

Hairdresser

Straightforward information and practical tips to help you sort health and safety

nhf
national
hairdressers'
federation



Safe Start Up
www.safestartup.co.uk

Hairdresser

This guide will help you with health and safety. It gives you straightforward information and practical tips. It tells you what you need to do to make sure you don't break the law, and how to protect yourself, anyone who works for you, your clients and your reputation. It also shows you where to go to get more information if you need it.

No one is saying that being a hairdresser or owning a salon is a risky business. But at the end of the day, if things go wrong it's your livelihood or business that will suffer. You'll find that you already do – or

plan to do – a lot of what's covered, and much of it is common sense. Looking after health and safety is just part of managing a business well. Done properly, you could see it save money too.

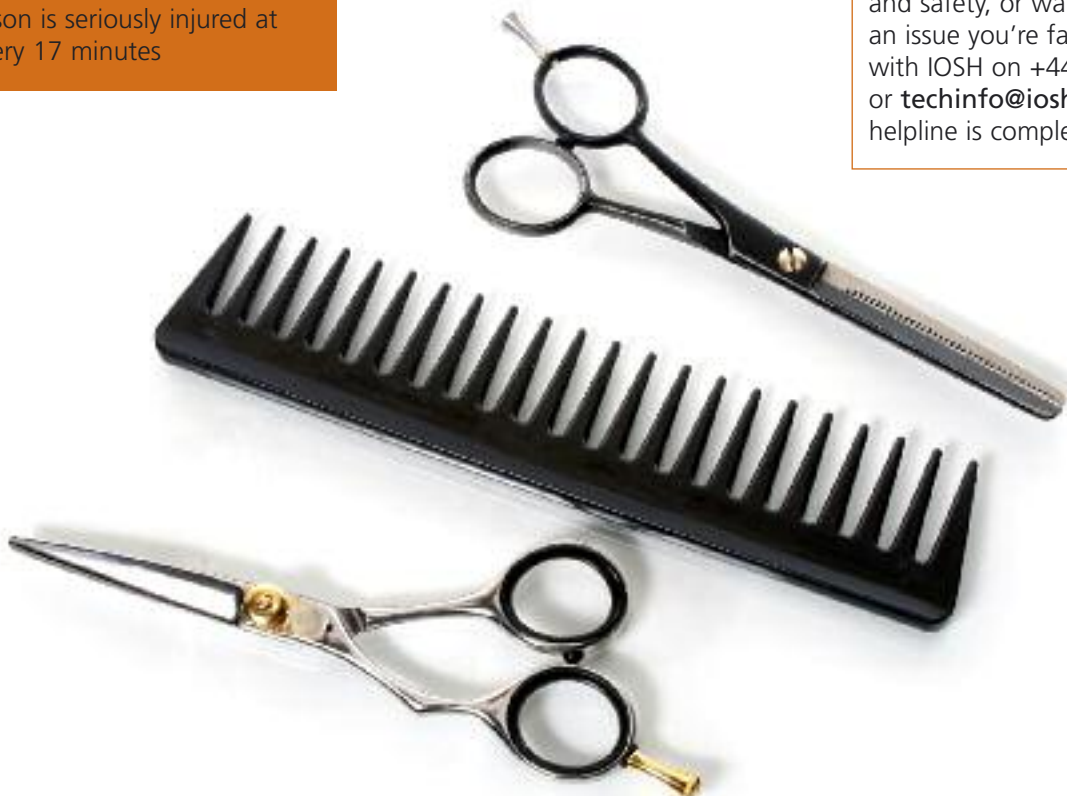
You'll find this guide helpful if you:

- own or manage a salon or group of salons
- work as a mobile hairdresser.

If you're a barber or barber shop owner, download our barber guide at www.iosh.co.uk/safestartup.

Did you know...

One person is seriously injured at work every 17 minutes



IOSH and the NHF

The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health has developed this guide in partnership with the National Hairdressers' Federation.

