

# Think about health and safety

Supporting MSPs in their work



Produced by the Institution of  
Occupational Safety and Health in  
association with the Scottish Parliament

# Who are we?

The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) is the world's biggest professional health and safety organisation. With more than 39,000 members, we play a vital role in providing advice to both public and private sector employers on effectively managing health and safety. IOSH has charitable status, is incorporated by Royal Charter, and has over 12,000 Chartered Safety and Health Practitioners.

Chartered Members develop strategies to cut down injury and ill health. This not only helps to prevent unnecessary suffering, but also increases profit margins and competitiveness and, in the public sector, frees up resources and leads to better services.

If you'd like to learn more about IOSH, or are interested in supporting one of our campaigns, please call our Communications team on 0116 257 3189.

The information contained in this booklet isn't intended to be exhaustive and should be used as a guide only. If you have any concerns or queries, feel free to consult the Scottish Parliament's health and safety adviser on 0131 348 6917 or the fire safety adviser on 0131 348 6915.

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# Practical guidance for busy people

As an MSP, your time is precious and the work you do is important to the electorate at large and your local community. Not only do you have the same pressures as someone running a business, you also have a high profile, a packed diary and are in the media spotlight. But you still have the same responsibilities for health and safety as your counterparts in industry.

For the most part, good health and safety isn't about party politics or paperwork – it's about practical action aimed at protecting people. The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health has worked with the Scottish Parliament to produce this simple, pragmatic guide. I'm sure that you'll find the uncomplicated advice useful in helping you to consider the risks faced by you and your team.

It's no coincidence that organisations with an excellent safety record are also the most efficient – the operational discipline which delivers great safety also delivers efficiency.

Strong leadership and competent advice are what's needed to achieve good health and safety. If you provide the first, we'll help with the second.

## **Rob Strange OBE**

Chief Executive, Institution of Occupational Safety and Health

IOSH is pleased to acknowledge the co-operation and assistance of the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives in preparing this guidance

I'm pleased to introduce this useful booklet, prepared by the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health for Members of the Scottish Parliament.

It sets out practical guidance on health and safety matters specifically for MSPs, both at Parliament and in your local offices. It gives important advice on office health and safety as well as suggestions for improving your personal safety. It explains the aspects of law that you need to know to protect yourself, your employees and others you interact with.

The information in *Think about health and safety* is presented in an easy-to-use format with a checklist of things to consider when planning meetings or surgeries. It also offers guidance on areas including fire, office layout, first aid and electrical equipment. There are even tips on travel arrangements.

I hope that you find this guidance valuable and that it contributes to better health and safety risk management for you and your staff.

## **Paul Grice**

Clerk/Chief Executive, Scottish Parliament

# Think about health and safety

**We know that as an MSP, you have a huge range of concerns and responsibilities to juggle. But taking a little time to think about how you and your support team work will be well worth doing. After all, we're talking about your most valuable 'resource' – people.**

In this booklet, we've focused mainly on your life outside Holyrood. At Parliament, you have plenty of access to professional support. Your office is set up for you by the facilities management team, and you can call on a number of offices within the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body for advice and back-up, from health checks through medical treatment to a range of dedicated safety-related services. But away from Holyrood you may feel less supported.

Whatever your local office set-up – and there really is no such thing as a typical MSP's office – you need to focus on two main issues:

- office health and safety
- personal safety.

Office health and safety isn't rocket science – it's a simple matter of applying some common sense principles to what you do. It doesn't have to eat into your time and resources. This guidance booklet takes you through the basics of what you need to consider.

Personal safety needs a little bit more thought. It's when you're out and about – or in a surgery – that you and members of your team are most vulnerable. We all know the stories about the occasional egg-throwing, but these

embarrassing, relatively harmless incidents – perhaps worth a few column inches – are easily eclipsed by attacks of a more serious nature, thankfully rare. Having the right processes and environment may make all the difference.

## You can make a difference

Health and safety has an unfair reputation as being about red tape and daft decisions. By working with the experts – the health and safety team at Holyrood, IOSH, the Health and Safety Executive and the Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives – you, as an opinion former working at the heart of law-making, can change the way that health and safety is perceived. By developing a sensible, pragmatic approach to the risks that you and your team face, you'll be setting an example of good practice, and helping to explode the myths surrounding health and safety.

## Focusing on the basics

Your major health and safety issues are addressed briefly on each page of this booklet, together with points and questions that should be considered when managing them. Remember there isn't always an easy answer, but looking at the risks involved will at least help you to make informed decisions when you set up or review your local office.

