ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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DISCLAIMER

This information is for guidance only and is not to be taken as an expression of the law. It should be read in conjunction with the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995, the Workplace Health and Safety Regulations 1998 and any other relevant legislation. Copies of the legislation can be purchased from the Printing Authority of Tasmania Bookshop: call (03) 6233 3289 or freecall 1800 030 940. It is also available on the Internet at www.thelaw.tas.gov.au

We welcome your feedback on this guide.
Send to: wstinfo@justice.tas.gov.au
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**WHY DO I NEED FIRST AID IN MY WORKPLACE?**

First aid in the workplace means providing the initial treatment and life support for people suffering an injury or illness at work.

In many instances, first aid can reduce the severity of the injury or illness. It can also calm the injured or ill person. In extreme instances, quick and appropriate first aid could mean the difference between life and death.

This *Guide to First Aid in the Workplace* provides practical information to help employers meet the requirements of the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*.

Under the Act, as an employer, you are required to provide:

/// first aid facilities — such as a first aid kit, a first aid room, a health centre and/or first aid equipment, as appropriate

/// first aid services — such as workers trained to be first aiders, training and information, as appropriate.

This guide explains how to assess the first aid needs of your workplace, to determine the appropriate first aid facilities and services.

While aimed at employers, this guide is also useful for anyone in the workplace — managers, workers, employees’ safety representatives and members of OHS committees — involved in or interested in first aid in the workplace.
HOW DO I KNOW WHAT I NEED?
ASSESSING THE FIRST AID NEEDS OF YOUR WORKPLACE

To determine what first aid facilities and services are appropriate for your workplace, you should apply the SAFE steps of hazard management:

// spot the hazard — identify the possible causes of injuries and work-related illnesses in your workplace
// assess the risk — of workplace injuries or illnesses occurring
// fix the problem — by working out the appropriate first aid facilities and services required for your workplace
// evaluate results.

WHEN SHOULD YOU DO THIS?

You should consider going through the four SAFE steps:

// if an injury or illness requiring first aid occurs, to determine if the first aid facilities and services available at your workplace were appropriate and sufficient
// before you buy any new equipment or chemical (get as much information from suppliers and manufacturers as possible to ensure your current first aid facilities and services are appropriate and sufficient)
// before you re-order the equipment or chemicals you already use in your workplace
// when you are about to introduce a new work task or procedure
// when you get new information about your work tasks, procedures, equipment or chemicals.
**STEP 1 — SPOT THE HAZARD**

A hazard is anything that has the potential to cause injury, illness or damage to your health.

Hazards at work may include:
- faulty or unguarded machinery
- chemicals
- unsafe human behaviour
- poor work design (for example, tasks involving repetitive movements)
- inadequate management systems (for example, no procedures for performing tasks safely or for using personal protective equipment).

There are a number of ways to find the hazards in your workplace:
- ask people in your workplace about any hazards they may have noticed
- consider the physical structure of your workplace — look at stairs, desks, floor surfaces, exits, driveways, housekeeping standards
- check all machinery, appliances and vehicles used for work
- examine how equipment and substances are stored, used and moved from one place to another
- review your company’s accident and incident records (including ‘near misses’)
- review information from designers, manufacturers or suppliers of the equipment and substances in your workplace
- consult professional OHS specialists.

The first aid assessment checklist (on pages 10 and 11) can also help you.

It’s important that your progress through the SAFE steps is documented, and can be verified. Keep a diary, and keep copies of your work sheets.

As you assess the first aid needs of your workplace, consider these factors:
- the nature of hazards and level of risk
- the size and layout of your workplace
- the location of your workplace
- the workers in your workplace
- known occurrences of injury and illness.
NATURE OF HAZARDS AND LEVEL OF RISK

Certain workplaces have greater risks of injury and illness due to the nature of the work being done there. For example, a library may require less first aid facilities than a factory. There is no single first aid option that fits all workplaces.

Do you store or use toxic or corrosive chemicals at your workplace? If so, additional first aid facilities and services may need to be provided to treat specific injuries, particularly if this is specified in the relevant material safety data sheet. Facilities may need to include emergency showers, eyewash stations, poison antidotes and additional first aid modules (examples of special modules are given in the section on First aid kits starting on page 16 of this guide). First aiders should also be trained in managing industry-specific injuries.

SIZE AND LAYOUT OF THE WORKPLACE

The size and layout of your workplace will affect the type of first aid facilities and services you need to provide.

