

HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK

Not many would be aware of this, but the government has legislation for health and safety of people at work. The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 requires the employers to have proper health and safety management systems at work. The Act makes provision for securing the health of people at work, welfare and safety of the employees including the people who are not directly employed by the company like contractors and visitors.

While the law exists and it is mandatory for the employers to follow the guidelines, it is also necessary for the employees to know about their rights and duties regarding their own health & safety. Employers should conduct a General Risk Assessment to ensure the health and safety of their employees.

To create awareness about health & safety at work, the employers should have proper employee induction & health and safety training programs whenever new employees join the company. The induction program should educate the employees about the safety standards, procedures and policies of the company.

The basics of health and safety at work start with having proper First Aid. Every organization big or small must have proper First Aid Kits and systems. While at work, people can suffer an injury or fall ill. It is very important for the company / firm to have proper arrangements so that the employees can receive immediate medical attention. A person who has received proper training for administering First Aid should be appointed for this.

Fire safety is of prime importance at work. The potential hazards and sources of fuel, oxygen & ignition etc should be identified. Proper Fire detection and warning systems should be in place to prevent any mishaps. Fire extinguishers should be kept ready in different places throughout the building. There should be exit doors and escape routes in the building. Electrical equipments and wiring should be proper and checked at regular intervals. The employees should be given training on dealing with fire emergencies. Fire drill and Fire Risk Assessment should be done at regular intervals.

Stress at work place is common. But if it starts affecting the health of the employee then it is a problem. Employers should identify the factors causing excessive stress to the employees. A stress risk assessment should be done to identify the potential hazards and risks. Proper measures should be adopted to control excessive employee stress. Employees should be given proper training, support and care to help them prevent & relieve the stress.

Employers should follow the norms of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations. They should assess the health risks faced by the employees from the chemicals or substances used at workplace. Proper control measures should be adopted and the same should be followed by the employees. Training and information about the health risks should be provided to the employees.

The employers are also required to have proper policies for disability health & safety. Employees with cognitive, physical, sensory, ambulant and other disabilities have a right to proper arrangements and facilities at the workplace. There should be proper access, lighting, signage, seating arrangements for the disabled. Other employees of the company should also be sensitized about the same.

New and expectant mothers have a right to proper care at the workplace. The employers should identify the potential hazards to the mother as well as the baby while at work. The employers can offer alternative work, different or less work timings or paid leave to ensure the health and safety of the mother and baby. Similarly, arrangements should be made for young persons at work and lone workers. A general risk assessment should be done for the security, health and safety of such employees.

It is important that the employer as well as the employee is aware of the rights and duties pertaining to health and safety at workplace. For details you can take the services of a health and safety consultant or just search for "health and safety at work" on any major search engine.