Our thanks to NHF member Yvonne McConnell, of Phaze 1 Hair, Nail and Beauty Lounge, for her input to the content of this guide.

About IOSH

IOSH is the Chartered body for health and safety professionals. We were founded in 1945 and are a registered charity. Find out more at www.iosh.co.uk.

About the NHF

The NHF is the UK's largest employer-led trade association for hairdressing, barbers and beauty salon owners. Find out more at www.nhf.info.

Here to help

If you have a question on health and safety, or want information on an issue you're facing, get in touch with IOSH on +44 (0)116 257 3199 or techinfo@iosh.co.uk. Our helpline is completely free.

By law you must...

In the UK, the law applies to all businesses, large or small. If you're self-employed or an employer then **you** are responsible for the health and safety of your business. The law is there to make sure you have a safe working environment and cut down the risk of you, your staff (if you have any) or clients getting ill or injured. So, by law you must...

...get some help with your health and safety duties

As an employer you have to appoint someone who knows about health and safety. This could be:

- yourself, if you have a health and safety qualification, knowledge and experience
- one or more of your staff, if they are qualified or you get them trained
- someone from outside the business.

If you're not confident about managing health and safety in-house then you may need to call in some external help or advice.

Even if you don't employ any staff, don't forget that legally you have what's called a 'duty of care' to anyone who is affected by what you do for a living – from a client to a member of the public.

Did you know...

Good health and safety saves cash: you can save £12 for every £1 you spend

Health and safety law

Your local authority will enforce health and safety law for the sector you work in. The authority will give advice and guidance, as well as making inspections and investigating accidents or complaints. Legal powers include formal enforcement notices to tackle specific risks. Local authorities can also prosecute where they have found a health and safety failure.

You can find out more about local authority enforcement at www.hse.gov.uk/lau/enforcement.htm and what powers an inspector has at www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/section/20

Find out more

- Find out more at www.hse.gov.uk/business/competent-advice.htm
- Download the HSE leaflet 'Getting specialist help with health and safety' at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg420.pdf
- Have a look at the HSE's 'Health and safety made simple' site at www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety and its toolbox with advice and guidance for small businesses at www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox
- Get guidance on getting professional advice at www.oshcr.org
- Find out about our free enquiry service at www.iosh.co.uk/helpline
- Download our free guide on getting help with health and safety at www.iosh.co.uk/techguide



By law you must...

...write a health and safety policy for your business

If you employ five or more people, part or full time, you have to have a written policy.

The policy should describe how you'll manage health and safety. It lets your staff and others know that you have a serious commitment to keeping on top of risks as part of your business. It should clearly state who does what, when and how.

Your policy doesn't have to take you long to write, or be lengthy or complicated. Download the template listed in 'Find out more' and complete it, or use it as a guide to write your own.

Your policy shouldn't just be a piece of lifeless paperwork – it's designed to help you manage health and safety properly. It will only be effective if you and your staff are aware of it and follow what it says. You'll need to review it every now and then to reflect any changes – just make a note in your calendar, say once a year. You'll also need to see if it needs updating if there's been a major change, for example, to the way you work, or where you work.



- Download a policy template at www.hse.gov.uk/risk/risk-assessment-and-policy-template.doc
- Look at an example of a policy at www.hse.gov.uk/risk/health-and-safety-policy-example.doc

...manage the risk in your business

You must consider and manage any risks where you work or connected with what you do.

This is a straightforward process. Known as 'risk assessment', it involves thinking about what you do in your business that could harm people – you, your staff (if you have them) or your clients – and what you're going to do to try to stop it happening.

In your line of work, you will probably look at things like:

- skin problems like dermatitis
- risks to do with storing and using chemicals
- aches and pains.

There may be more, but these are the main areas you're most likely to need to focus on – we look at these three in a bit more detail on page 07.

Risk assessments aren't about piles of paperwork, just sensible actions to control the risks. The law doesn't expect you to remove all risks, but it does expect you to control them. You're probably doing most of this already as part of day-to-day management – but your risk assessment will help you see if what you're doing is enough or if you need to do more.



