

Introduction to Health and Safety

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Key concepts, legal framework, responsibilities, and practical steps for creating a safe workplace.

1. Why Health & Safety Matters

Reason	Impact
Protects workers	Reduces injuries, illnesses, and fatalities
Legal compliance	Avoids fines, prosecutions, and shutdowns
Financial benefits	Lowers insurance premiums, absenteeism, and turnover
Productivity & morale	Safer environments boost confidence and efficiency
Reputation	Demonstrates corporate responsibility to customers & partners

2. Core Definitions

Term	Meaning
Health and Safety (H&S)	The discipline that protects the physical and mental well-being of employees, contractors, visitors, and the public.
Risk	The combination of <i>likelihood</i> of an event occurring and the <i>severity</i> of its consequences.
Hazard	Anything that has the potential to cause harm (e.g., chemicals, machinery, ergonomic strain).
Control Measure	Any action that eliminates or reduces a risk (e.g., engineering controls, PPE, training).
Incident	An unplanned event that could have resulted in injury, illness, or damage (near-misses are included).

3. Legal Framework (U.K. example – similar structures exist worldwide)

Legislation

Main Requirement

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Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974	General duty of care for employers to ensure health, safety, and welfare of employees and others.
Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999	Requires risk assessments, written health & safety policies, and competence of staff.
COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) 2002	Identify, assess, and control exposure to hazardous substances.
PUWER (Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations) 1998	Ensure equipment is safe to use, maintained, and inspected.
RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) 2013	Mandatory reporting of work-related deaths, serious injuries, and dangerous occurrences.
Equality Act 2010	Requires reasonable adjustments for disabled workers.

Tip: Keep a **regulatory register** that lists all applicable statutes, the responsible person, and review dates.

4. Key Elements of an Effective H&S Management System

1. Policy & Commitment

- Written health and safety policy signed by senior management.
- Clear statement of objectives and responsibilities.

2. Planning

- Conduct **risk assessments** (identify hazards ? evaluate risk ? decide on controls).
- Set measurable targets (e.g., “reduce recordable injuries by 20% in 12 months”).

3. Implementation & Operation

- **Training & competence** – induction, job-specific training, refresher courses.
- **Safe work procedures** – method statements, permits to work.
- **Provision of resources** – PPE, signage, maintenance programs.

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4. Monitoring & Measurement

- Regular **inspections, audits, and incident investigations.**
- Track leading indicators (near-misses, safety observations) and lagging indicators (lost-time injuries).

5. Review & Continuous Improvement

- Management review meetings (quarterly/annual).
- Update risk assessments and procedures after changes (new equipment, processes, legislation).

5. The Risk Assessment Process (5-Step Model)

| Step | Action |