HR Essentials – Business Templates

Workplace Health and Safety

One of the most important aspects of your responsibilities as a small business owner is ensuring the safety of your employees. Putting in place an effective safety culture within your organisation is vital to provide a safe working environment and ensuring you adhere to a multitude of safety rules and regulations.

It can be easy to view health and safety as the party pooper in the HR toolbelt; however, it is actually a complex blend of aligning attitudes, beliefs and values throughout your organisation and ensuring the collaboration of each and every one of your employees - starting with yourself.

5 safety areas for focus

Leadership

Adopting health and safety procedures must be championed by your leadership team. Your employees will look to you for guidance and behave according to your example; demonstrating a positive attitude towards upholding workplace safety will set expectations for healthy behaviours towards an effective safety culture.

Responsibility

Employees should be made aware that health and safety is the responsibility of every individual within the organisation. A sense of shared responsibility should be promoted, and a duty of care to their co-workers encouraged; this means employees behave in a way that protects and safeguards others.

Accountability

Leadership and management teams are accountable for the people within their teams. Ensuring the safety of your team means wholeheartedly promoting a safety culture and keeping on top of health and safety training requirements.

Clarity

Setting clear expectations from the outset should be a priority. Make it a number one goal during onboarding that all new recruits complete their health and safety training before beginning their role. Ensure ongoing communication with your entire workforce about what is expected of them regarding upholding a safety culture.

Ethics

Your safety culture should be driven by morals and ethics, a duty to help to provide a safe environment for all. Everyone within the organisation should share the belief that they are all morally and ethically bound to act in a way that safeguards and promotes the health and safety of fellow employees.

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How to identify hazards in the workplace

Workplace safety training should be provided before any employee begins their role; this should provide a description of the hazards your employees may face in their specific roles. Each industry's hazards will differ, but the important question is, are these hazards avoidable and are you doing everything you can to identify hazards before they cause harm?

As an employer, you are legally responsible for the safety of your employees, so keeping up to date with health and safety hazards is imperative. These are some common hazards which, if correctly identified, can help to avoid workplace accidents:

- Chemical Hazards
- Biological hazards
- Physical hazards
- Ergonomic hazards

Health and safety checklist template

- **Assign a health and safety representative**

Whether it be yourself or a member of your staff, it is imperative to assign a competent person with the necessary knowledge and skills to take charge of health and safety. Suitable training should be given free of charge and within work hours. If your industry is particularly high-risk, it is worthwhile considering hiring an external specialist to fit the needs of your business.

- **Write a health and safety policy**

If you don't already have a health safety policy, then now is the time to create one. It doesn't have to be overly complicated, and we can support you with this if required. Review your policy regularly and make changes accordingly, especially if there are any major changes in work procedures or new equipment.

- **Use suitable training methods**

Providing appropriate training based on your specified industry; for example, basic office training can easily be carried out in a meeting room or via an online learning portal. However, for more complex involved training, such as working at heights and using heavy machinery, guided instruction and on-the-job training is suitable. It is important training is easy to understand and an appropriate amount of time is spent delivering the training.

- **Provide adequate workplace facilities**

Ensuring a safe environment for your employees also includes providing sanitary conditions in their work environment. You are required to provide toilets, hand basins and soap and somewhere to rest of an acceptable standard. Work and rest areas

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must be appropriately ventilated and a reasonable temperature maintained. If there are roles which require specialist training, you must provide a changing area.

• Appoint a first aid specialist

Consider sending a trusted staff member on a first aid training course. As well as being responsible for contacting emergency services when necessary and delivering basic first aid, they will also need to remember to keep the first aid kit topped up and could also oversee putting up health and safety posters to promote safety culture day to day.

• Ensure you have the correct insurance provisions

You have a legal obligation to have employers' liability insurance; if you do not do this, you can receive hefty daily fines until the correct insurance is put in place. The only potential exceptions to having employers' liability insurance apply if you have no employees or are a family business and all your employees are closely related to you. For more information, you should refer to the Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969.

• Carry out health and safety checklist

We have provided our handy health and safety checklist template, which will help you identify any risk factors and highlight where you need to implement more sufficient measures to keep your staff from harm.

• Ensure health and safety for remote workers

By law, employers must conduct a risk assessment of employees' working environments, including working from home. You can request that employees carry out a self-assessment of their remote workspace and equipment to ensure awareness of potential risks and help identify any measures required to minimise risk.