to ensure that work equipment is suitable for the purpose for which it is used, and that any risks to workers' health and safety from equipment are controlled. Equivalent requirements are made by the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999.
- **The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005** requires all employers in England and Wales to assess fire risks regularly and take appropriate measures to prevent and control fires and ensure that people can escape. They must also provide employees with fire safety information and training. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, fire safety requirements are covered by the Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006 and the Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010.
- **The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995** require deaths, major injuries, occupational diseases and dangerous occurrences to be reported. Equivalent requirements are made by the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997.
- **The Work at Height Regulations 2005** require employers to ensure that work at height is properly planned and supervised and carried out by competent people using suitable equipment. Equivalent requirements are made by the Work at Height Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.
- **The Working Time Regulations 1998** set out maximum weekly working time and minimum rest periods for employees. They place additional limits on the working hours of night workers and young workers and require employers to offer free health assessments to night workers. Similar requirements are made by the Working Time Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016.

## Enforcement and penalties

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) are the independent regulators responsible for workplace health and safety. They operate in partnership with local authorities to enforce the various regulations.

Where necessary, health and safety inspectors can issue notices that require health and safety improvements. Failure to comply with these can lead to unlimited fines and a prison sentence of up to two years. Company directors can face disqualification orders for a period of up to 15 years.

## Useful resources

'Health and Safety Basics for Your Business'

HSE

[www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety](http://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety)

'Health and Safety Poster' (downloadable version of the poster that employers are required to display)

HSE

[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/lawposter.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/lawposter.htm)

'Making Health and Safety Work for Your Business'

HSENI

[www.hseni.gov.uk/topic/making-health-and-safety-work-your-business](http://www.hseni.gov.uk/topic/making-health-and-safety-work-your-business)

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