

# Section 1

## Introduction to Health and Safety



**After completing this section, the learner will be able to:**



Describe the basic principles underpinning health and safety, to include the concepts of prevention of risks and protection against hazards.



Define both employer and employee responsibilities for a familiar work or learning environment with regard to health and safety and accident prevention by referring to appropriate health and safety legislation for Ireland.



## **Introduction to health and safety**

### **Vocabulary**

Look up explanations for the keywords below.

<b>access</b>	<b>act</b>	<b>article</b>	<b>assessment</b>
<b>bona fide</b>	<b>communicate</b>	<b>consultants</b>	<b>consultation</b>
<b>consultation</b>	<b>continuous improvement</b>	<b>contravene</b>	<b>contravention</b>
<b>control</b>	<b>penalties</b>	<b>duty holders</b>	<b>egress</b>
<b>eliminate</b>	<b>emergency</b>	<b>enforcement action</b>	<b>evacuation</b>
<b>evaluate</b>	<b>hazards</b>	<b>improvement notice</b>	<b>injury</b>
<b>inspector</b>	<b>law</b>	<b>legislation</b>	<b>minimise</b>
<b>occurrences</b>	<b>policy</b>	<b>procedures</b>	<b>prohibition notice</b>
<b>proportionate</b>	<b>prosecutions</b>	<b>risk assessment</b>	<b>risks</b>

#### **Abbreviations**

**PPE** = Personal Protective Equipment

**HSA** = Health and Safety Authority



## Introduction to health and safety

Have you or any of your colleagues ever experienced an accident in the workplace? Discuss the following.

- ✓ What happened?
- ✓ Who came to the scene?
- ✓ What were the effects of the accident?
- ✓ Were there any changes in work practices as a result?

In this section of the manual, the following topics will be discussed-

- ✓ Health and safety legislation in Ireland
- ✓ Employers and the law
- ✓ Responsibilities of employers and employees
- ✓ Importance of consultation
- ✓ Health and safety personnel
- ✓ The role of the HSA

### Health and safety legislation in Ireland



**Two main pieces** of legislation cover general safety, health and welfare in Ireland.

- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 takes a preventative approach to accidents and ill health at work and identifies responsibilities. It makes it clear that **everybody** is responsible for health and safety in the workplace (*for example, employers, employees, suppliers or contractors*). It sets out rights and obligations as well as fines and penalties.

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 contain specific workplace health and safety laws.

## Employers and the law



Employers are required to manage safety and health in the workplace and to ensure proper welfare facilities. This is in order to prevent accidents and ill-health. Welfare facilities include drinking water, clean toilets, warm/hot washing water and soap, and clean canteen facilities.

Controlling dangers at work is as important as any other task. The employer needs to recognise the problem, know enough about it, and decide what solutions are needed.

Under the law, employers have to:

- identify hazards
- carry out a risk assessment
- prepare a written safety statement
- communicate risks and controls.

All these duties have a practical purpose. They help employers and other people who are responsible to manage employees' safety and health. They also help get the balance right between safety and health problems and their solutions.

All safety measures must be:

- proportionate to the real risks involved
- adequate to eliminate, control or minimise the risk of injury.



## Responsibilities of employers and employees

### Activity



Take a minute to list what you think are some responsibilities of employers and employees in relation to health and safety.

Employers	Employees
Provide personal protective equipment	Inform management of new hazards

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### Activity



On the HSA website ([www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie)) look at the following:

- ✓ Safety Toolkit and Short Guide to General Application Regulations 2007 Small Business Edition (2008)
- ✓ Workplace Health Toolkit for Small Businesses (2010)
- ✓ Guide to the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005
- ✓ A Short Guide to The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005

## Employer responsibilities

It is very important that employers ensure the safety of their employees. Every year many people suffer injury in the workplace. In some cases, the accidents cause death.

In the workplace, the employer is responsible for the following.

