

FIRST AID: MOUNTING CONCERN IN SCHOOLS

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Abstract: First aid can save lives and prevent minor injuries becoming major ones. Every management employer should ensure that there are adequate and appropriate equipments and facilities for providing first aid in the workplace.

It is for schools to enhance their own policies and procedures, based on an assessment of local needs. Most schools will already have first-aid arrangements in place, and this guidance draws on existing good practice. It provides advice for schools on drawing up first-aid practices and ensuring that they are meeting their promise of a healthy environment and in particular, includes a checklist of issues which schools may find helpful when undertaking a risk assessment.

INTRODUCTION

List of the items which should be in a standard first-aid kit are:

- a suitably stocked first-aid container /box
- Appointed person to take charge of first-aid arrangements
- Information for staff and employees on first-aid arrangements

This minimum provision must be supplemented with a risk assessment to determine any additional provision. First-aid provision must be available at all times while people are on school premises, and also off the premises whilst on school visits.

FIRST AID IN SCHOOLS - WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

a) The Management/authorities

It is a moral and legal duty of the management to take care of the health and safety of their staff, employees and anyone else on the premises. In schools this includes responsibility for the head of the institution and teachers, non-teaching staff, pupils and visitors. Schools should have the health and safety policy in place. This should include arrangements for first aid, based on a risk assessment of the school, and should cover:

- Numbers of first aiders / appointed persons;
- Numbers and locations of first-aid containers;
- Arrangements for off-site activities/trips;
- Out of school hour's arrangements e.g boarding houses, annual day, sports day, other events.

It is the management's responsibility to make sure that the all requirements for provision of first aiders are met, that appropriate training is provided and recommended procedures are followed. The management should be satisfied that the training given to the staff is sufficient and ensure their understanding, confidence and expertise.

b) The Head of the Institution - Principal

The head of the institution is responsible for putting the policy into practice and for developing detailed procedures. The head of the institution should also make sure that parents are aware of the school's health and safety policies, including arrangements for first aid.

c) Teachers and Other School Staff

Teachers' conditions of employment do not include giving first aid, although any member of staff may volunteer to undertake these tasks. Teachers and other staff in charge of pupils are expected to use their best endeavours at all times, particularly in emergencies, to secure the welfare of the pupils at the school in the same

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way that parents might be expected to act towards their children. The head of the institution must arrange adequate and appropriate training and guidance for staff who volunteer to be first aiders/appointed persons.

WHO IS AN APPOINTED PERSON AND WHAT ARE HIS MAIN DUTIES?

An appointed person is someone who:

- Takes charge when someone is injured or becomes ill;
- Looks after the first-aid equipment e. g. restocking the first-aid container;
- Ensures that an ambulance or other professional medical help is summoned when appropriate.

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- What to do in an emergency;
- Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR);
- First aid for the unconscious casualty;
- First aid for the wounded or bleeding.

At school, the main duties of a first aider are to:

- Give immediate help to casualties with common injuries or illnesses and those arising from specific hazards at school;
- When necessary, ensure that an ambulance or other professional medical help is called.

Emergency first-aid training should help an appointed person cope with an emergency and improve their competence and confidence.

First Aid - What do Schools Need to do?

- Provide adequate and appropriate equipment, facilities and qualified first aid personnel.
- Make suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to the health and safety of their staff at work, and

others who may be affected by their undertaking.

- To identify what measures they need to take to prevent or control these risks.
- The Management and/or head of institution should regularly review the school's first-aid needs (at least annually), and make subsequent changes at the earliest.
- The head of the institution must inform all staff (including those with reading and language difficulties) about the first-aid arrangements. This should include the location of equipment, facilities and first-aid personnel, and the procedures for monitoring and reviewing the school's first-aid needs.
- A simple method of keeping staff and pupils informed is by displaying first-aid notices in staff/common rooms. The information should be clear and easily understood. Including first-aid information in induction programmes will help ensure that new staff and pupils are told about the first-aid arrangements. It is a good practice to include such information in a staff handbook and student's almanac also.

RISK ASSESSMENT OF FIRST-AID NEEDS – WHAT SHOULD SCHOOLS CONSIDER?

Schools normally include staff, pupils and visitors when carrying out risk assessments for first-aid needs.

POINTS TO CONSIDER

a) *Location and size of the school*

• **Is it remote from emergency services?**

It is good practice to inform the local emergency services, in writing, of the school's location and any particular circumstances that may affect access to the school. Size of the school is also important. The governing body/head of institution needs to consider additional first aid provision if there is more than one building, how many first-aid personnel are needed to provide adequate cover on each floor on a split-level site and outlying buildings, and on each site of a split-site school.

• **Are there any specific hazards or risks on the site?**

Hazardous substances such as dangerous tools and machinery or Temporary hazards, such as building or maintenance work, should also be considered and suitable short-term measures must be put in place.



