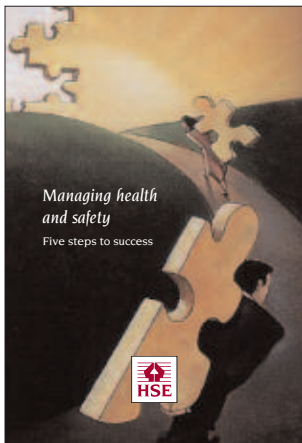


Managing health and safety

Five steps to success



This is a web-friendly version of leaflet INDG275, reprinted 08/08

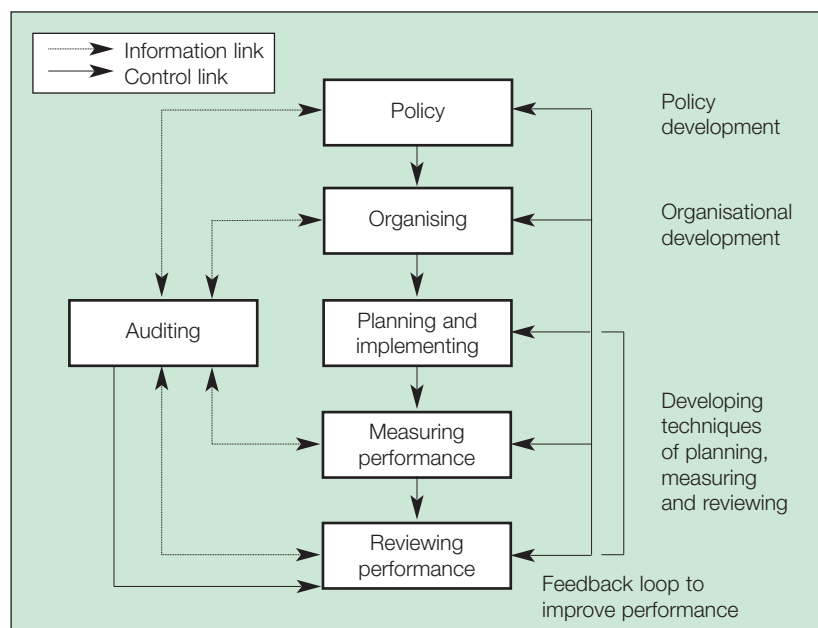
This booklet summarises the key messages of the latest edition of *Successful health and safety management* (HSG65) which retains the well received framework for managing health and safety set out in earlier editions, as well as providing improved guidance on:

- planning for health and safety;
- accident and incident investigation;
- health and safety auditing.

This booklet also explains what is involved in good management of health and safety and the cost of getting it wrong.

It is aimed at directors and managers and should also help supervisors, owners of small firms, employee representatives, insurance companies, trade associations and other key players. Many of the messages will be of interest to small and medium-sized firms, who will find further information in *Essentials of health and safety at work* and *Five steps to risk assessment* - see page 11 for details.

Key elements of successful health and safety management



Taken from *Successful health and safety management*.

Why manage health and safety?

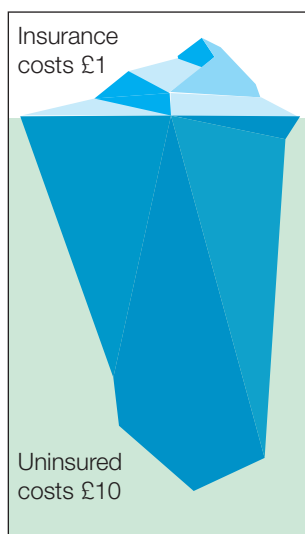
Every working day in Great Britain at least one person is killed and over 6000 are injured at work. Every year three-quarters of a million people take time off work because of what they regard as work-related illness. About 30 million work days are lost as a result.

Accidents and ill health are costly to workers and their families. They can also hurt companies because, in addition to the costs of personal injuries, they may incur far greater costs from damage to property or equipment, and lost production.

With very few exceptions, employers have to have liability insurance cover for injuries and ill health to their employees. They will also have insurance for accidents involving vehicles and possibly third-party and buildings insurance.

However, insurance policies only cover a small proportion of the costs of accidents. Costs not covered by insurance can include:

- sick-pay;
- damage or loss of product and raw materials;
- repairs to plant and equipment;
- overtime working and temporary labour;
- production delays;
- investigation time;
- fines.