Responsibility	Details
<b>Workplace</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Provide and maintain a safe workplace (<i>including machinery and equipment</i>)</li><li>✓ Ensure safe access and exit</li><li>✓ Use safe design and operation</li></ul>
<b>Work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Ensure the safety, health and welfare of employees</li><li>✓ Prevent improper conduct or dangerous behaviour</li><li>✓ Make sure that safety procedures are in writing</li><li>✓ Manage the process of continuous improvement</li></ul>
<b>Risks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Prepare a safety statement and update it regularly</li><li>✓ Ensure that all risks are assessed and implement controls from this risk assessment</li><li>✓ Ensure that work is adapted to each individual</li><li>✓ Provide training and instruction as required</li><li>✓ Even where PPE is used make sure that hazards are dealt with</li></ul>
<b>Welfare facilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Provide and maintain proper welfare facilities for employees</li><li>✓ Provide:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Drinking water</li><li>○ Clean toilet</li><li>○ Warm/ hot washing-water and soap</li><li>○ Clean canteen facilities</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>Emergency procedures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Prepare and regularly update emergency procedures</li><li>✓ Include an evacuation plan</li><li>✓ Clearly label all evacuation routes</li><li>✓ Rehearse the evacuation plan: learn from rehearsals</li></ul>
<b>Training and information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Provide appropriate training, information and supervision that enables employees to perform their duties safely</li><li>✓ Provide demonstrations where required (<i>for example, how to properly insert a pair of ear-plugs</i>)</li><li>✓ Ensure information is easily understood by using simple language and by taking reading levels into account</li></ul>
<b>Serious incidents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Report accidents that result in over 3-days' absence</li><li>✓ Report dangerous occurrences such as explosions or serious fires to the HAS</li></ul>

Dangerous occurrences can be reported online at [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie). If the incident is very serious, call the HSA's Workplace Contact Unit (WCU) on 1890 289 389.

## Employee responsibilities

It is important to always be alert when it comes to health and safety. Some jobs are obviously more dangerous than others, but accidents can happen in any workplace. The best policy is always to **prevent accidents occurring in the first place**. Follow workplace rules and these guidelines.

Responsibility	Details
<b>Cooperate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Co-operate with your employer and fellow employees</li><li>✓ Follow reasonable instructions</li></ul>
<b>Don't take chances</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Do not take chances with your life or that of your colleagues</li><li>✓ If something doesn't seem safe it probably isn't</li><li>✓ Avoid horseplay or messing around at all times</li></ul>
<b>Safe work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Make sure you are clear of your safety responsibilities: if you have any doubt, consult your manager</li><li>✓ Take appropriate breaks</li><li>✓ Ensure you comply with all relevant safety and health laws</li><li>✓ Never be intoxicated in the workplace to the extent that you may endanger your own or others' safety</li><li>✓ Do not engage in improper conduct or behaviour</li></ul>
<b>Raise concerns</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Report any near-misses</li><li>✓ Report horseplay if it occurs</li><li>✓ Report any dangerous equipment</li></ul>
<b>Safety equipment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Do not interfere with or misuse safety equipment</li><li>✓ Report missing or faulty equipment</li></ul>
<b>Equipment use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Use equipment correctly</li><li>✓ Pay attention</li><li>✓ Ensure you know how to use equipment</li><li>✓ Look for training and instructions if needed</li></ul>
<b>Training and information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Complete required training</li><li>✓ Pay attention at training</li><li>✓ Report any further training needed</li><li>✓ Read the company safety statement</li></ul>
<b>PPE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Use PPE and clothing provided</li><li>✓ Report defective equipment and get replacements</li><li>✓ Ask for demonstrations if needed</li></ul>



## Importance of consultation

Health and safety must include **two-way consultation** between an employer and his/her employees.



To help develop sound policies and good workplace practices the HSA work with various advisory committees and task forces that focus on specific occupations or hazards.

The law requires employees to cooperate with the employer in safety-management. Equally, every employer must consult employees, their safety representatives or both on the following.

- ✓ Any measure which may affect safety, health and welfare
- ✓ Hazard identification and risk assessment
- ✓ Preparing the safety statement
- ✓ Information that needs to be provided
- ✓ Training
- ✓ Planning and introducing new technologies in the workplace

### Activity



Find out if you have a consultation process about health and safety at your workplace.



## Health and safety personnel



The important health and safety personnel in the workplace are:

- Safety officer
- Safety representative

### The safety officer

The employer may decide to appoint a safety officer to manage health and safety and act on his/her behalf in relation to health and safety issues. However, responsibility for health and safety **always rests with the employer**.

