

First aid in the workplace

First aid is the initial assistance provided to someone suffering from an injury or illness.

Within the workplace, first aid is enshrined in legislation, the specifics of which varies between states and territories. The provision of first aid supplies and officers to treat illness and accidents within the workplace can; potentially reduce the severity of an injury, save lives and lead to faster recovery and a reduction in lost time. First aid provided within the workplace is not limited to employees but encompasses any third parties such as labour hire personnel, contractors, subcontractors, visitors or volunteers when on the employer's site.



It is an employer's responsibility to provide a safe workplace, including the provision of adequate access to first aid treatment and facilities so far as is reasonably practicable. This responsibility includes readily accessible first aid kits and supplies, their maintenance and restocking, in addition to providing trained first aid officer(s). A first aid room may also be required dependent upon the workplace and nature of the work taking place.

Workplace injury risk can be considered as low or high based upon the industry, nature of the work completed and individual workplace. A low risk workplace is one in which employees are exposed to minor hazards, excluding those that may result in serious illness or injury. High risk workplaces

are those in which employees are exposed to hazards that may result in serious illness or injury. To determine the supplies, equipment, facilities and training required to fulfill an employer's duty of care to their employees, it is advisable to complete a first aid risk assessment. When completing a first aid risk assessment to determine the level of first aid to be provided, Safe Work Australia recommends you consider:

- ▼ The industry and nature of the work being completed and safety issues that could arise. The number and composition of people attending the workplace including employees, labour hire personnel, contractors, subcontractors, visitors and volunteers.
- ▼ The location of your workplace (if regional or remote this may include the response times for emergency services), in addition to the size of the premises including the proximity of first aid facilities to work areas.
- ▼ How likely an incident is to occur (probability) and the resulting injuries that may occur (severity). Past injuries and near miss statistics from your facility and information from similar industries can provide useful information to support your risk assessment.¹

General First Aid Requirements

- ▼ Safe Work Australia recommends, one first aid officer per 50 employees for low risk workplaces and one per 25 employees for high risk workplaces.¹
- ▼ First aid officers should hold a current senior first aid certificate at minimum, or competency based equivalent. First aid officers need to be competent and

comfortable to provide first aid in the event of an emergency. Refresher training should be undertaken as required.

- ▼ All employees should be made aware of who the first aid officers are and how best to contact them in an emergency.
- ▼ A first aid room for low risk workplaces with over 200 employees and a high risk workplace with over 100 employees.¹
- ▼ First aid kits need to be clearly identifiable and located in easily accessible, high traffic areas. All employees should be advised of their location.
- ▼ A responsible person should be engaged to maintain first aid supplies.
- ▼ When first aid rooms are required, a responsible person should be engaged to maintain the equipment, supply and maintenance of the room.
- ▼ All first aid treatment given should be recorded, information retained and regularly reported to management and effectiveness reviewed.

First aid compliance is important to every workplace. First aid, in addition to assisting in keeping the workplace safe, can contribute to a reduction in lost time resulting in a financial saving, whilst conversely, failure to comply with WHS legislation may lead to significant fines for individuals and/or the organisation with some leading to the risk of imprisonment.

¹Safe Work Australia, 2017, First Aid, Safe Work Australia, <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/first-aid> accessed 10/11/2017.