

FIRST AID AT WORK

What is First Aid?

First aid is the immediate care given to a person who is injured or who suddenly becomes ill. It can range from cleaning a cut and applying a bandage to helping someone who is choking or having a heart attack.

Why is First Aid Important?

First aid is an essential part of your company's emergency response system and overall health and safety program. Think about what could happen if someone at work suddenly stopped breathing and no one knew how to help that person. Or, what if the necessary first aid supplies and equipment weren't available to help an employee who was bleeding heavily or who had been splashed with a corrosive chemical.

Every company will, at some time or another, have to deal with first aid emergencies. Even in workplaces that seem safe, such as stores and offices, many types of emergencies can happen. It is critical to be prepared at all times to quickly and effectively deal with these situations.

Benefits of First Aid

There are many benefits of first aid. First aid can:

- save lives (in the case of seriously injured or ill persons);
- reduce the chance of permanent damage (for example, prompt flushing of the eyes with water after a chemical splash can prevent blindness) help prevent an injury from becoming more serious (for example, cleaning and bandaging a cut can help prevent infection and further problems);

- minimize the length and extent of medical treatment;
- reduce lost time from work.

Training employees in first aid also has its benefits. For example, research shows that people trained in first aid have fewer and less severe accidents, both on and off the job, than untrained people.

What the law says

It not only makes good sense to provide first aid facilities and training in the workplace, it's the law. In Ontario, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)* contain regulations relating to first aid.

Ontario Workplace Safety and Insurance Act: R.R.O. 1101/90 respecting First Aid Requirements

Here is a list of what this regulation requires the employer to do:

- Provide and maintain first aid equipment, facilities, and trained first aiders in the workplace. The specific requirements depend on the number of workers employed in any one shift and the type of work being done. Consult the regulations for the minimum requirements that apply to your workplace.
- Post the WSIB's "In Case of Injury" Poster in a place or places where all workers can see it. (Known as Form 82, this poster outlines the legal responsibilities and obligations of both the employer and worker when an injury or illness happens on the job).

- Make sure first aid is given immediately.
- Make sure there is a record of the first aid treatment or any advice given to an employee.
- Complete and give Form 156 to the employee (“Treatment Memorandum”) if more than first aid treatment or advice is needed.
- Provide immediate transportation to a hospital, doctor, or the employee’s home.
- Submit a Form 7 to the WSIB within three days of learning of an accident. This form is also known as “Employer’s Report of Accidental Injury/Industrial Disease.”

It is the duty of the employees to:

- get first aid immediately;
- notify the employer immediately of any injury or possible onset of a work-related illness;
- choose their own doctor;
- complete and promptly return all WSIB forms.

Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario

The Regulation for Industrial Establishments

(R.R.O. 851/90) has a number of sections that deal with first aid either in general terms, or in relation to a specific hazard. They are:

- s. 124: Eyewash fountains must be provided where a worker is exposed to a potential hazard of injury to the eyes due to contact with a biological or chemical substance.
- s. 125: A quick acting deluge shower must be provided where a worker is exposed to a potential hazard of injury to the skin due to contact with a substance.
- s. 130: A worker who may be exposed to a biological, chemical or physical agent that may endanger the worker’s safety or health, must be trained, among other things in proper emergency measures and procedures.

The Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) Regulation

(R.R.O. 860/90) also has sections that relate to first aid: s. 7: Among other things, employees must be trained in first aid measures in case they inhale or swallow a hazardous material or get it on their skin or in their eyes. First aid measures are listed on both the supplier label of a hazardous product and the corresponding Material Safety Data Sheet.

Questions and Answers about the First Aid Regulation

What is a first aid station and how does it differ from a first aid room?

A first aid station is required in companies where there are less than 200 employees during anyone shift. In order to meet the requirements of Regulation 1101/90, a first aid station must contain a first aid box and a notice board. (For more information about first aid boxes, see below). The notice board must display:

- WSIB Form 82 (“In Case of Injury” Poster);
- The valid first aid certificates of the trained workers on duty;
- An inspection card with spaces for recording inspection dates and the signature of the person doing the inspection.