The safety officer has the right to:

- ✓ regularly review the safety statement
- ✓ make sure workplace safety audits take place
- ✓ arrange health and safety training for employees
- ✓ hold regular staff and management briefings
- ✓ organise and record fire drills
- ✓ investigate accidents
- ✓ report all accidents and dangerous occurrences to management
- ✓ consult with the HSA when clarification is needed
- ✓ consult with health and safety consultants on behalf of the company.

### The safety representative

Employees are entitled to select a safety representative. The safety representative's role is to represent them on safety and health matters. A safety representative has the right to:

- ✓ immediately inspect where an accident, dangerous occurrence or risk to the safety, health and welfare of any person has occurred or is present
- ✓ investigate accidents and dangerous occurrences
- ✓ investigate any complaints made by an employee about safety, health and welfare at work
- ✓ accompany an inspector carrying out an inspection
- ✓ get advice from inspectors on safety, health and welfare in the workplace
- ✓ make representations to the employer on safety, health and welfare at the workplace
- ✓ receive training by the employer.

It is against the law for an employer to penalise (*or threaten to penalise*) an employee for carrying out their duties as a safety representative.

## Activity



Read the statements below and tick the box to identify if the statement is made by the safety representative or the safety officer? The first one has been ticked already.

Statement	Safety representative	Safety officer
'I reviewed the safety statement.'		✓
'My employer pays for my training.'		
'I can make representations to the company on behalf of the employees.'		
'I am appointed by the employer.'		
'I organise the company fire drills.'		
'I am elected by the employees.'		
'I monitor health and safety for the company.'		
'I am the voice of the employees.'		

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## The role of the HSA



The HSA is the national statutory body responsible for enforcing workplace safety and health law. It deals with every type and size of workplace.

### What is the HSA's main responsibility?

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) has overall responsibility for **administering** and **enforcing** health and safety at work in Ireland.

### What are the main functions of the HSA?

The main functions of the HSA are the following.

- Monitor compliance with legislation at the workplace
- Take enforcement action (including prosecutions) when necessary
- Inspect all places of work and monitor compliance with the laws
- Investigate serious accidents, causes of ill-health and complaints
- Be a centre of information and advice to employers, employees and self-employed on all aspects of workplace health and safety
- Promote education, training and research in the field of health and safety

A wide range of activities falls under their responsibility.

- Promote good standards of health and safety at work
- Inspect all places of work and monitor compliance with health and safety laws
- Investigate accidents and complaints
- Undertake and sponsor research on health and safety at work
- Develop and publish codes of practice, guidance and information documents
- Provide an information service during office hours
- Develop new laws and standards on health and safety at work

## Activity



The HSA website is [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie). Under the 'About us' tab, find out the aim of the HSA. Write it here.

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## Activity



1. What does HSA stand for?

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2. List two functions of the HSA.

- a. 

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- b. 

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3. Explain briefly what the following legislation covers.

### **Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005**

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### **Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007**

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## Inspectors



HSA inspectors monitor compliance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005. Their primary focus is a **preventative** one – to raise awareness among employers and their employees on their responsibilities under the Act.

The HSA carries out around 16,000 inspections every year. The aim of an inspection is to:

- ensure compliance
- address significant risks
- help employers bring about improvement by identifying strengths and weaknesses and highlighting good and poor practice
- educate and guide employees in health and safety matters
- raise the profile of health and safety at the workplace.

They look at how prepared Irish workplaces are on safety and health management. They look in particular on how the safety statement is prepared and implemented. They also seek to find out how much employers, directors and senior managers are aware of their safety and health responsibilities.

### **Powers of inspectors**

Inspectors from the HSA have a wide range of powers allowing them to do the following:

- Enter a workplace at any time to search, examine and inspect
- Direct a place (*or part of*) to be left undisturbed
- Direct that the safety statement is updated
- Ask for records and information
- Inspect and remove records
- Get assistance and facilities
- Make sure the law is put into operation or procedures to be carried out
- Take any measurements, photographs or recordings
- Install, use and maintain monitoring instruments
- Get risky items dismantled, processed or tested
- Take samples
- Require name and home address

Inspectors use these powers very carefully and enforce the law in a fair, proportionate and consistent way.