The Building Code of Australia sets out specific first aid requirements for workplaces with more than 150 workers (see pages 20 and 21).

If your workplace has less than 150 workers, the following questions will help you work out what first aid facilities and services you should provide:

- what kind of work is performed at different work areas in your workplace?
- how far would an injured or ill worker have to be transported to medical care?
- how easily could this be done?

First aid facilities and services should be located at points convenient to workers. If your workplace has a large physical area, you may need first aid facilities and services in more than one location, especially if:

- your workplace is a long distance from accident and emergency facilities
- small numbers of workers are spread over a wide area
- access to treatment is difficult
- your workplace is on more than one building level.

If you have separate work areas, it may be appropriate to locate the main first aid facilities centrally and provide portable first aid kits in each work area.
LOCATION OF THE WORKPLACE

The time taken for medical aid to reach an injured or ill person is more significant than distance.

Workplaces in remote areas should have additional first aid facilities and services. You may need to:
- plan around poor roads
- plan around potential bad weather conditions
- organise aerial transport to evacuate an injured or ill person
- check that your communications systems are efficient and reliable, to ensure the best response time in any medical emergency.

YOUR WORKERS IN THE WORKPLACE

Consider the number and distribution of your workers, and arrangements such as shiftwork, overtime and flexible hours.

If workers work away from your workplace, you need to consider:
- if they work alone or in groups
- what access they have to telephone or emergency radio communications
- the kind of work they are doing.

Do you have more than one shift in your workplace? First aid facilities and trained first aiders should be available whenever workers are working, and at an appropriate level for the number of workers on each shift. While the number of people working overtime may be fewer than on a regular shift, the additional work hours can heighten fatigue, which can increase the risk of accidents and injuries.

If your workplace is a school, museum, library or sporting venue where the public may be present, you may need to consider additional first aid services and facilities.

KNOWN OCCURRENCES OF INJURY AND ILLNESS

You may be able to identify likely injuries and illness, and their causes, by reviewing records you have on:
- accidents and incidents
- injuries
- illness
- near misses.

However, don’t rely solely on this information, because it covers past occurrences that may not reliably indicate potential injuries and illnesses.

You should also consider common medical conditions that could occur in any workplace, such as asthma, diabetes, and heart attack. Talk about this with your workers.
MAJOR TYPES OF HAZARDS

PHYSICAL HAZARDS
- electrical
- fire/explosion
- heat and cold
- machine guarding
- noise
- nuisance dust
- vibration
- working space

CHEMICAL HAZARDS
- dust
- fumes
- gases
- liquids
- solids
- vapours

ERGONOMIC HAZARDS
- equipment design
- job design
- manual handling
- tool design
- work station design

RADIATION HAZARDS
- infra-red
- ionising
- microwaves
- non-ionising
- ultra-violet

PSYCHOLOGICAL HAZARDS
- dealing with the public
- discrimination
- harassment
- low level constant noise
- shift work
- threat of danger
- work load

BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS
- bacteria
- infections
- viruses

This list is taken from Tasmania’s Annotated Workplace Health and Safety Regulations 1998.
If you have any of these in your workplace, think about the kind of injury or illness they may cause — and therefore the type of first aid facilities and services you may need in your workplace.
FIRST AID CHECKLIST: ASSESSING THE FIRST AID NEEDS IN YOUR WORKPLACE

The following checklist will help you identify hazards in your workplace. It is not exhaustive and does not replace the need for you to follow the four SAFE steps of hazard management.

Date checklist completed: .................................................................

Date checklist to be reviewed:
(annually or when there is a change to the workplace) ..............................

Name of person who completed the checklist: ......................................

................................................................................................

Position title: ...................................................................................

Company/workplace: ...........................................................................

ABOUT THE WORKPLACE

What type of workplace is it?
What type of work is done here?
What is the industry level of risk?
What size is the area of the workplace?
Is the workplace located on more than one level?

ACCESSING THE WORKPLACE

What is the access in to and out from the workplace?
What is the access in to and out from different levels of the workplace?
Are there isolated areas in the workplace where workers are required to work alone?
What communication and supervision is there with workers in isolated areas?
Does the public have access to the workplace? If yes, where?
Are there any controls in place to monitor public access to the workplace?
How long does it take for emergency services to reach the workplace?
How long does it take to reach the nearest medical service or hospital?
ABOUT THE WORKERS

How many workers work here?
How many shifts operate here?
How many workers are on each shift?
Is overtime worked? How frequently? How much?
Are there workers for whom English is a foreign language?
Are there workers with disabilities, health conditions or other special needs to consider?