Find out more

- Look at templates and examples at www.hse.gov.uk/risk/risk-assessment-and-policy-template.doc
- Look at risk assessment case studies at www.hse.gov.uk/risk/casestudies
- Use our free risk assessment tool at www.ioshroutefinder.co.uk

By law you must...

...talk to your employees

If you employ anyone, you need to consult them on health and safety. Again, it's not complicated – you can do this by listening and talking to them about:

- health and safety and the work they do
- how risks are controlled
- the best ways of giving information and training.

This is a two-way thing. Let your staff raise concerns and give their opinions on decisions. After all, they're often the best people to understand the risks involved in their work – and talking to them about it lets them know that you take their health and safety seriously.



- Find out more at www.hse.gov.uk/involvement/doyourbit

...give training and information

If you have staff, they need to know how to work safely and without risking their health. You must give clear instructions, information and training. It's a legal requirement to give basic health and safety induction training for all new staff. An induction should cover information about working safely and include first aid and fire and evacuation procedures. Don't forget that you have the same health and safety responsibilities for anyone you employ – including temps, apprentices, trainees or work experience students. Bear in mind that younger people will be inexperienced and less mature, as well as sometimes lacking the confidence to ask questions and raise issues. New, inexperienced or young employees will need to be supervised more closely.

Training could include, for example, basic first aid, handling and storing chemicals or how to achieve good

posture to help with aches and pains. Not all training needs to be formal or expensive – at a salon, some training can be given in-house in informal sessions, based on your own knowledge and experience. Remember that health and safety training must be in working hours and you can't charge employees for it. Keeping training records will help remind you when refreshers are due. If someone has changed jobs or is taking on new responsibilities, you'll need to tell them about any new health and safety implications.

Make sure that everyone has information on:

- hazards and risks they may face – for your business, dermatitis is a typical risk, for example – have a look at page 07 for more details
- what's in place to deal with hazards and risks
- what to do in an emergency.



- Download a guide on health and safety training at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg345.pdf
- Find out more about employing young people at www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople/law/index.htm

By law you must...

...have the right facilities

Some of these legal requirements will sound obvious, but it's a good idea to check to make sure that you've covered the staff welfare basics.

You need to provide:

- toilet and washing facilities
- drinking water
- somewhere to store clothing and to change if your staff wear a uniform
- somewhere to rest and eat meals.

If you're a mobile stylist, visiting clients' houses, it's a good idea to keep some basic washing facilities handy, for example hand gels that don't need water or a container of clean water. You may need to take a rest break in the car.

You need to make sure that where you work is healthy, and that you have:

- good ventilation – fresh, clean air drawn from outside or a ventilation system
- a comfortable working temperature – usually at least 16 degrees C
- lighting suitable for the work being carried out
- enough space, seating and so on
- a clean environment with bins provided for rubbish.

If you own your salon, you need to keep your workplace safe by:

- maintaining and servicing the premises and work equipment
- having windows that can be opened and cleaned safely
- making sure that any glass, Perspex or plastic panels in doors or walls are protected or made of

toughened safety material, if they are in areas where members of the public have access and could be affected if there were an accident – you may need to get advice on this.

If you rent, make sure your landlord provides you with safe premises, for example, checking a gas boiler and letting you have a copy of the safety certificate. You'll need to clarify your role with your landlord, especially what's expected of you in terms of building upkeep. You'll obviously have responsibility for your own equipment.

You also need to keep floors and corridors clear of rubbish or blockages – this makes it easier and safer to work and also cuts down fire risks.



Find out more

- Download a guide on workplace health, safety and welfare at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg244.pdf

Did you know...

One small company was fined £3,500 in court because it didn't have adequate washing facilities for employees who were at risk of getting dermatitis



By law you must...

...plan for first aid, accidents and ill health

You have to organise first aid arrangements where you work. If you employ people, you're responsible for making sure they get attention straightaway if they get ill or injured.

If you're self-employed, with no staff, you need to have a first aid kit.

