

SOLAS

An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
Further Education and Training Authority

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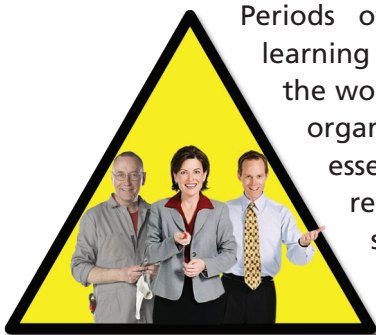
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This booklet is designed to be used to raise the awareness of Health and Safety for learners (Learners include Apprentices and adult trainees) attending SOLAS courses and to give them essential information to ensure they have a healthy and safe learning experience. Additional course and facility Health and Safety information and requirements will be given as appropriate over the duration of the course.

The contents of this booklet are based on the Health and Safety Authority's publication "Health and safety matters for students embarking on work experience - A short guide for teachers" and are reproduced with their permission.

Introduction



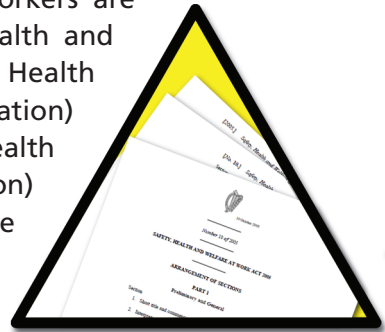
Periods of work experience and work-based learning are important for people to experience the work environment. Good preparation and organisation of learning and placements is essential if these opportunities are to be rewarding and safe. Through health and safety education learners will develop a set of safe behaviours which they can transfer into their working lives.

This guide will assist instructors in preparing their learners for the health and safety aspect of their learning and work experience programme. It offers practical information and advice on workplace health and safety that can be taught and discussed with learners in the classroom before they embark on learning and work experience. This process will enable learners to commence work with a greater appreciation and awareness of health and safety issues.

Legislation

Health and safety legislation is in place to protect workers (this includes learners on training and work experience) or those who may be affected by work activities.

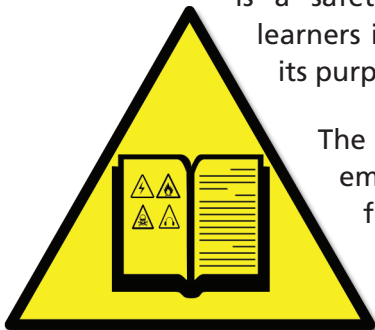
The safety, health and welfare of workers are covered principally by the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005; the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007; and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) (Amendment) Regulations 2007. These laws place general duties of care on employers, the self-employed and employees.



This guide is not intended as a legal interpretation of the law.

Safety Statement

One of the key health and safety requirements for any workplace is a safety statement. Instructors should help learners identify what a safety statement is and its purpose.



The safety statement is prepared by the employer and is a written programme for managing safety and health in the workplace. It should begin with a policy statement on how the employer intends complying with the law.

The safety statement should be based on an identification of the hazards¹ and an assessment of the risks² in that particular workplace. The controls/precautions necessary to combat these hazards and reduce these risks (including the controls/precautions necessary to protect young or inexperienced workers) should also be included.

Employers must consult with their employees and make the safety statement accessible to them. They must also review the statement particularly when there is a major change in the place of work, or in the work to be carried out, to ensure that there is no significant risk to the safety and health of workers or others who may be affected by the work activity.

Learners will encounter unfamiliar risks from the jobs they will be doing and from the working environment. They may also lack experience or be unaware of how to raise concerns. It is therefore important that everyone involved in the employment of young or inexperienced people understands:

- young people and the law; and
- risks to young or inexperienced people at work.

1 A hazard is anything at work which might cause you harm.

2 A risk is the likelihood that harm could occur from a particular hazard and its consequences. Assessing the risks is the process of evaluating the risks in the workplace and putting in place the most appropriate controls/precautions in order to prevent accidents and work-related illness.



Common Health and Safety Hazards

The following table lists examples of some of the most common hazards found in workplaces. Instructors will find this table useful for educating learners about workplace health and safety. Learners will find some or all of these hazards addressed in the company's safety statement which should also explain the measures/precautions taken by the employer to prevent accidents and ill health arising from these hazards.