WORKPLACE HAZARDS

Do any of the major types of hazards occur in your workplace?
Have you checked material safety data sheets, product labels, manufacturers’ information?

PREVIOUS INCIDENTS

How many accidents, incidents or near misses have happened in your workplace this year?
Has this increased or decreased from previous years?
What are the most frequent injuries your workers suffer?
Are there jobs in your workplace prone to more injuries or to particular injuries?

ACCESS TO FIRST AID

What is the maximum distance to first aid within your workplace?
Are first aid facilities identified in a manner that workers understand?
Do workers have ready access to first aid facilities and first aid staff?

OTHER

Do workers know about the first aid facilities and services available in their workplace?
Are there written procedures for medical emergencies? Do workers know and understand these?
Are extra modules required for the first aid kit to cover circumstances specific to your workplace?
Does anyone currently have first aid qualifications? Are they up-to-date?
STEP 2 — ASSESS THE RISK

A risk is the likelihood of a hazard causing injury, illness or damage to your health.

Your list of hazards may be surprisingly long, with some hazards posing more safety risks than others. That’s why you need to work out which hazards are more serious than others, so you can start dealing with those ones first.

To assess the risk associated with each hazard, ask these questions:

*What is the potential impact of the hazard?*

// How severe could an injury or illness be?

// What is the worst possible damage the hazard could cause to someone’s health?

// Would it require simple first aid only? Or cause permanent ill health or disability? Or could it kill?

*How likely is the hazard to cause someone harm?*

// Could it happen at any time or would it be a rare event?

// How frequently are workers exposed to the hazard?

You should also consider how many people are exposed to the hazards, and remember that everyone is different. A hazard may pose more risk to some people than others because of differences in physical strength or health, experience and training.
**STEP 3 — FIX THE PROBLEM**

You should now have enough information to help you determine:

// the first aid facilities you need to select, provide and maintain, including the number, location and contents of first aid kits and any additional modules, and whether a first aid room or health centre is required

// the first aid services you need, including how many first aiders you need, the training workers need about the first aid facilities and services in their workplace, and the training workers need to become first aiders in their workplace

// the policies, procedures and processes for using first aid facilities and services.

Information about first aid facilities and first aid services begins on page 16.

**STEP 4 — EVALUATE RESULTS**

Hazard management is not a one-off event — it’s an ongoing process.

You should regularly assess the first aid needs of your workplace to make sure your first aid facilities and services continue to be appropriate and sufficient (see *When should you do this?* on page 5). Use the first aid checklist again on page 10 for guidance.

You should also ask:

// are more first aiders needed?

// what are the first aid skills and competencies required?

// was first aid training effective?

// is your communication about the first aid facilities and services you have in place effective?

// are more first aid kits required?

// should first aid kits be located in different places?

// are first aid kits well maintained and identifiable?

// are first aid rooms or health centres well maintained?
TALKING ABOUT FIRST AID IN YOUR WORKPLACE

During each of the SAFE steps, employers, managers, contractors and workers need to communicate with each other and work together.

WHAT INFORMATION IS NEEDED?

Once you have your first aid facilities and services in place, you should provide information and instructions to your workers about:

- the arrangements for first aid facilities at the workplace
- the location, accessibility and contents of first aid kits
- the names and locations of trained first aiders.

You should also make sure these important emergency contact details are prominently displayed and readily available in your workplace:

- phone numbers for emergency services — for example, 000, the hospital, poisons information centre, emergency centres
- name and phone numbers for internal first aiders and if you have a health centre, the general registered nurse.

HOW DO I PROVIDE THIS INFORMATION?

You could:

- include it in your inductions, for both new staff members and visitors (including contractors)
- in staff newsletters and memos, and on noticeboards
- during tool box talks, staff meetings or training sessions
- display signs (see the Australian Standard 1319—1994 Safety signs for the occupational environment)

Remember whenever there is a change in the type of duties performed which may impact on the first aid requirements, you need to talk with your workers.

If languages other than English are used in your workplace, you may need to provide first aid information in these languages.
WHO SHOULD I CONSULT WITH?

As well as talking with your workers, consulting with your health and safety committee and/or employees’ safety representative is an important part of assessing the first aid needs of your workplace. They can play an important role in gathering information, developing solutions, and contributing to decisions about the first aid needs of your workplace.