If you have staff, you must have:

- a stocked first aid box
- an 'appointed person' to take charge – someone who co-ordinates first aid where you work, restocks the box when necessary and calls an ambulance if needed. This person doesn't have to be a trained first aider
- information for employees giving details of what you've organised for first aid.

You may decide that you need someone trained in first aid. Your first aid assessment will highlight this – you

just need to consider your situation and write down anything significant, along with what you plan to do to deal with it. For example, think about how far away from your nearest surgery or hospital you are, and whether any of your staff have complex medical conditions.

By law, you must report and keep a record of certain accidents, incidents and illness.

...display the health and safety law poster

If you employ anyone, you must either display this poster, or give each member of staff the pocket card version. The poster outlines UK health and safety law and includes a simple list that tells employers what they and

their employees need to do. There is also space on it for you to name your health and safety representatives, if you have any, and health and safety contacts, for example, your local authority adviser.

Find out more

- Get information on first aid and how to stock a first aid box at www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid and a leaflet on first aid from www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg214.pdf
- Find out what needs reporting and how at www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/index.htm
- Buy an accident book from the HSE at books.hse.gov.uk or record the details in your own system

Did you know...

Four people are killed every week at work

Find out more

- You can get copies of the poster and pocket cards from www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/lawposter.htm

By law you must...

...get insurance for your business

If you have employees you'll probably need employers' liability insurance. It protects you against any costs of compensation in claims made against you by an employee if they get injured

or ill and it's caused by your business. There may be other types of insurance you need, such as public liability, or 'driving for business' cover if you're a mobile hairdresser.

Did you know...

One small business owner was fined nearly £4,000 with costs of £3,000 after it was found to have no Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance



Find out more

- Download information on employers' liability insurance at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/hse40.pdf
- Find out more on insurance at www.abi.org.uk/Information/Business/15310.pdf

...keep your business up to date

Keeping up with news and developments in your sector will help you keep your health and safety policy and risk assessments up to date. You'll find help through trade unions, employers' organisations, Business Link and trade associations.



Find out more

- Read IOSH news and sign up to RSS news feeds at www.iosh.co.uk/news
- Subscribe to free ebulletins at www.hse.gov.uk/news/subscribe
- Get podcasts from www.hse.gov.uk/podcasts
- Keep up with news from www.nhf.info/news

Issues to think about

We've covered some of the basic things you need to do to comply with the law. Here, we look at some specific issues and legal duties relevant to your work in the hairdressing business.

Skin problems

Hairdressers are at high risk when it comes to skin problems. Up to 70 per cent of hairdressers will suffer a form of skin damage at some stage in their career. Bear in mind that skin damage is not only painful, it also looks unsightly, especially in your business.

For hairdressers, the main causes of contact dermatitis are exposure to chemicals in the products you use and frequent wet work, including shampooing and rinsing. You can help prevent this by:

- wearing disposable non-latex gloves when rinsing and shampooing, when using chemicals to colour, bleach, perm or set hair and when cleaning tools and utensils after each treatment
- changing gloves between clients (make sure you don't get any products on your hands when you take them off)
- drying your hands thoroughly with a soft cotton or paper towel
- moisturising after washing your hands, as well as at the start and end of each day – make sure you don't miss fingertips, between the fingers and wrists
- checking regularly for early signs of dermatitis – look out for very dry or chapped skin.

'Barrier' creams aren't recommended – many chemicals will still get through to your skin.

If you're an employer or manager you should make sure your staff are aware of

this issue and give them information on how to prevent dermatitis as well as equipment like gloves to protect themselves.

You should always test the chemicals you're planning to use on your client at least 48 hours before their appointment, following the manufacturer's instructions. Explain to your client what you're testing for and what they need to look out for. If there is any sign of an allergic reaction, then the treatment shouldn't go ahead, and the reaction should be recorded on your client's record card. You could also consider checking with your client to see if they have allergies to things like the latex in some gloves.