Each page includes a short list of information sources as well as handy reminders about what's available at Parliament.

## The basics in practice

To show you how a couple of the ideas in *Think about health and safety* can be put easily into practice, we've taken a look at the local office set-up of MSP Jim Tolson. Read our findings and recommendations on page 20.

# What is 'occupational safety and health'?

Put simply, occupational safety and health is about protecting people from injury or ill health caused by work.

It's also about making sure that people affected by what you do, or who visit your premises, are considered and protected.

Remember that decent workplace conditions will help your team to work more efficiently and productively, ultimately helping you to do your job more effectively.

As with many other areas – from handling personnel issues to managing money – you need to set up your policies and processes for health and safety, follow them, and check from time to time to make sure that they're working properly. It's important not to lose sight of the main focus – the welfare and productivity of you and your team.

## Think about...

### Who may be affected by my work as an MSP?

- employees
- volunteers
- members of the public
- anyone else – including your family

### Where is my 'workplace'?

- your office at Holyrood
- your constituency office – permanent or temporary
- your home office
- vehicles used for work
- anywhere else visited or used during your work

### Who is responsible for health and safety?

- as the employer, you're responsible, but it's not all down to you to do – it's about delegating responsibly, whether to your office manager, political agent, constituency adviser or other team members

## More info...

- *An introduction to health and safety* (HSE INDG259)
- *Managing health and safety: five steps to success* (HSE INDG275)



### ● Did you know?

In a single year in Scotland, 23 people died at work and over 2,500 sustained a major injury. Over 97,000 people suffered from an illness put down to or made worse by work. Nearly 2.5 million working days were lost because of injuries and ill health.

# What do I need to do?

It really depends on the scale of your team and work. If you have employees, you must have employers' liability insurance and display the certificate in your local office. It's also good practice to keep a detailed record of previous insurance, including old certificates. You must give your staff information about health and safety, either individually (look at the free HSE publication 'Your health and safety – a guide for workers') or by displaying the 'Health and safety law – what you should know' poster, available from HSE Books on 01787 881165.

You also need a way of recording accidents at work – an 'accident book'. You can get a standard record book from HSE Books.

If you employ five or more people, you'll need a written 'health and safety policy' and written 'risk assessments' that focus on significant risks, including fire.

A 'health and safety policy' outlines your commitment and approach to health and safety, who does what, and the arrangements you've made to identify and manage the risks that you and your team face.

'Risk assessment' is about deciding who could be harmed and then judging how likely it is that something will go wrong, and how serious the consequences would be.

Once you've worked out what the risks are and how significant they are, you can concentrate on cutting them out – or at least controlling them.

If you employ fewer than five, you don't need to record what you do formally with a written policy and risk assessments, although it's still a good idea. It makes sense to create a basic health and safety file to keep everything together, such as your policy, guidance leaflets, insurance certificate and risk assessments.

### More info...

- The Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives (Safe and Healthy Working) has useful FAQs and pro formas at [www.healthyworkinglives.com](http://www.healthyworkinglives.com)
- *Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969: a guide for employers* (HSE HSE40)
- *Officewise* (HSE INDG173)
- Office checklist, [www.hse.gov.uk/risk/office.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/office.htm)
- *Five steps to risk assessment* (HSE INDG163)
- Your health and safety – a guide for workers, [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

### Think about...

#### Am I an employer?

- if you have a contract of employment with anyone to carry out work for you, then you're an employer
- even if you have no formal contract, then depending on the degree of control you have over work done, you may still be considered an employer
- if volunteers work on your behalf, they may be considered 'employees' under health and safety law too

#### What insurance should I consider?

- employers' liability insurance
- public liability insurance
- motor vehicle insurance

#### Which documents must I have?

- Health and safety law – what you should know (poster)
- employers' liability insurance certificate
- accident book
- written safety policy (if five or more employees)
- written risk assessments (if five or more employees)

### At Holyrood

The health and safety team and fire safety adviser can give you advice and support on fire action, risk assessments, computer assessments and welfare. Make use of the facilities management helpdesk – call 0131 348 5100 – for health, safety or welfare requests or concerns. There is also a pack of health and safety resources for MSPs in the 'members' resources' section of the Scottish Parliament website.

# What about health and safety law?

Workplace health and safety legislation is 'reserved' under the Scotland Act 1998, although wider responsibility for health and for fire hazards is devolved to Scotland. The Health and Safety Executive works closely with the Scottish Government, particularly in devolved areas of common interest such as health, enterprise and justice.