Consultation should:

- address all aspects of providing first aid in the workplace
- happen as early as possible when you’re planning to introduce new first aid facilities and services, or change existing ones. This will allow you plenty of time to consider everyone’s ideas, information and feedback.
FIRST AID FACILITIES AND SERVICES

FIRST AID KITS

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

If you are the employer, you are responsible for providing first aid kits appropriate and sufficient for your workplace.

You should nominate someone — usually an appropriately trained first aider — to be responsible for:
- using the kit
- making sure the kit is in good condition
- making sure the kit’s contents are restocked or replaced when necessary. Items past their use by or expiry date must not be used and must be properly disposed of.

HOW MANY AND WHERE?

Assessing the first aid needs of your workplace will help you determine the number of first aid kits you will need. Remember the physical size and location of your workplace and the location of your workers across the workplace. Your workers should be able to easily access these kits.

As a guide, consider providing at least one first aid kit for every workplace with up to 100 workers. For very large workplaces there should be at least one kit for every 100 workers in an area at any one time.

Portable first aid kits should be provided for those working away from your main workplace.

WHAT SHOULD IT BE STORED IN?

The container should protect the contents of the kit from dust and damage. If any extra first aid modules are included, the container should be large enough to hold them, though preferably in separate compartments.

The container should be easily recognisable: for example, with a white cross predominantly displayed on a green background. It should not be locked.
WHAT SHOULD A BASIC FIRST AID KIT INCLUDE?

First aid kits should meet the specific needs of your workplace (determined when you assessed the first aid needs of your workplace). Although first aid needs vary from one workplace to the next, a basic kit might include:

- adhesive tape (hypoallergenic)
- antiseptic solution (single use only)
- approved resuscitation mask
- burn dressings
- conforming roller bandages
- crepe bandages
- drinking vessel
- elastic dressing strips
- important information including basic first aid notes and contact details for emergency services and first aiders
- gauze swabs
- hygienically clean plastic bags
- notebook and pen for recording treatment given
- protective equipment such as disposable gloves, aprons and, where applicable, eye protection
- safety pins
- scissors
- splinter forceps, tweezers
- sterile eye pads
- sterile saline solutions (single use only) for cleaning wounds and as an eye wash
- triangular bandages.

Where hazards exist that are specific to your workplace, you should make sure medical services with the facilities to deal with these hazards are available. Assessing the first aid needs of your workplace will also determine if you require the following additional modules.
**EYE MODULE**

This extra module should be included in first aid kits for any workplace where:

- chemical liquids or powders are handled in open containers
- spraying, hosing, compressed air or abrasive blasting operations are carried out
- there is any possibility of flying particles
- welding, cutting or machining operations are carried out
- wearing eye protection is recommended.

An eye module should include:

- adhesive tape
- eye wash solution (single use only)
- guidance notes
- sterile eye pads.

Clearly identify the eye module container’s contents and purpose.

You may also need to consider installing eyewash facilities.

**BURNS MODULE**

This extra module should be included in first aid kits for any workplace with the risk of a worker sustaining a serious burn. For example, where:

- chemical acids or alkalines are used
- flammable liquids are used
- heat is used
- other corrosive chemicals are used.

A burns module should include:

- burns dressings of assorted sizes
- clean sheeting for covering burns. The size of dressings and sheeting should be determined by the kind of the hazards in your workplace
- guidance notes.

You should clearly identify the burn module container’s contents and purpose.

You may also need to consider installing drench showers.
REMOTE LOCATION KITS

A basic first aid kit for workers in remote locations might include the following extra items:

- broad crepe bandages for snake bites
- approved cervical collar for spinal/neck injuries (only to be used by appropriately trained first aiders)
- emergency reference manual
- clean sheeting for covering burns
- thermal blanket for treating shock and hypothermia
- torch or flashlight
- whistle for attracting attention.

A worker working alone in an isolated environment may need to carry an industry-specific kit at all times.

OTHER USEFUL MODULES

Talk with first aid professionals or supply companies if other first aid modules are needed (as determined when you assessed the first aid needs of your workplace).
**FIRST AID ROOMS**

The Building Code of Australia requires every workplace with more than 150 workers and without a health care centre to provide a suitable first aid room (however, even if your workplace has less than 150 workers, assessing the first aid needs of your workplace might actually show that you need a first aid room).