A first aid room is required when there are 200 or more workers on any one shift. The requirements for what a first aid room must contain are more extensive than for a first aid station. For the specifics, consult Section 11 of the regulation. Remember, these are minimum requirements only. Your company may want to exceed the requirements for what a first aid station or room must contain because of:

- the specific hazards in your workplace;
- the size of your workplace;
- your location (for example, if your company is in a remote area where it would take a long time to get someone to the hospital, it may want to consider additional equipment and supplies, such as oxygen therapy equipment and mechanical ventilators).

How many first aid stations do we need and where should they be located?

The regulation states that “first aid stations shall be so located as to be easily accessible for the prompt treatment of any worker at all times when work is in progress.” [Reg. 1101, s. 1(3)] It also states that when a first aid room is not easily accessible, an additional first aid room or station must be established (Reg.1101, s.12).

One often used formula says that first aid stations should be accessible within a two-minute walk from anywhere in the workplace. That means one station may be sufficient for some workplaces. For others, it may be wise to have more. Here are some examples:

- If the workplace is laid out on more than one floor or level, it makes sense to have at least one first aid station on each floor or level.
- If there are a number of particularly hazardous processes in the workplace, it may be most effective to have a first aid station close to each process.
- If your workplace is spread over a large area, it may be necessary to have more than one station in order to meet the two-minute guideline.

What should a first aid box contain?

Sections 8, 9, 10, 11 and 16 of the first aid regulation list the items that must be included in the first aid boxes in workplaces of different types and sizes. But, again, depending on the specific hazards in your workplace and past accident experiences, special or additional equipment may be needed.

How many first aid attendants do we need?

Regulation 1101/90 requires that a first aid station or room be at all times in the charge of a qualified first aid attendant who works in the immediate area. To determine the minimum number of workers that should be trained in first aid, consider the following:

- the number of work shifts (there must be at least one qualified first aider per shift);
- the size of your workplace;
- the potential for the loss of trained first aiders due to retirements, transfers, vacations, illnesses, parental leaves, etc.
- In a workplace such as a farm, keep and maintain an appropriate first aid kit on each major piece of farm equipment, truck, and automobile. Also, keep and maintain appropriate first aid kits in the barn, shop, and home.

Many advocate going far beyond the minimum number of first aid attendants required. For example, one formula recommends that 10 percent of the workforce be trained as first aiders. Another formula suggests employers allow for two trained first aiders per shift per station. Some even recommend training all employees or as many as possible.

First Aid Training for Workers

First aid training (and re-training) should be provided by a training organization that has been recognized by the WSIB. Refer to the WSIB website, in the employer section, for a list of approved first aid trainers.

Note: it is wise to put together a list of the first aid attendants in your workplace and the dates on which their first aid certificates expire. In this way, your company can make the necessary arrangements for re-training before certificates become invalid.

Checklist for inspecting your first aid facilities

This is a sample checklist. Modify it to suit your company's needs

First Aid Stations and Rooms	Yes	No	Comments
Is each station and room at all times in the charge of a worker who holds a valid first aid certificate and works in the immediate area?			
Are stations and rooms easily accessible at all times when work is in progress?			
Do employees know where first aid stations and rooms are located?			
Used only for the intended purpose?			
Clean?			
Are the telephone numbers of the first aider, doctor, and ambulance posted in a noticeable location at each station? Are they accurate?			
Are valid first aid certificates posted?			
Equipment and Supplies			
Do first aid boxes and rooms contain the minimum supplies, equipment and furnishing as required by the first aid regulation?			
Are first aid boxes large enough so that each item is in plain view and easily accessible?			
Are supplies properly maintained? Prominently displayed? Clean? Dry? Accessible? Ready for immediate use?			
Are first aid boxes inspected at least 4 times a year?			
Is there an inspection card for each first aid box with the date of the most recent inspection and the signature of the person who did the inspection?			
Records of First Aid Treatment			
Are records of first aid treatment properly kept? Well maintained?			
Are records periodically reviewed to determine any trends in workplace accidents?			

Initials of person doing inspection: _____

Date: _____

Resources

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

www.wsib.on.ca

For copies of the First Aid Regulation 1101/90,
call or write:

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)

200 Front St. W.
Toronto, Ont. M5V 3J1

(416) 344-4078

For copies of WSIB Form 82 and others forms,
contact the WSIB office nearest you.

For general inquires, call:

(416) 344-1000

1-800-387-0750

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