Slips

Slipping on spillages on a tiled floor. Slipping on a highly polished floor surface.



Trips



Tripping over something left on the floor such as a box or a stray cable. Tripping over loose matting or carpet tiles. Tripping over raised surfaces that you could not see.

Falls

- Falling down steps or stairs.
- Falling off stepladders or chairs - especially if you are larking about.



Lifting And Carrying



Referred to as 'manual handling'³ you can injure yourself if you lift and carry anything incorrectly from a box of stationery to a tray of bricks.

Working With Knives

Cuts and lacerations can occur when you work with knives - often this type of injury is the result of a knife slipping in the hand.



³ Manual handling continues to trigger approximately one-third of all reported accidents; the next most common category is 'slip, trip and fall' incidents. Together, they accounted for over half of all reported accidents in 2007.

Working With Cutting Machines

- Cuts and lacerations.
- Amputation of a finger or thumb.



Working In Proximity Of Running Equipment And Machinery



Getting 'caught' in running equipment or machinery inexperienced workers are at significant risk of such injuries in a number of industries e.g. labourers in wood and paper manufacturing, metal fabrication, food and beverage processing, construction, machine operators, material handlers, bakers and cooks.

Tractors, Farm Vehicles And ATV's (All Terrain Vehicles)

Tractors account for the highest proportion of fatalities and accidents in agriculture each year. Vehicle operation, being crushed, struck, pinned under or falling from the vehicle are the causes of vehicle accidents. Those at risk include persons using the tractor and those who may be in the area where the tractor is operating.



Working With Hot Substances Or Objects



Burns and scalds - typically these injuries involve hot water or steam; hot fats, oils or other food products; and equipment such as pots, pans, or trays. Working with welding equipment can also be a risk in this area.

Chemicals

All sorts of workplace chemicals may cause harm, from soaps in the washroom that irritate the skin, to toners in photocopiers, to the more dangerous acids used in industry.



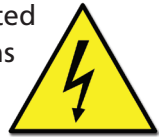
Dust And Spores



Sources of dust and spores include mouldy hay, straw or grain, compost used in mushroom growing, and poultry feathers and droppings. Exposure to these materials can cause both short-term effects (including irritation, bronchitis and breathlessness), and long-term effects (including asthma, chronic bronchitis, shortness of breath, weight loss, farmers lung and sensitization). Always wear the proper PPE.

Electricity

Electricity can kill or cause severe burns and must be treated with respect. Make sure you understand the instructions before using any electrical equipment - if in doubt ASK - and report any damaged tools or electrical equipment, including plugs, cables or extension leads to the manager.



Visual Display Units (VDUs)



The main problems which can occur with the use of VDUs are related to the design of the job or workstation.⁴ A badly arranged workstation can lead to the adoption of a bad working posture with consequent pains in muscles and joints and also visual problems.

Make sure you know how to arrange your work and workstation to avoid awkward movements, reflections, aches and pains. Adequate breaks must also be provided if there is intensive or continuous use of VDUs in your office.

Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI)

Repetitive strain injury can occur if motions are repeated frequently (e.g. every few seconds) and for prolonged periods such as an eight-hour shift, resulting in the accumulation of fatigue and muscle strain. Effects of repetitive motions are increased when awkward postures and forceful exertions are involved



⁴ A VDU workstation includes the keyboard, the VDU screen, printer, work chair, work desk and the VDU work environment (e.g. lighting, glare, reflections, humidity, and temperature) and software.

Noise



Exposure to high levels of noise, either continuously or as a loud sudden 'bang' from equipment such as cartridge-operated tools, can have a number of physiological and psychological effects on workers including stress, tinnitus and if exposed to high noise levels over long periods of time, permanent loss of hearing can occur.

High noise levels can also interfere with communications in the workplace, leading to an increased risk of accidents.

Temperature

Hot or cold working conditions may cause you to suffer ill health. Comfortable working conditions should be maintained - as a guideline a minimum comfortable working temperature for indoor sedentary workers is 17.5 degrees centigrade and upper level for comfort is 27 degrees centigrade (when undertaking light duties). In addition, each enclosed workplace must be adequately ventilated.