The first aid room should:

- be clearly marked FIRST AID
- be set aside for first aid purposes and no other use
- be well lit and well ventilated
- be at least 14 square metres in size
- have easy access to toilets
- be suitably located, with convenient access
- be easily accessed by workers being moved or supported by a stretcher or wheelchair.

The contents of the first aid room should include:

- a container for soiled dressings
- a desk, telephone and emergency telephone numbers
- a first aid kit suitable for your workplace
- a medical examination couch with blankets and pillow
- a removable screen
- a sharps container
- a sink and wash basin with hot and cold running water
- a steriliser
- a stretcher
- a workbench or dressing trolley
- an examination lamp
- appropriate resuscitation equipment
- cupboards for storing medication, dressings and linen
- electric power points
- suitable seating.

If you are the employer, you should nominate someone — usually an appropriately trained first aider — to be responsible for the room and its contents.

Assessing the first aid needs of your workplace will help you determine the times or days that this person should be available. At all other times, first aid kits and a person responsible for the kits should be available. Inform workers about these arrangements.
HEALTH CENTRES

The Building Code of Australia requires every workplace (other than a shop or office) with more than 300 workers at any one time to provide a self-contained health centre (however, even if your workplace has less than 300 workers, assessing the first aid needs of your workplace might actually show that you need a health centre).

The health centre must contain:

- a treatment room with a floor area of at least 14 square metres
- a separate recovery room
- a separate waiting room
- a separate (combined) office/consulting room
- a toilet with airlock and a wash basin with clean hot and cold running water.
- a storeroom or adequate storage cupboards.

It must have walls, floors and ceilings that are impervious to moisture; easy to clean; free from cracks, ledges and sharp edges; and finished in a light colour.

The health centre should be under the control of a general registered nurse. Depending on the industry, the number of workers employed and work schedules, you may need to have more than one general registered nurse on site at any one time.
**FIRST AIDERS**

A first aider is a worker with a minimum of 15 hours of current first aid training from an approved provider. A first aider has responsibilities on top of their normal work duties.

First aiders make the initial treatment of people suffering injury or illness at work. They are not responsible for ongoing medical care. The treatment they provide can only equal the level of first aid training and competence they have. When in doubt, a first aider should always seek medical help.

The first aider should record all first aid treatment given (and you should keep these records):

- date, time, name of person treated
- description of physical symptoms or condition
- treatment provided
- if the person was sent or referred to further medical treatment (hospital, their own doctor).

This doesn’t need to be complicated — a notebook is probably all you need.

**HOW MANY?**

While there is no rule for the number of first aiders in a workplace, it’s recommended you train at least two workers to be first aiders.
FIRST AID TRAINING

First aiders should have successfully completed a minimum of 15 hours of current first aid training from an approved provider. They should do regular training to make sure their knowledge and skills remain up to date, and that they are using currently-accepted first aid practices and techniques.

Assessing the first aid needs of your workplace will help you decide what training your first aiders will need to suit your workplace and its particular risks of injury and illness.

You can also discuss your training needs with your chosen training provider.

To deliver workplace first aid training in Tasmania, the provider must:

- be registered as a training provider with the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority (or equivalent authority in another state or territory). That is, the provider must have current Registered Training Organisation (RTO) status
- deliver nationally-recognised first aid training that is registered with state or territory registering authorities
- be a full member of the Australian Resuscitation Council.

First aid training topics should include:

- first aid kits: their contents and use
- eye irrigation
- information about relevant legislation
- legal obligations under the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*
- poisons
- purchasing first aid supplies
- recognising illnesses and medical conditions
- recognising and managing unconsciousness
- resuscitation mask
- simple record keeping, particularly how to record details of first aid treatment given
- standard precautions to minimise the spread of infectious diseases when treating wounds
- transporting injured or ill persons
- treating and controlling bleeding
- treating burns and scalds
- treating extreme temperatures
- treating injuries to bones, muscles and joints
- treating minor injuries
- treating shock
- welfare of the first aider.
FIRST AID MANUALS

These are valuable references for first aid in the workplace. Make sure you have up-to-date manuals. However, having a manual does not replace having a trained first aider in the workplace.

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Specialist practitioners and first aid training providers can help you determine the first aid facilities and services needed in your workplace. They can also provide information about hazards, injuries and illnesses relevant to your workplace.
For more information contact
Workplace Standards Tasmania
Phone:  1300 366 322  (within Tasmania)
       (03) 6233 7657  (outside Tasmania)
Fax:     (03) 6233 8338
Email: wstinfo@justice.tas.gov.au