Carry out skin checks on your staff to see if they are allergic to any of the products you use – keep a confidential record of the findings, and any actions you've taken.

Did you know...

16,000 people in just one year suffered from skin problems because of their work

Hairdressers are 17 times more likely to develop dermatitis



Find out more

- Find out more about hairdressers and dermatitis at www.hse.gov.uk/hairdressing/index.htm
- You'll find information and resources from the Bad Hand Day campaign helpful – go to www.hse.gov.uk/hairdressing/bad-hand.htm
- Get advice on selecting the right gloves at www.hse.gov.uk/skin/employ/gloves.htm
- Get guidance on allergy testing at www.nhf.info/top-tips/health-and-safety



Issues to think about

Using and storing chemicals

Most of the products you use are completely safe, but some can be hazardous under certain conditions or if used in the wrong way. For example, if a product is left in direct sunlight or near a radiator it can activate the ingredients before you use it, and badly labelled products can mean you end up mixing the wrong things which at best could leave your client with damaged hair, and at worst with dangerous vapours that can attack the eyes, leave serious skin burns or even make people pass out. You need to be aware of how to use and store these products – it's actually a legal requirement.

You must make a list of any substances used at work – not just the products you'd use in a salon, but even cleaning products like bleach or polish too. You also need to know what can happen if products are spilled, accidentally mixed or splashed onto skin or into the eyes. This is easier than it sounds – most products will have a 'safety data sheet' that lists storage, disposal and first aid requirements, and they're free from the manufacturer (if you don't have any, just ask for them).

You'll need to follow what the product manufacturer advises – remember that they've developed and tested the

products and know what can happen if they're not used or stored properly, so don't ignore what they say. You'll need to do a basic risk assessment of key activities such as mixing and disposing of chemicals, storing chemical products and cleaning. Then think about simple steps to stop things from going wrong – for example, mixing chemicals when you pour them down the sink can create a dangerous chemical reaction, but pouring one away at a time, and running plenty of cold water between chemicals, will help avoid this (remember that some chemicals can't be poured away, or have to be diluted first – check the safety data sheet).

Be sensible about where you mix and store chemicals – keep them away from rest areas where you or your colleagues could be preparing food and drinks. It's



Did you know...

One small firm paid nearly £12,000 in fines and costs after an employee suffered burns to her eyes, face and chest from an open bottle of oven cleaner falling on her from a high shelf when she knocked it over in the dark



a good idea to store chemicals at floor level in a cool, dark cupboard, and stick a list alongside the relevant hazard symbols on the cupboard door.

You should also think about what to do if a product gets into your client's mouth or eyes – the safety data sheet you get with each product will give you advice on this.

Make sure you and your staff use disposable non-latex gloves and an apron when working with chemicals – from mixing to applying them.

Bear in mind that some of the chemicals you use day in, day out, can

cause cancer over time if not used carefully. It's worth looking to see what's new on the market – there are products which can help cut down your exposure – for example, 'dust free' bleach.

If you have staff, you need to train them and make sure they follow safety guidelines and take the precautions you tell them about.

Your business is low risk, but remember that if you don't understand the chemicals you're using, how they can react and what actions you need to take, you could seriously harm yourself, your team or your clients.

Did you know...

Skin cancer kills more than 2,500 people in the UK every year



Find out more

- The Melanoma Taskforce and British Association of Dermatologists have developed guidelines aimed at hairdressers, masseurs, therapists and other wellbeing professionals to help them pick up on signs of skin cancer when they're dealing with clients – find out more at www.babtac.com/melanomataskforce
- Find out more about managing chemicals at www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/basics.htm
- Get a free copy of 'A guide to the health and safety of salon hair products' from the NHF on +44 (0)1234 831965

Issues to think about

Aches and pains

Almost 40 per cent of hairdressers report musculoskeletal problems. It's not surprising that with all the repetitive tasks you do, and a lot of standing, you or your team may get a few aches and pains from time to time. Don't ignore them – take action.

Remember good salon and product designers will usually have the worker in mind and aim to reduce problems.