You must comply with health and safety law – if you don't, you are committing a criminal offence and may be prosecuted. In addition to prosecution, if people are harmed as a result of your activities, you could face a civil claim for compensation. Remember that the poor publicity alone could be extremely damaging.

Remind your employees that they have legal duties to co-operate with you to make sure health and safety requirements are met.

## At Holyrood

As an employer, you need to work with the team at Holyrood to comply with the law. In practice, this means assessing shared risks, following safety measures laid down by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, taking part in safety training and letting the facilities management team know about any defects or hazards. It's worth getting involved in health and safety inspections or attending the health and fire safety committee. Remember that your duties as an employer apply whether or not you're at Holyrood.

## Think about...

What sources of information are available to help me meet the demands of the law?

Get information and advice from the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body health and safety adviser on 0131 348 6917, or fire safety adviser on 0131 348 6915.

The Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives offers free, confidential services to help small businesses:

- advice line: 0800 019 2211
- website: [www.healthyworkinglives.com](http://www.healthyworkinglives.com)

The HSE has plenty of information and guidance:

- infoline: 0845 345 0055
- website: [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk) (for A–Z of free downloadable leaflets go to 'publications')
- books: 01787 881165

Don't forget that you can get advice from your local authority environmental health department or fire and rescue service.

You can also get authoritative information on health and safety from IOSH:

- helpline: 0116 257 3199
- website: [www.iosh.co.uk](http://www.iosh.co.uk)
- books: 01787 249293

## More info...

- [www.hse.gov.uk/scotland](http://www.hse.gov.uk/scotland) – especially the section 'What's different?'
- *Health and safety regulation: a short guide* (HSE HSC13)

# Personal safety and working alone

As an MSP, the chances of you or someone in your team being threatened or attacked – verbally or physically – are going to be higher than the average professional. You're in a public position, perhaps with a high profile. People may come to you with deep-seated issues, problems and concerns – and they may be at the end of their tether.

You and your team members may face threats to your personal safety when out and about, at your local office or at a surgery. Don't assume that physical violence is all you need to worry about – it would be wrong to overlook the effects of violent threats, gestures or language. Serious or persistent verbal abuse or threats can cause long term health damage.

Of course, this is a delicate balancing act – on the one hand, you need to make sure that you and the people who work with and for you are safe, and on the other, you don't want to appear unapproachable or inaccessible to your constituents or other visitors.

For specialist advice and training on security issues and avoiding violence contact the crime prevention section of your local force or the Parliament Police Unit.

When you or members of your team are working alone, then not only will you need to deal with some of the personal security vulnerabilities special to the job, but you may also come across other problems. For example, you need to think about what will happen if someone is ill or suffers an accident when working on their own, whether in the office or somewhere else.

## At Holyrood

If you're concerned about your personal safety, contact the Security Office.

## Think about...

### What do I need to consider when planning meetings and surgeries?

- the setting and environment
- the organisation of the meeting space and furniture – eg is there easy access to a door without passing the visitor?
- whether unauthorised visitors can enter the building
- the arrangements for people waiting to see you
- training to deal with difficult or violent situations
- basic physical security measures
- organising good team support to make sure that no-one is working alone or without back-up – particularly when meeting people

### What measures should I put in place to deal with emergencies?

- a simple procedure for handling suspicious packages
- a simple policy for handling threats, immediate or otherwise

### What should I do to support members of my team when they can't avoid working alone?

- put in place measures to call for help or back-up, eg routinely carrying a mobile phone
- make sure that team members let others know where they are going, and make use of a straightforward 'logging in/off' system
- consider the special risks faced on overseas trips

## More info...

- *Violence at work: a guide for employers* (HSE INDG69)
- *Working alone in safety: controlling the risks of solitary work* (HSE INDG73)
- IOSH's Risk Assessment Routefinder has information on violence and a checklist for dealing with violence:  
[www.ioshroutefinder.co.uk/html/Violence%20at%20Work.html](http://www.ioshroutefinder.co.uk/html/Violence%20at%20Work.html)  
[www.ioshroutefinder.co.uk/PDF/Questionnaire%20-%20Violence%20work.pdf](http://www.ioshroutefinder.co.uk/PDF/Questionnaire%20-%20Violence%20work.pdf)

# Your office

You may have more than one 'workplace' outside Holyrood – a separate office and perhaps ad hoc venues where you hold your surgeries. Each building that you or your staff use in support of your role as an MSP is a place of work.

You need to provide basic facilities for the welfare of your team. You also need to make sure that you offer a safe working environment – emergency evacuations should be top of your list, but there are other important areas to think about too.