HSE studies have found that uninsured costs outweigh those covered by insurance policies. In a wide range of business sizes and activities, the total uninsured losses from day-to-day accidents ranged from twice up to 36 times the total paid in insurance premiums in the same year; the average was around ten times the amount paid in premiums.

So in some cases, you could think of accident costs like an iceberg, with the majority of the losses uninsured and hidden below the water line.

Directors and managers can be held personally responsible for failures to control health and safety. Can you afford such failures? Do *you* really *manage* health and safety?

This booklet shows you how. It lists five steps to success. Following them will help you to keep your staff at work and reduce the costs of injuries, illness, property and equipment damage. You will have fewer stoppages, higher output, and better quality. By complying with the law and avoiding fines you will avoid damaging publicity. You cannot be a 'quality' organisation unless you apply sound management principles to health and safety.

Inspectors visiting your workplace will want to know how you manage health and safety. If an accident occurs, you, your systems, procedures, and employees will come under scrutiny. Will they stand up to examination? Read about the five steps and ask yourself the five questions after each one. Get your managers and staff to discuss them.

Step 1: Set your policy

The same sorts of event that cause injuries and illness can also lead to property damage and interrupt production so you must aim to control all accidental loss. Identifying hazards and assessing risks,* deciding what precautions are needed, putting them in place and checking they are used, protects people, improves quality, and safeguards plant and production.

Your health and safety policy should influence all your activities, including the selection of people, equipment and materials, the way work is done and how you design and provide goods and services. A written statement of your policy and the organisation and arrangements for implementing and monitoring it shows your staff, and anyone else, that hazards have been identified and risks assessed, eliminated or controlled.

*A hazard is something with potential to cause harm. The harm will vary in severity - some hazards may cause death, some serious illness or disability, others only cuts and bruises. Risk is the combination of the severity of harm with the likelihood of it happening.

Ask yourself:

- 1 Do you have a clear policy for health and safety; is it written down?
- 2 What did you achieve in health and safety last year?
- 3 How much are you spending on health and safety and are you getting value for money?
- 4 How much money are you losing by not managing health and safety?
- 5 Does your policy prevent injuries, reduce losses and really affect the way you work? Be honest!

Step 2: Organise your staff

To make your health and safety policy effective you need to get your staff involved and committed. This is often referred to as a 'positive health and safety culture'.

The four 'Cs' of positive health and safety culture

- 1 **Competence:** recruitment, training and advisory support.
- 2 **Control:** allocating responsibilities, securing commitment, instruction and supervision.
- 3 **Co-operation:** between individuals and groups.
- 4 **Communication:** spoken, written and visible.

Competence

- Assess the skills needed to carry out all tasks safely.
- Provide the means to ensure that all employees, including your managers, supervisors and temporary staff, are adequately instructed and trained.
- Ensure that people doing especially dangerous work have the necessary training, experience and other qualities to carry out the work safely.
- Arrange for access to sound advice and help.
- Carry out restructuring or reorganisation to ensure the competence of those taking on new health and safety responsibilities.

Control

- Lead by example: demonstrate your commitment and provide clear direction - let everyone know health and safety is important.
- Identify people responsible for particular health and safety jobs - especially where special expertise is called for, eg doing risk assessments, driving fork-lift trucks.
- Ensure that managers, supervisors and team leaders understand their responsibilities and have the time and resources to carry them out.
- Ensure everyone knows what they must do and how they will be held accountable - set objectives.

Co-operation

- Chair your health and safety committee - if you have one. Consult your staff and their representatives.
- Involve staff in planning and reviewing performance, writing procedures and solving problems.
- Co-ordinate and co-operate with those contractors who work on your premises.

Communication

- Provide information about hazards, risks and preventive measures to employees and contractors working on your premises.
- Discuss health and safety regularly.
- Be 'visible' on health and safety.

Ask yourself:

- 1 Have you allocated responsibilities for health and safety to specific people - are they clear on what they have to do and are they held accountable?
- 2 Do you consult and involve your staff and their representatives effectively?
- 3 Do your staff have sufficient information about the risks they run and the preventive measures?
- 4 Do you have the right levels of expertise? Are your people properly trained?
- 5 Do you need specialist advice from outside and have you arranged to obtain it?

Step 3: Plan and set standards

Planning is the key to ensuring that your health and safety efforts really work. Planning for health and safety involves setting objectives, identifying hazards, assessing risks, implementing standards of performance and developing a positive culture. It is often useful to record your plans in writing. Your planning should provide for:

- identifying hazards and assessing risks, and deciding how they can be eliminated or controlled;
- complying with the health and safety laws that apply to your business;
- agreeing health and safety targets with managers and supervisors;
- a purchasing and supply policy which takes health and safety into account;
- design of tasks, processes, equipment, products and services, safe systems of work;
- procedures to deal with serious and imminent danger;
- co-operation with neighbours, and/or subcontractors;
- setting standards against which performance can be measured.