- **Accident statistics**

Accident statistics can indicate the most common injuries, times, locations and activities at a particular site. These can be a useful tool in risk assessment, highlighting areas to concentrate on and tailor first-aid provision to.

- **How many first-aid personnel are required?**

There are no rules on exact numbers. Management has to make a judgement based on its own circumstances and a suitable and sufficient risk assessment. School Authorities should consider the likely risks to students as well as staff and employees, when drawing up policies and deciding on the numbers of first-aid personnel. As a general guide, they recommend that:

- A lower risk place of work (e.g. shops, offices, libraries), with 50-100 employees, should consider having at least one first aider;
- A medium risk place of work (e.g. light engineering and assembly work, food processing) with 100-500 employees or people on campus, should consider having at least one first aider for every 50 employees (or part thereof).
- A high risk place of work (e.g. manufacturing units) with 500-1000 or more employees or people on campus, should consider having at least one first aider for every 50 employees (or part thereof).
- Schools generally fall into the medium risk category**, but some schools or areas of activity may fall into the high risk category. Schools should base their provision on the results of their risk assessment. If there are parts of the school where different levels of risk can be identified, the employer should consider the need to make different levels of provision in different areas/departments.

b) Selection of first aiders

Unless first-aid cover is part of a member of staff's contract of employment, people who agree to become first-aiders do so, on a **voluntary basis**. When selecting first aiders, school authorities should consider the individual's:

1. A proactive interest in Health Education.
2. Learn new skills like Reliability and Communication skills, Aptitude and ability to absorb new knowledge

3. Ability to cope with stressful and physically demanding emergency procedures and situations.
4. Must be readily available and accessible

c) Contacting first-aid personnel

Do all school staff know how to contact a first aider? Are there agreed procedures in place if an emergency occurs in an isolated area, e.g. on the playing field? Governing bodies/head of institutions should consider how best to let everyone know the school's first-aid arrangements. Procedures need to be in place that are known, understood and accepted by all. Information should be given about the location of first-aid equipment, facilities and personnel. First-aid notices should be displayed which are clear and easily understood by all.

First Aid Training: Procedures and Refreshers

Training courses cover a range of first aid competencies. The school should arrange appropriate training for their first-aid personnel. Technical organisations/Hospitals/Health Education providers will often tailor courses specifically to schools' needs. It is helpful to let the training organisation know in advance of any particular areas that should be covered. School authorities should arrange refresher trainings and retesting of competence to the First Aiders. Schools should keep a record of the First Aiders and their training updates.

First-Aid Materials, Equipment and First Aid Facilities

School authorities must provide the proper materials, equipment and facilities at all times. First-aid equipment must be clearly labelled and easily accessible.

- **How many first-aid boxes should a school have?**

Every school should provide at least one fully stocked first-aid container for each site. The assessment of a school's first-aid needs should include the number of first-aid containers. Additional first-aid containers will be needed for split-sites/levels, distant sports fields or playgrounds, any other high risk areas and any offsite activities.

The sitting of first-aid boxes is a crucial element in the school's policy and should be given careful consideration. If possible, first-aid containers should be kept near to hand washing facilities.



- **Contents of a first-aid container (Refer to Annexure VII)**
- **First-Aid containers for travel**
Before undertaking any off-site activities, the head of institution should assess what level of first-aid provision is needed. It is recommended that, where there is no special risk identified, a **minimum** stock of first-aid items for travelling first-aid containers is:
 - A leaflet giving general advice on first aid
 - Six individually wrapped sterile adhesive dressings;
 - One large sterile unmedicated wound dressing - approximately 18cm x 18cm;
 - Two triangular bandages;
 - Two safety pins;
 - Individually wrapped moist cleansing wipes;
 - One pair of disposable gloves.

Equivalent or additional items are acceptable. Additional items may be necessary for specialized activities and schools should be geared up for the same

- **School Transport/Public Service Vehicles**
Transport Regulations require that all minibuses and public service vehicles used either as a school vehicle or contract carriage have on board a first-aid container with the following items:
 - Ten antiseptic wipes, foil packaged;
 - One conforming disposable bandage (not less than 7.5 cms wide);
 - Two triangular bandages;
 - One packet of 24 assorted adhesive dressings;
 - Three large sterile unmediated ambulance dressings (not less than 15 cm x 20 cm);
 - Two sterile eye pads, with attachments;
 - Twelve assorted safety pins;
 - One pair of rustless blunt-ended scissors.

This first-aid box/container shall be:

- Maintained in a good condition;
- Suitable for the purpose of keeping the items referred to above in good condition;

- Readily available for use; and
- Prominently marked as a first-aid container.

HYGIENE / INFECTION CONTROL

All staff should take precautions to avoid infection and must follow basic hygiene procedures. Staff should have access to single-use disposable gloves and hand washing facilities, and should take care when dealing with blood or other body fluids and disposing of dressings or equipment.

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