## More info...

- Workplace health, safety and welfare: a short guide for managers (HSE INDG244)
- Welfare at work: guidance for employers on welfare provisions (HSE INDG293)
- HSE Office risk assessment tool, [www.hse.gov.uk/risk/office.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/office.htm)

## At Holyrood

The Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body offers induction training, including health and safety and fire training for MSPs and their staff. If you see faulty or damaged equipment or furniture, or dangerous situations, call the helpdesk on 0131 348 5100.

## Think about...

### Are they *my* premises?

- are you the owner/occupier/tenant?
- do others use the building?
- who is 'responsible' for maintenance issues?
- if you share premises with others, is there an evacuation plan for fires or other emergencies, and who is the contact for 'common' issues?

### What do I need to provide for my team?

- toilet and washing facilities, including hot and cold running water
- access to drinking water
- a way of getting hot food and drinks
- somewhere to take breaks

### What about the layout?

- make sure that people can get in and out of the office safely
- consider lighting, ventilation and temperatures – all can have an impact on how people feel when they're working, especially in a high pressure situation
- make sure that there's enough work space and storage

### How accessible is your office?

- consider whether people with disabilities can get in and move around easily

### What about pregnant employees?

- re-evaluate their activities – lifting and carrying will probably be out of the question
- look at the way the desk and other furniture is set up
- consider providing a place to rest or lie down
- keep checking with your employee throughout her pregnancy to make sure that all the right adjustments are made and any problems are taken on board

# Fire

There's always a risk of fire – and it'll be increased in high-rise office blocks.

You must get a formal assessment of your fire risks – it needs to be carried out by a competent person and it should be specific to where you work. Fire risks shouldn't just be considered under your overall risk assessment.

It's important to take steps to prevent the start of fire, make sure there are clear escape routes, and provide equipment to fight a fire *if appropriate*. Only people who've had the right training should use fire extinguishers – generally the best advice is to get out, stay out and call the fire brigade.

It's worth keeping a note of your fire risk assessment, actions taken as a result of it, fire drills and lessons learned from them, fire training, and equipment and systems testing and maintenance. Contact your local fire and rescue service if you need advice or guidance on your local office.

## At Holyrood

You need to work with the team at Holyrood to comply with the law. In practice, this means assessing shared risks, following safety measures laid down by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, taking part in fire safety training and letting the facilities management team know about any defects or fire hazards. Also, consider the needs of visitors and staff with disabilities, using the Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan process. Call the fire safety adviser on 0131 348 6915 for advice.



### • Did you know?

Nearly 9,000 fires broke out in occupied buildings in Scotland in a single recent year.

## Think about...

### What do I do to detect a fire and raise the alarm?

- fit smoke detectors and get them maintained regularly
- if your office is relatively small and contained, you may not need elaborate alarm equipment
- if you do need a full alarm system, make sure that it's regularly tested and that everyone can hear it

### How can I make sure everyone can escape quickly?

- clear ways of escape, including 'personal evacuation plans' to help people with disabilities get out safely
- a fire evacuation procedure
- well-marked fire exits that are kept clear

### How do I prevent fire starting or spreading?

- keep waste to a minimum
- keep potential fuel – eg paper – away from heat sources
- check that flammable substances are stored securely
- keep fire doors closed
- follow 'good housekeeping' principles

### What about fire extinguishers?

- you need enough of the right types of extinguisher (usually water-based and CO<sub>2</sub>)
- get extinguishers inspected annually – and replace them if they've been used

### Do I need to train my team?

- you need to make sure that everyone who works in your premises is aware of the fire evacuation procedure and escape routes, and knows where the fire alarm points are
- you need to make sure that everyone knows when and how to use fire extinguishers

## More info...

- [www.dontgivefireahome.com](http://www.dontgivefireahome.com)
- [www.firelawscotland.com](http://www.firelawscotland.com)
- [www.thefpa.co.uk/Resources/Fire+Safety+Guidance](http://www.thefpa.co.uk/Resources/Fire+Safety+Guidance)

# Electricity

You'll no doubt have numerous pieces of electrical equipment. Remember that computers, photocopiers, printers, kettles, fires, fans, radios and televisions all have the potential to kill or injure.

These everyday pieces of kit are essential for your team to work effectively, but it's vital that your staff know how to use them safely, and that the equipment is looked after to keep it in good working condition.