Standards help to build a positive culture and control risks. They set out what people in your organisation will do to deliver your policy and control risk. They should identify who does what, when and with what result.

Three key points about standards

Standards must be:

- measurable;
- achievable;
- realistic.

Statements such as 'staff must be trained' are difficult to measure if you don't know exactly what 'trained' means and who is to do the work. 'All machines will be guarded' is difficult to achieve if there is no measure of the adequacy of the guarding. Many industry-based standards already exist and you can adopt them where applicable. In other cases you will have to take advice and set your own, preferably referring to numbers, quantities and levels which are seen to be realistic and can be checked. For example:

- completing risk assessments and implementing the controls required;
- maintaining workshop temperatures within a specified range;
- specifying levels of waste, effluent or emissions that are acceptable;
- specifying methods and frequency for checking guards on machines, ergonomic design criteria for tasks and workstations, levels of training;
- arranging to consult staff or their representatives at set intervals;
- monitoring performance in particular ways at set times.

Ask yourself:

- 1 Do you have a health and safety plan?
- 2 Is health and safety always considered before any new work is started?
- 3 Have you identified hazards and assessed risks to your own staff and the public, and set standards for premises, plant, substances, procedures, people and products?
- 4 Do you have a plan to deal with serious or imminent danger, eg fires, process deviations etc?
- 5 Are the standards put in place and risks effectively controlled?

Step 4: Measure your performance

Just like finance, production or sales, you need to measure your health and safety performance to find out if you are being successful. You need to know:

- where you are;
- where you want to be;
- what is the difference - and why.

Active monitoring, before things go wrong, involves regular inspection and checking to ensure that your standards are being implemented and management controls are working. Reactive monitoring, after things go wrong, involves learning from your mistakes, whether they have resulted in injuries and illness, property damage or near misses.

Two key components of monitoring systems

- Active monitoring (before things go wrong). Are you achieving the objectives and standards you set yourself and are they effective?

- Reactive monitoring (after things go wrong). Investigating injuries, cases of illness, property damage and near misses - identifying in each case *why* performance was substandard.

You need to ensure that information from active and reactive monitoring is used to identify situations that create risks, and do something about them. Priority should be given where risks are greatest. Look closely at serious events and those with potential for serious harm. Both require an understanding of the immediate and the underlying causes of events. Investigate and record what happened - find out why. Refer the information to the people with authority to take remedial action, including organisational and policy changes.

Ask yourself:

- 1 Do you know how well you perform in health and safety?
- 2 How do you know if you are meeting your own objectives and standards for health and safety? Are your controls for risks good enough?
- 3 How do you know you are complying with the health and safety laws that affect your business?
- 4 Do your accident investigations get to all the underlying causes - or do they stop when you find the first person who has made a mistake?
- 5 Do you have accurate records of injuries, ill health and accidental loss?

Step 5: Learn from experience - audit and review

Monitoring provides the information to let you review activities and decide how to improve performance. Audits, by your own staff or outsiders, complement monitoring activities by looking to see if your policy, organisation and systems are actually achieving the right results. They tell you about the reliability and effectiveness of your systems. Learn from your experiences. Combine the results from measuring performance with information from audits to improve your approach to health and safety management. Review the effectiveness of your health and safety policy, paying particular attention to:

- the degree of compliance with health and safety performance standards (including legislation);
- areas where standards are absent or inadequate;
- achievement of stated objectives within given time-scales;
- injury, illness and incident data - analyses of immediate and underlying causes, trends and common features.

These indicators will show you where you need to improve.

Ask yourself:

- 1 How do you learn from your mistakes and your successes?
- 2 Do you carry out health and safety audits?
- 3 What action is taken on audit findings?
- 4 Do the audits involve staff at all levels?
- 5 When did you last review your policy and performance?

Conclusion

This approach to managing health and safety is tried and tested. It has strong similarities to quality management systems used by many successful companies. It can help you protect people and control loss. All five steps are fundamental.

How well did you answer the questions about each step? If you think there is room for improvement, *act* today: don't *react* to an accident tomorrow.

Further information

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For information about health and safety ring HSE's Infoline
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This document contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

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