



## **POLICIES FACT SHEET**

The health and safety policy is both a legal requirement and the cornerstone of health and safety in the workplace. It defines the overall approach and commitment to health and safety within the organisation in terms of responsibilities and practical arrangements.

Section 2 (3) of the Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974 places a duty on all employers to prepare and keep revised a written statement of health and safety policy. When there are fewer than 5 employees there is no requirement to have the policy in writing. This general duty is reinforced by Regulation 5 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 which requires that every employer makes such arrangements as are appropriate for the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of the necessary preventative and protective measures.

An organisation's health and safety policy must be brought to the attention of all employees in order to comply with the general duty to ensure all employees are fully aware of the organisation and arrangements for health and safety relating to their particular situations. It therefore also requires training, instruction and communicating requirements to be put in place.

A health and safety policy is a comprehensive statement of how an organisation deals with health and safety issues. In order to achieve this, the policy should consist of three main parts;

1. A general statement of intent – the organisations overall philosophy, a declaration by the CEO (or equivalent) and the setting of aims and objectives.
2. Roles and responsibilities of individuals – outline the chain of command, identify the roles and responsibilities for individual staff or groups.
3. Arrangements, systems and procedures – stating the practical arrangements by which the general policy is effectively implemented.

An organisation's health and safety policy should be subject to regular review as part of the arrangements for overall planning and organising. The object of a review is to identify and resolve any deficiencies or outdated information. Changes to an organisation's structure, premises, methods of work or the product or service it provides should all trigger a review of the policy. It is good practice to review a health and safety policy at least annually even if significant changes have not taken place.

Although an organisations health and safety policy is the key policy for maintaining a safe and health workplace a variety of other policies may be introduced to deal with specific subject areas. These are likely to be referred to within the overall health and safety policy and can include subjects such as drugs, alcohol and smoking, working at height and lone working. These policies should be written in such a way as to convey an unequivocal message to employees as to what is expected of them in the workplace and how the organisation will assist, train and monitor employees to maintain compliance with the policy.