Emergency Procedures



Fire is a major hazard in any workplace. You must know and understand the procedures for evacuating the workplace in an emergency. These procedures should be included in the company's safety statement.

You must also know the procedures for first-aid treatment in the event of an accident. The names of the people responsible for any first-aid actions should be included in the company's safety statement

Human Behaviour

Your behaviour can also be a hazard if you act in a way that can cause harm, whether intentional or unintentional, to your colleagues e.g. shoving someone down steps or jokingly pushing someone into another worker. Other examples include carelessness, thoughtlessness, lack of concentration, haste, frustration and irritability, horseplay and boredom.



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

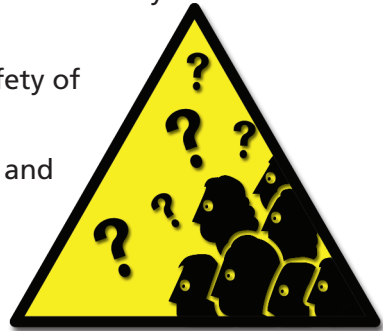
The following FAQs should help instructors to clarify health and safety matters with learners. Instructors and learners will also find these useful for:

- selecting suitable work experience companies; and
- preparing learners to become safety aware prior to starting work experience.

What are the health and safety responsibilities of (a) the employer and (b) the employee?

Employers are responsible for:

- creating and maintaining a safe and healthy workplace
- safeguarding the health and safety of their employees
- providing information, training and instruction to their employees
- ensuring a written safety statement is prepared and made available to all employees.



Employees/Learners have a duty to protect themselves and others. They must co-operate with their employer and must ensure that they:

- are not under the influence of an intoxicant or in such a state that they might be a danger to themselves or others (an employer may prevent an employee/Learner from working if it is apparent that he or she would be such a danger).

- make correct use of any article or substance provided for their use or protection, including protective clothing and equipment; and
- report to their employer or supervisor any matter that could increase the likelihood of an accident or work related-illness occurring.

How can Learners in Training or on work experience access the company's safety statement?

The safety statement must be made available to Learners. Some employers give each employee a copy of the statement. Others make it available at a central location e.g. on the company notice board or intra net site. Sometimes the employer may refer to the safety statement as the safety policy.

Learners must read the safety statement carefully, particularly the risk assessment sections relating to their job, and ensure that they fully understand this information. If in doubt, ASK.

Should all new workers (including Learners on training or work experience) receive induction training?

Yes, employers must provide instruction, training and supervision. Induction training is an essential part of the learning process when starting in a new job or training programme and the nominated supervisor will tell the Learner how to work safely and will arrange training for each job.

If a Learner has an accident at work who should report it?

If a Learner is injured in the course of his or her employment or training and prevented from performing the normal duties of their work for more than three calendar days, not including the date of the accident, the employer must report the incident to the Health and Safety Authority (HSA).

What is Safe Pass?

Safe Pass is a one-day safety awareness programme aimed at all who work on construction sites. The Safe Pass programme raises workers' awareness of the hazards on construction sites so that they will not be a danger to themselves or their co-workers. You must successfully complete a Safepass programme if you plan to work on a construction site. You can check for availability of SafePass courses in most SOLAS offices.

Training courses in SOLAS training centres are not classed as construction sites

Do learners and seasonal workers need Safe Pass before working on a construction site? If so, who should pay?

Yes, the Safe Pass programme is aimed at everyone who works on a construction site, including new entrants. Learners who want to apply for a job on a construction site for seasonal work must have the Safe Pass card. In this instance they would have to pay for it themselves before they are employed. More information on Safe Pass can be obtained from SOLAS (visit www.SOLAS.ie or telephone 01 6070500).

What is PPE? Who should supply this?

PPE means 'personal protective equipment' and includes items such as ear protection, eye protection, safety shoes, and high-visibility vests.

Employers must supply PPE where risks cannot be eliminated or adequately controlled. If PPE is supplied this information will be contained in the risk assessment section of the safety statement. During your SOLAS training course, appropriate PPE will be provided to you by SOLAS. It is your responsibility to look after the PPE supplied to you and use it appropriately.