## Think about...

### What do I need to do to ensure electrical equipment is safe?

- make sure it's checked periodically by a competent person – not an enthusiastic amateur!
- check regularly for signs of burning, overheating or scorch marks
- check regularly for damaged plugs and frayed or damaged cables
- take damaged cables or equipment out of use straight away
- make sure there are enough sockets for the equipment
- make sure that adaptors are safe and not overloaded – the broad 'gang' adaptors are better than the box-shaped ones
- consider fitting residual current devices, which cut off the electricity supply almost instantly if there's a problem
- if members of your team bring their own electrical equipment to your constituency office, get it checked out
- encourage your team to switch off and unplug equipment that's not in use or if the office is unattended

## More info...

- *Maintaining portable electrical equipment in offices and other low risk environments* (HSE INDG236)
- *Electrical safety and you* (HSE INDG231)

## At Holyrood

Fixed electrical installations and portable electrical equipment are routinely inspected for safety. Make sure your staff don't bring in any of their own electrical kit – you can source what you need through the facilities management or business information technology teams.

# Lifting and carrying

Even basic office work will involve some lifting, lowering, pushing and pulling items by hand.

Remember that the health problems known as 'musculoskeletal disorders' – anything from back pain to damaged hand and arm muscles – can be serious, cumulative or even chronic and disabling. Following a few simple rules can make a huge difference.



## • Did you know?

In just one year, 40,000 people in Scotland reported a musculoskeletal health problem caused or made worse by their work.

### At Holyrood

Support services staff are trained in lifting and carrying techniques and can help you with more physically demanding work. Contact the helpdesk on 0131 348 5100 if you need a hand with furniture or other bulky or heavy things.

## Think about...

### What can cause injuries?

- lifting or moving heavy boxes
- lifting or moving machines or equipment
- over-reaching, stretching or twisting
- lifting with a bent back
- repeating an action over and over again
- dropping heavy loads

### What sort of injuries can happen?

- injury to the back, neck or spine
- injuries to arms, wrists, hands or shoulders
- injuries to legs or feet

### What do I need to do?

- look at the risks involved in any physical work
- make sure that lifting and carrying is avoided where possible
- keep the size of loads down
- make sure equipment – eg a trolley – is used if it's needed
- train your team in the right techniques for lifting and moving things
- make sure that any lifting is done by the right people – those with enough strength and capability

## More info...

- Scottish Backs, [www.nhsinform.co.uk/health-zones/scottish-backs.aspx](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk/health-zones/scottish-backs.aspx)
- *Understanding ergonomics at work* (HSE INDG90)
- *Getting to grips with manual handling: a short guide* (HSE INDG143)
- *Aching arms (or RSI) in small businesses* (HSE INDG171)

# Working with computers

Computers may seem harmless but they're likely to be the most common risk to health your staff will come across.

If conditions aren't right, working with computers can cause musculoskeletal disorders – back or neck pain or damaged hand, wrist and arm muscles. These can be serious, cumulative or chronic and disabling. The good news is that with proper planning and awareness they can be easily avoided.

In a nutshell, you need to consider:

- computers
- monitors
- input devices such as the keyboard and mouse
- desks
- chairs
- how the work is organised
- the working environment.

You may also need to focus on foot rests, wrist rests and copy holders.

## Think about...

### If I or my team use computers, what do I need to do?

- provide suitable work furniture and sufficient space
- assess the desk, chair and other equipment to make sure they're appropriate and that the adjustments – from chair height to screen angle – have been used to best effect
- use a system of breaks or task rotation for people who use computers for significant chunks of time
- offer eye tests for people who use computers day in, day out and suffer from eye problems

### If I or my team use laptops, what do I need to do?

- add a full-sized keyboard, mouse and screen if you're using a laptop for long periods
- be aware of posture when using a laptop – it's easy to fall into bad habits, particularly if it's being used in a hotel or car!
- consider the combined weight of a laptop, files and papers when travelling around – you may need a wheeled carrying case

## More info...

- *Working with VDUs* (HSE INDG36)
- The IOSH guide *Out of site, out of mind? Managing office teleworking in the 21st century* is at [www.iosh.co.uk/teleworking](http://www.iosh.co.uk/teleworking)

## At Holyrood

The health and safety team offers guidance on good practice and will give you computer self-assessment forms. The team can also review your computer assessments and help you find solutions when there are problems. Contact the HR team if you need occupational health service support.

# Stress at work

Stress is an increasing cause of occupational ill health and can affect different people in different ways. For some people, a limited amount of pressure can be a good thing, but a great deal of harm can be caused if it becomes excessive or prolonged.

In your environment, stress may be a big issue, so it's worth taking time to think about it.