All inspectors from the HSA carry official identification and can produce this identification when asked.

Inspectors expect reasonable cooperation to enable them to do their work. It may be an offence to do the following.

- ✓ Prevent or attempt to prevent anyone from answering inspector's questions
- ✓ Prevent, obstruct, or delay an inspector
- ✓ Fail to comply with a request, instruction or direction from an inspector
- ✓ Make a false statement to an inspector
- ✓ Make a false entry in any register, book, notice or other document
- ✓ Produce or allow false or misleading records to be produced
- ✓ Pretend to be an inspector
- ✓ Go against an improvement notice
- ✓ Carry on an activity after it has been prohibited
- ✓ Refuse to produce a record that an inspector requires
- ✓ Give an inspector false or misleading information



## Activity



1. Check either True or False in each case below.

Inspectors have the power to:	True	False
Request that a safety statements is changed		
Take photographs and recordings		
Take risky items apart or away		
Enter any place at any time		
Advise and guide management		

2. Inspectors need cooperation so that they can carry out their work. List five situations where it is an offence to prevent the work of an inspector.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. \_\_\_\_\_





## Introduction to health and safety – Worksheet 1 – Whose responsibilities?

Below is a list of workplace health and safety duties. Which are the responsibility of employers and which of the employee? Rewrite the list in the correct column – Employer or Employee. In some cases, a responsibility may belong in both columns.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remove the risk</li><li>• Provide training</li><li>• Wear suitable protective clothing</li><li>• Identify hazards in the workplace</li><li>• Report an accident or dangerous occurrence to the HAS</li><li>• Explain what should be done in the event of an accident</li><li>• Provide adequate access for emergency services</li><li>• Pay penalties for breaches of health and safety regulations</li><li>• Do not engage in improper conduct such as bullying or horseplay</li><li>• Maintain equipment regularly</li><li>• Use equipment properly</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inform management of a new hazard</li><li>• Provide suitable protective clothing</li><li>• Tell others of new hazards</li><li>• Report defects in the PPE</li><li>• Read the safety labels and refer to safety data sheets when chemicals are involved</li><li>• Do not work under the influence of alcohol or drugs</li><li>• Assess risks in working in the workplace</li><li>• Consider special arrangements for vulnerable workers such as trainees</li><li>• Select a safety representative</li><li>• Hold appropriate fire drills</li><li>• Complete a written safety statement</li></ul> |
|---|---|

Employer	Employee





## Introduction to health and safety – Worksheet 2 – Vocabulary

1. Fill in the missing words in the paragraph below using the words in the box.

responsibility

enforcement

advice

promotes

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) has overall \_\_\_\_\_ for the administration and \_\_\_\_\_ of health and safety at work in Ireland. It is a centre for information and \_\_\_\_\_ to employers, employees and self-employed on all aspects of workplace health and safety. The HSA also \_\_\_\_\_ education, training and research in the field of health and safety.

2. Explain the following terms in your own words.

Advisory committees

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Sound policies

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Risk assessment

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Defective equipment

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## Introduction to health and safety – Worksheet 3 – Word search

Find the 11 words listed in this word search.

o	k	r	r	f	c	x	a	e	g	p	z	s	y
l	p	u	e	e	g	y	t	n	l	e	t	g	s
f	t	v	t	h	c	f	y	p	c	a	n	n	e
b	h	h	a	t	o	i	w	m	t	p	o	i	q
d	z	a	c	l	e	t	f	e	c	c	i	n	k
s	f	z	i	a	j	n	m	f	w	q	t	i	i
z	n	a	n	e	l	e	h	r	o	i	a	a	d
u	d	r	u	h	n	d	m	m	z	z	l	r	x
q	m	d	m	t	m	i	g	a	r	a	s	t	e
t	n	e	m	s	s	e	s	s	a	a	i	u	s
f	m	a	o	o	p	t	u	l	m	w	g	s	d
b	h	f	c	b	k	v	f	p	v	k	e	y	c
k	r	a	s	s	e	s	s	l	y	q	l	u	e
q	e	k	x	s	a	f	e	t	y	v	y	n	a

assess  
assessment  
communicate  
hazard  
health  
identify  
legislation  
officer  
safety  
statement  
training