PPE must be used correctly. Workers/Learners must comply with the training and instruction given on its correct usage. PPE must be replaced and maintained by the employer when required.

What are the rules in relation to sitting and standing at work?

As a general rule, if the job or a substantial proportion of the job can be done properly whilst sitting, the employer shall provide suitable facilities for sitting. A decision on whether you sit or stand will depend on the work activity and a site-specific risk assessment.

What health and safety provisions should be in place for employees with disabilities?

Safe access to and egress from and circulation within the workplace should be provided as necessary. Access to all welfare areas, e.g. sanitary facilities, washing facilities, facilities for taking meals, should also be provided. Employers should ensure that adequate assistance is available for the safe evacuation of those with a disability in the event of an emergency.

What should learners look for when selecting companies for work experience?

Learners selecting a company for work experience will find it beneficial to know what its main business activity is and where the learner is likely to be employed. Learners may also wish to find out if there is a health and safety contact person - perhaps a safety officer⁵ has been employed or the employees may have elected a safety representative.⁶ The company may have a human resources (HR) department with responsibility for health and safety matters and may also employ an occupational health nurse.

Some companies may have one or more safety personnel, others have none; however this is not an indication of how well or how poorly health and safety issues are managed. Companies have different requirements and vary in size and operations. In some cases, particularly in small or low-risk businesses, the employer may manage all health and safety operations.

⁵ A safety officer is appointed by the employer to manage health and safety in the workplace. The employer maintains overall responsibility for health and safety in the workplace.

⁶ A safety representative is selected and appointed by the employees to represent them in consultations with the employer on matters of safety, health and welfare at the place of work.

Learners may also wish to check if the company has previously taken on learners and if so, ask about the outcome. A checklist for learners can be found later in this guide.

Is there specific legislation regarding young persons at work?

Yes, there is legislation regarding young persons at work. ***The Protection of Young Persons' (Employment) Act, 1996*** is designed to protect the health of young workers, and to ensure that work done during the school years does not put their education at risk. The law sets minimum age limits for employment, defines rest intervals and maximum working hours, and prohibits the employment of those under 18 years of age on work late at night. Employers must also keep specified records for those workers aged under 18 years.

Further information on the Act is available from the National Employment Rights Authority (NERA) (visit www.employmentrights.ie/en/ or Locall **1890 80 80 90**). NERA is an office of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and has its headquarters in Carlow.

The HSA also has legislation regarding the 'Protection of Children and Young Persons'. This can be found under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Applications) Regulations 2007, Chapter 1 and Part 6, and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) (Amendment) Regulations 2007.

The HSA has produced an eleven-page guidance document entitled 'Guide to the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007, Chapter 1 and Part 6: Protection of Children and Young Persons' which includes information in relation to the employment of young persons, risk assessment, circumstances prohibiting employment of a child or young person, health surveillance, and agents, processes and work that children and young persons may require protection from.

7 "young person" means a person who has reached 16 years of age or school-leaving age (which ever is higher) but is less than 18 years of age.

This general guidance aims to prevent occupational accidents or ill health and may be down loaded from the Authority's website at www.hsa.ie

Instructors should distribute the following information to learners. It may help ensure that learners have important health and safety information regarding their Training.

The form on page 14 can be used to assist learner attending work experience to collect essential health and safety information from their host company.

My contact at the training location is (insert instructor's name):

.....

If I am unsure about a health and safety matter I must contact:

.....

If I have an accident at work I must contact:

.....

The name of my workplace supervisor is:

.....

The person with overall responsibility for health and safety at my workplace is: (insert name and occupation)

.....

.....

The name of the safety representative is:

.....

The safety statement/policy at my workplace can be found (state where):

.....

The things I am prohibited from doing and restricted from doing are listed here and have been agreed with my supervisor:

.....

.....

.....

PPE is supplied to me by:

.....

Emergency procedures have been explained to me.

Yes

No

In the event of an emergency I must:

.....

.....

.....

If I require first aid treatment I must contact:

.....



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governance.