## More info...

- Work Positive – at [www.healthyworkinglives.com](http://www.healthyworkinglives.com) – helps businesses to tackle stress issues
- Advisers from the Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives offer mental health first aid training – contact the team at [www.healthyworkinglives.com](http://www.healthyworkinglives.com)
- IOSH's Risk Assessment Routefinder has downloadable information on stress: [www.ioshroutefinder.co.uk/html/Wellbeing%20at%20work.html](http://www.ioshroutefinder.co.uk/html/Wellbeing%20at%20work.html)
- IOSH's Occupational Health Toolkit has information and links on stress: [www.ohtoolkit.co.uk](http://www.ohtoolkit.co.uk)
- Free IOSH guidance, *Working well: guidance on promoting health and wellbeing at work*: [www.iosh.co.uk/workingwell](http://www.iosh.co.uk/workingwell)
- HSE's stress management standards can be accessed at [www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm)



## • Did you know?

In Scotland in a single recent year, 38,000 people suffered from stress, depression or anxiety caused or made worse by work.

## Think about...

### What should I look out for?

- whether team members are overburdened
- whether they have enough responsibility to make decisions
- what particular tasks cause pressure
- whether timescales and deadlines for tasks or projects are realistic
- signs of stress – from mood swings to frequent bouts of illness

### How should I communicate with my team?

- keep everyone up to speed on things that affect them
- make sure that responsibilities are clearly defined
- encourage discussion if a member of your team feels stressed

### What should I do if workplace stress is an issue?

- talk to the affected member of the team – try to get to the bottom of the real causes and agree solutions together
- make reasonable changes to the workload, working hours and so on
- talk to others in your team – is the problem widespread? It could be that you need to make broader changes
- check to make sure that things have improved – if not, get professional advice

## At Holyrood

Contact the HR team if you need help from the occupational health advisory service.

# On the road

Every year around a third of all road traffic accidents involve someone at work.

On top of road traffic legislation, health and safety law applies if people drive a vehicle as part of their working day.

## More info...

- *Driving at work: managing work-related road safety* (HSE INDG382)
- RoSPA offers guidance and tools to help with road safety – go to [www.rospa.com/roadsafety/resources/employers/default.aspx](http://www.rospa.com/roadsafety/resources/employers/default.aspx)

## Think about...

### If I or my team drive for work, what do I need to do?

- check your motor vehicle insurance to ensure that it covers use at work
- check your employees' insurance to ensure that it covers use at work
- check your employees have a valid current driving licence – you don't want disqualified drivers using vehicles while working for you!
- make sure that plenty of time is allowed for each journey and encourage people to take rest breaks during long trips – a 15-minute break every two hours is recommended. Try to avoid the worst driving conditions
- consider overnight stops if travelling a long way from home
- discourage people from using a mobile in hands-free mode when driving – it quadruples the risk of a serious crash
- consider alternatives – do you or your colleagues really need to drive? Could you take a train or arrange a conference call?
- if extensive driving is unavoidable, consider arranging defensive or advanced driving courses

### Is the vehicle maintained in good working order?

- make sure the vehicle is suitable for long journeys
- make sure the vehicle is correctly maintained

# Equipment

Any equipment that you provide for your team – from a computer to a paper guillotine – must be safe.

In an office, the dangers aren't going to be anything like those faced on, say, a building, industrial or agricultural site, but that doesn't mean that accidents can't or won't happen.

## Think about...

### What work equipment do I have?

- photocopier
- printer
- scanner
- PC
- laminator
- TV/DVD/video
- filing cabinet
- guillotine
- heaters or fans

### What should I do to reduce risks?

- make sure people are trained to use the equipment and that it is used only as designed
- maintain equipment in good condition and in accordance with manufacturers' instructions
- inspect and, if appropriate, get the equipment tested regularly

### More info...

- *Simple guide to the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (HSE INDG291)*

### At Holyrood

If you or your team see faulty, damaged or dangerous equipment or furniture, call the helpdesk on 0131 348 5100.

# Slips, trips and falls

Slips and trips are the most common cause of major injuries at work. At Holyrood, more than 20 per cent of accidents involve slips, trips or falls. Both your team and visitors to your premises are at risk.

Look at the areas of your workplace where people are likely to walk and consider any potential slip or trip hazards.

Remember that falls from a height needn't be from the top of a building. A tumble from a ladder, or even a chair, can cause serious damage. Make sure the right equipment is used rather than improvising – use stepstools or proper stepladders for higher access. Better still, think about where you store things and try to keep items within easy reach.

## At Holyrood

Encourage your team to report hazards and faults to the helpdesk on 0131 348 5100. Make sure staff report all accidents or near misses – regardless of how minor they may seem – to the health and safety team using form CF005, available on the Scottish Parliament website.