Did you know...

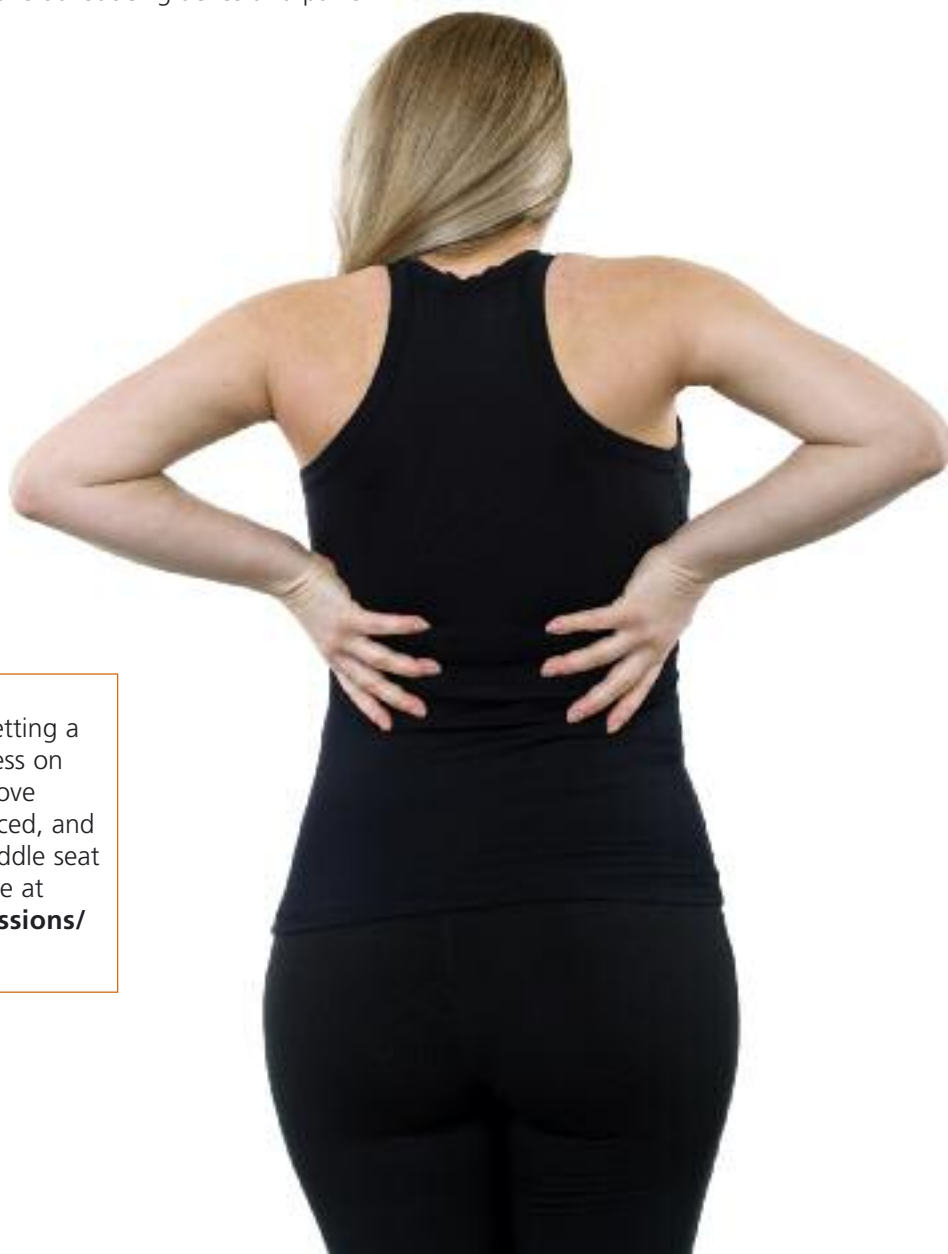
Musculoskeletal disorders – from back pain to sore wrists – affect one million people every year

For example, you can get salon chairs that are height-adjustable, and scissors, dryers and combs that are ergonomically designed to be more comfortable to use.

