



PROCEDURES FACT SHEET

Procedures identify and stipulate the correct way of undertaking certain tasks or activities. Many work specific procedures now go under the guise of method statements or safe systems of work (see GM Consulting's Safe System of Work factsheet) leaving standard procedure activities such as 'Emergency Procedures' and 'First Aid Procedures'.

These collective measures apply to the whole workplace and to everyone who works within it. Procedures are designed to remove ambiguity and provide clear and simple instructions on what to do if a certain event happens. This is particularly important with events such as fire or injury when there may be a tendency to panic in the face of the hazard or an injured person. It also stands to reason that having procedures is not sufficient in itself but they need both to be communicated effectively to all staff and these staff need to practice or carry out the procedures on a regular basis. Evacuation or emergency procedures are often signposted in a shortened format (what to do in case of fire for instance) but have all employees read them?

Emergencies do happen and any workplace may experience severe personal injury, fire, explosion, terrorist activities or natural disasters. Anticipating emergencies and planning the response can greatly decrease the extent of injury and damage.

An emergency procedure is required by the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 detailing a course of action that directs personnel in acting immediately and correctly in the event of an emergency. A good written procedure will designate a chain of command, identify individuals responsible for assessing the degree of risk to life and property, who should notify the emergency services and who should be notified for various types of emergencies. Part of the emergency procedures should deal with evacuation, what location should employees be evacuated to and routes to escape the workplace.

The first step in developing an emergency procedure is a risk assessment. This will not only identify the hazards in the workplace but also those at nearby facilities which may affect it. The development of the procedures should be undertaken in co-operation with employees and reviewed with them on a regular basis.

Part of the response to an emergency is likely to include taking action to contain the hazard, such as fire fighting, shutting down equipment or first aid. It is important that the procedures clearly set out the limits of such actions to be taken by employees and stress the need to bring in specialised assistance at the earliest opportunity.

Procedures and provisions for first aid is a duty placed on employers by the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981. Such procedures and arrangements need to be implemented after an assessment of first aid provision. The absolute minimum requirement is for a first aid box and an 'appointed person' but this is likely to require significant expansion depending on such factors as the nature of the work and the number of employees involved.