## Think about...

### What can I do to prevent slips or trips?

- make sure the flooring isn't wet or slippery – dry or clean up spillages straightaway
- make sure that uneven or worn carpets or tiles are replaced
- try not to have electrical cables crossing walkways, but where it's unavoidable, secure them with proper covers
- focus on how well the work areas, stairs, hallways, corridors and so on are lit – it can make a huge difference
- make sure there's enough room to work and that everything's kept as tidy as possible

### What could be termed a 'height'?

- any height from which a fall is likely to cause injury
- ladder work

### How can I make things safer?

- store materials at a convenient height
- make sure that the right equipment is available and used
- check that window openings are limited if there's a risk of falling out
- follow 'good housekeeping' principles to keep storage needs to a minimum

## More info...

- *Five steps to risk assessment* (HSE INDG163)
- *Preventing slips and trips at work* (HSE INDG225)
- HSE slip and trip webpages are at [www.hse.gov.uk/slips/information.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/slips/information.htm)

# Hazardous substances and noise

'Hazardous substances' – anything that can cause harm to people who come into contact with them – are used in many workplaces and include materials ranging from cleaning fluids to print toner. Remember that products that are used at home may be covered by legal requirements if used at work.

Some offices can be noisy because of the equipment used in them. Staff shouldn't be exposed to noise levels above 80 dB(A) averaged out over the day, unless the risk of hearing damage is assessed and action is taken (from getting quieter machines to fitting acoustic covers). The 80 dB(A) noise limit is the sound typically made by a normal vacuum cleaner – it's extremely unlikely that you'll regularly find this level in your office.

Remember that as well as the possibly damaging effects on hearing, noisy environments can cause distraction, stress and headaches. This is more likely to be the issue for your team – noisy environments can seriously affect relationships, morale and productivity if they aren't tackled.



## Did you know?

More days are lost through ill health than through accidents, and, if asbestos exposure is included, more people die as a result of workplace ill health than accidents. In a single year in Scotland, over 2 million days were lost due to illness and over 500,000 due to injury.

## Think about...

### If I have hazardous substances on my premises, what do I need to do?

- check if there are less or non-hazardous versions available that can be used as alternatives
- inform your team of the dangers involved in using certain substances, how to use them, how and where to store them, and how to get rid of them safely

### Which machinery generates noise in an office?

- photocopiers
- mail sorting machinery
- printers

### If I have noisy machinery, what should I do?

- if noise levels are excessive – eg if people consistently have to raise their voices to make themselves heard – then you should seek expert advice. Remember that improvements don't have to be complex or costly, though – moving equipment to a different room, changing the layout, using screens, or replacing a problem machine with a smaller, more modern version may do the trick

## More info...

- *COSHH: a brief guide to the regulations* (HSE INDG136)
- *Noise at work: guidance for employers on the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005* (HSE INDG362)

# Accidents and first aid

You'll need to sort out first aid arrangements to cover injury, illness or other emergency.

First look at what level of first aid cover would suit your set-up – 'First aid at work: your questions answered' will help with this. At the very least, you must have a fully stocked first aid kit and ask someone to act as an 'appointed person'. This person can take charge if someone is injured or falls sick, calling an ambulance if necessary. He or she should also maintain the first aid kit. Remember that the 'appointed person' isn't a first-aider – this calls for proper HSE-approved training. It's a good idea to train a member of your team to be a first-aider so that he or she will be able to deal with minor incidents or act as a first line of treatment in cases of more serious problems.

Remember that you'll need to cover situations where your first-aider isn't around, and that an emergency won't necessarily be confined to you or your team – it could be a member of the public. Make sure that you have the right insurance cover, especially if your first-aider may be helping a visitor.

Certain types of injury and occupational ill health must be reported – straightaway by phone and in writing within 10 working days to your local HSE office. Call 0845 300 9923 or visit [www.riddor.gov.uk](http://www.riddor.gov.uk).

## At Holyrood

If you or your team need first aid, contact your nearest first aider. The first aiders are identified by signs on each floor. You can also call the security control room on 0131 348 5333 or ask a security officer. Make sure your team reports accidents or near misses – use form CF005, available on the Scottish Parliament website.

## Think about...

How do I prepare in case someone has a minor injury?

- make sure team members can call on a trained first-aider, or at the very least an 'appointed person' to take charge in an emergency
- provide a fully kitted out first aid box
- remember to make arrangements for when a member of your team is travelling

How do I report and record accidents?

