



H & S Guidance - Health and Safety Policy and Statements

INTRODUCTION

Businesses which are successful in achieving high standards of health and safety have **health and safety policies** which contribute to their business performance. Policies should be cost effective and aimed at preserving and developing both human and physical resources within the business whilst also achieving reductions in financial losses and liabilities. The length of a statement will probably be related to the size, extent, complexity or inherent hazards of your business - there is no rule about the length of policy statements. The link with risk assessment should be considered - for example the procedures that need to be written down as a result of risk assessment could be incorporated into the arrangements section of your policy statement. More and more client businesses are asking for details of safety policies to help ensure the safety of their own employees.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires employers of five or more people to have a written statement of health and safety policy. It should be their own statement, specific to their business, setting out their **general policy** for protecting the health and safety of their employees at work and their **organisation** and **arrangements** for putting the policy into practice. The firm's policy must be brought to the notice of all employees and be revised whenever appropriate. Any revision should also be brought to employees' attention. Although a safety policy is legally only concerned with employees' safety, it is good practice to include considerations on the safety of other persons (e.g. contractors, members of the public).

SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

What is meant by a general policy on health and safety?

- A statement of aims with regard to your employees' health and safety.
- A recognition of health and safety as an integral part of your business performance.



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- A commitment to a high level of health and safety performance and to continual cost effective improvement.
- Provision of adequate/appropriate resources to implement the policy.
- Placing the management of health and safety as a prime responsibility of line management.
- Ensuring the understanding, implementation and maintenance of the policy at all levels.
- A commitment to involve and consult employees and to provide appropriate training to ensure competency at all levels of responsibility.
- Carrying out periodic reviews.

What is meant by the organisation for carrying out the policy?

This, essentially, is a specification of the health and safety duties and responsibilities of individuals at every level. Whenever possible key individuals/posts should be named. Employees should see from the statement how they fit into the system and to whom they should go to for advice etc.

What is meant by arrangements for health and safety?

This is a description of the systems and procedures for ensuring employees' health and safety. Hazards could be listed, together with the rules and precautions for avoiding them, e.g.

Fire Safety Display	Screen Equipment
First Aid	Personal Protective Equipment
Accident Reporting	Work Equipment
Electricity	The Workplace
Hazardous Substances	Risk Assessment
Manual Handling	Contractors Safety

Larger firms may have safety manuals (including safety rules, checklists etc.) which could be referred to. Arrangements for instruction, training and supervision should also be covered, as should means of communicating or consulting on health and safety.



PREPARING, REVISING & USING THE POLICY STATEMENT

1. The statement should be written by people within your business, assisted, where necessary, by external help and advice. Staff consultation (formal or otherwise) should be carried out to help ensure the commitment and involvement of the workforce. Sources of information might include trade/employer associations or enforcing authorities (your local Council or the HSE). You may wish to seek the services of a health and safety consultant, if you feel this is warranted or desired. *How you set out the policy statement is up to you - it should be set out in the way you think it will be clearest to your employees, using everyday language. For multi-site operations an 'umbrella' (general) statement could be prepared which could then form the basis for more detailed statements relating to each site.*
2. The policy statement and any revision of it must be brought to the **attention** of all employees; if short enough the provision of a copy might be practicable, otherwise copies may be posted up on notice boards.
3. **Revisions** may be needed in the light of experience, new hazards, organisational changes or new legislation.
4. **Monitoring** the effectiveness of your policy can be carried out using spot checks, checklists/ audit inspections, management reports, accident investigation reports etc.

CHECKLIST -

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY STATEMENTS

Do you employ 5 or more people?

YES/NO

If yes, have you prepared a written statement of your policy with respect to health and safety incorporating the following:

- Statement of general policy

YES/NO



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- Details of the organisation for carrying out the policy

YES/NO

- Details of your arrangements for health and safety?

YES/NO

Does the policy specify who is responsible, and the arrangements for identifying hazards, assessing risks and controlling them?

YES/NO

Do your staff know about the policy and understand it?

YES/NO

Is it up to date?

YES/NO

REFERENCES/FURTHER DETAILS

HSE Guidance on preparing an H&S Policy

Booklet HS(G)65 - Successful health and safety management.
ISBN 0 7176 1276 7. (HSE)

British Standard BS8800: 1996 - Guide to occupational health and safety management systems