If you have staff, training and information will also help. You should give advice on posture and using tools. Often, simple things like making sure your staff take regular breaks, getting them to change their grip on tools like dryers to keep their wrists straight, and trying to vary the types of appointment people handle in a day, can be effective at reducing aches and pains.

Think about how your staff dress for work – wearing high heels or platforms when standing for most of the day will probably be uncomfortable and cause posture problems, as well as increasing the chance of a slip or trip. Flat, closed toe shoes are best.

Don't forget that your staff can get injuries outside work, and it can affect how they do their job. In these cases, you need to adjust how they work while they're recovering.



Find out more

- If you don't already use one, think about getting a 'saddle' chair. These stools will decrease stress on your legs and back, but still allow you to move about quickly and easily. You're more balanced, and it's also easier to stand frequently from a saddle seat compared to a standard stool. Find out more at www.ergonomicssimplified.com/professions/hairdresser

Issues to think about

You also need to consider...

- **Slips, trips and falls** – if you have a salon, keep the floors clean and clear.
- **Electricity** – make sure fixed and handheld equipment works properly and that your electrics are serviced and tested by someone with the right skills and qualifications.
- **Lifting and carrying** – think about what you have to lift and carry and how you can change things to make it easier – for example, splitting loads into smaller piles, getting a small trolley to move loads around more easily, or ordering smaller batches of products more frequently.
- **Working temperature** – it can get hot and humid in a salon, so make sure yours can be easily ventilated
- **Fire precautions** – if you have a salon, you have to have a fire risk assessment. You have the same responsibility whether you rent or own the property. Think about how a fire could start (the top two reasons are arson and electrical faults) and how you and your staff and clients would escape if there were a fire. Your assessment, which should be written up, should cover what action you've taken to minimise the risks – for example, making sure you use up-to-date electrical kit and getting hard-wired electrics (inside the walls) checked by qualified electricians. You will also

need to decide on the right types of fire extinguisher, think about signage and make sure exit routes are kept clear. Don't forget to include a fire management plan, which covers how often your alarms and emergency lighting should be tested, and who will do it, and your fire evacuation plan details. If you rent your property, your landlord may cover some of these duties – check your contract or ask if you're not sure. Talk to your local authority adviser or a health and safety consultant if you need more help.

Did you know...

Injuries caused by slips or trips cost employers more than £500 million a year

Did you know...

In just one year, there were 31,000 fires in buildings used for business – 36 people died



Issues to think about

- **Working on your own** – if you're a mobile stylist, remember to let a friend or relative know where you're going, and use a simple 'call in' system, especially if you're visiting a new client.
- **Using computers** – working in a salon isn't comparable to an office or call centre, but you should still think about the risks. Anyone who works with a computer for long periods will need a 'display screen equipment' assessment and you'll need to make sure they take regular breaks, get information about the risks and training in the best ways to use a computer. You'll need to offer free eye tests too.



Find out more

- Look for more information on getting your electrics tested at www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/faq.htm#maintaining-it-safely
- Find out more about safe lifting and carrying at www.hse.gov.uk/msd/faq-manhand.htm
- Get more information about fire precautions at www.communities.gov.uk/fire/firesafety/firesafetylaw
- Find out more about the risks of working on your own at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf
- Download our 'Going it alone' guide for a quick overview of things to think about when working on your own at www.iosh.co.uk/safestartup
- Get information about working with computers at www.hse.gov.uk/MSd/dse/index.htm

Got a question?



Look at our FAQs at www.iosh.co.uk/safestartup.

May 2014

This IOSH guide is designed as an introduction to health and safety basics for low risk businesses, and is not intended to give exhaustive coverage of the subject. We encourage all employers and business owners to find out more about the detailed legal requirements affecting your business at www.hse.gov.uk.

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IOSH is the Chartered body for health and safety professionals. With more than 44,000 members in over 120 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.