- buy an accident book
- tell your team about the duty to report accidents

Which accidents are reportable? The extensive list includes:

- death or 'major injury'
- fractures other than to fingers, thumbs or toes
- amputation
- dislocation of shoulder, hip, knee or spine
- loss of sight
- electric shock if unconscious or admitted to hospital for more than 24 hours
- any other injury requiring admission to hospital for over 24 hours
- injury resulting in more than three days' off work

## More info...

- *First aid at work: your questions answered* (HSE INDG214)
- *Reduce risks – cut costs* (HSE INDG355)
- *RIDDOR explained* (HSE31)

## A local office in action

Jim Tolson is the former MSP for Dunfermline West. During his candidacy, we visited his office to see how two of the health and safety basics are dealt with. His constituency has an urban and rural mix typical of the area.

The office used by Jim and his staff is situated on the first floor of a commercial unit just outside the centre of Dunfermline. They occupy two private offices along with shared welfare facilities. The team has one part-time and two full-time staff members.

### Fire

Staff are well aware of what to do if a fire starts and the team had put some thought into making sure that people working in and visiting the offices are protected. With only one exit from the premises, staff know that it's important to keep it clear.

We suggested that the team should discuss with the landlord the possibility of fitting an electric fire warning system to provide early warning of fire elsewhere on the premises. We recommended a test and maintenance log for all fire safety assets, including fire safety training records for all staff. We also said that the results of the fire risk assessment each year should be recorded – even if it's just in the office diary.

### Personal safety

Security is taken seriously. The local police have advised the team on personal safety, particularly when dealing with visitors. Staff are aware of how important it is to take the heat out of difficult situations and avoid conflict wherever possible. They use an informal, friendly approach with constituents.

There's a panic button connected to the local police station as a precaution. This reassures the team that they can call on help if they need to, and gives them more confidence. Lone working in the office, at surgeries and on house calls is avoided wherever possible.

### The verdict?

In general, standards at Jim Tolson's constituency base were quite typical of a small, efficiently run office where health and safety is addressed as a matter of common sense. Preparing a policy statement, assessing the bigger risks and recording the significant findings with defined responsibilities represent the next step in improving health and safety at this local office.

## More information

IOSH's Risk Assessment Routefinder is a free resource for SMEs – download it at [www.ioshroutefinder.co.uk](http://www.ioshroutefinder.co.uk).

The Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives aims to improve the health of working age people in Scotland by ensuring healthier and safer workplaces, promoting healthier lifestyles and developing employability. Find out more about its free services at [www.healthyworkinglives.com](http://www.healthyworkinglives.com).  
t 0800 019 2211

Free publications are available from the HSE. We've identified the most relevant booklets and their reference numbers under separate areas. Use the reference code for finding them quickly at [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/index.htm).  
t 01787 881165

You can also call the HSE infoline for help.  
t 0845 345 0055

### Useful web links

There's a huge range of information on health and safety available online, as well as a number of free downloadable tools. These sites are a good starting point:

- [www.iosh.co.uk](http://www.iosh.co.uk) – Institution of Occupational Safety and Health
- [www.iosh.co.uk/branches](http://www.iosh.co.uk/branches) – our branch network, including Edinburgh, North of Scotland and West of Scotland
- [www.hse.gov.uk/scotland/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/scotland/index.htm) – health and safety at work in Scotland
- [www.hse.gov.uk/scotland/partnership.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/scotland/partnership.htm) – information on the Partnership on Health and Safety in Scotland
- [www.healthyworkinglives.com](http://www.healthyworkinglives.com) – Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives
- [www.safestartup.org](http://www.safestartup.org) – basic info and advice for new or small businesses
- [www.rospace.com/workplacesafety/affiliatedgroups/scottishhigherperformers/whats-new.aspx](http://www.rospace.com/workplacesafety/affiliatedgroups/scottishhigherperformers/whats-new.aspx) – RoSPA's Higher Performers' Forum in Scotland
- [www.rospace.com/safetygroupsuk/index.htm](http://www.rospace.com/safetygroupsuk/index.htm) – local safety groups

You can access *Think about health and safety* – including live weblinks – at [www.iosh.co.uk/msspsafety](http://www.iosh.co.uk/msspsafety).

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IOSH is the Chartered body for health and safety professionals. With more than 39,000 members in 85 countries, we're the world's largest professional health and safety organisation.

We set standards, and support, develop and connect our members with resources, guidance, events and training. We're the voice of the profession, and campaign on issues that affect millions of working people.

IOSH was founded in 1945 and is a registered charity with international NGO status.

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