



## Safety Bulletin 124

### Changes to first aid training and approval arrangements

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE), carried out an evaluation of first aid in the workplace and found that 'although first aid awareness and penetration in workplaces was good, compliance was found to be more "in spirit" rather than the letter of the regulations and this exposed some important deficiencies in the format and content of guidance and in the proportionality of the current regulatory requirements for lower risk employees'.

The changes have been developed in consultation with employers and training providers and it is hoped that the new format will make it easier for employers to comply with the regulations.

Detailed guidance for employers will be available as a revision of the current document produced by HSE: *First aid at work - The Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981 – Approved Code of Practice and Guidance (L74)*. Within this, it is only the guidance that is being revised, the Regulations and Approved Code of Practice will remain the same. HSE also intends to revise its guidance for small and medium sized enterprises in *First aid at work – your questions answered (INDG214)*. Both publications will be available for 1 October 2009. It is intended that L74 will continue as a priced publication and INDG214 will be available as a free leaflet that can be downloaded from HSE's website.

Employers will not be required to retrain all their first aiders as soon as the implementation date is reached. First aiders with a valid first aid at work (FAW) certificate will only enter the new arrangements when their certificate expires. This means that it will take three years post implementation before all first aiders in the workplace are captured within the new training structure.

#### What are the changes?

The current initial four day **First Aid at Work (FAW)** course will be shortened to **three days** and there will be a new qualification of **Emergency First Aider in the Workplace (EFAW)** that will require a **one day** training course.

The **FAW requalification** remains unchanged at **two days**.

The HSE will also strongly recommend that FAW and EFAW students attend an annual **three hour Annual refresher course** to prevent 'skills fade'.

Both the First aid at work and Emergency first aid in the workplace courses will be approved by the HSE and must be taught by HSE approved first aid training providers. Training for Appointed persons may be taught by non-HSE approved training providers.



Is my current FAW certificate still valid?

Yes, up until the expiry date even if this is after 1 October 2009.

Does the shorter course mean there is going to be less content trained on the course?

On 1 April 2009 the HSE confirmed that the First aid at work course will be similar to the current version in content, but will be covered in three days, not four. Recent simplification of first aid protocols, including CPR and casualty movement, mean that less time is needed to teach these and other subjects. The teaching techniques used by St John Ambulance's highly skilled trainers will ensure your first aiders will continue to be trained to the highest standards demanded by the HSE.

Can I wait for the new course?

No, you will need to maintain trained first aiders in your workplace between now and October 2009. The HSE published their guidance for first aid training providers on 1 April, 2009 and the content of course after 1 October is very similar to the First aid at work course we already teach. The current qualification will still be valid for three years.

When do I have to do a new requalification course?

When your current certificate is about to expire.

Will I have to attend refresher training?

The HSE recognise that 'skills fade' does occur during the three year validity of current certificates and strongly recommends a three hour Annual refresher course at the end of both the first and second year of your First aid at work qualification.

You will not need to take the Annual refresher in the same year that you attend a requalification course to renew your certificate.

What course will I need to do; will I need more first aiders?

Employers are required to carry out a risk assessment to decide on the numbers of first aiders required and the level of training needed.

When assessing your specific needs, employers need to consider:

- ✚ workplace hazards and risks
- ✚ the size of the organisation
- ✚ the organisation's history of accidents
- ✚ the nature and distribution of the workforce
- ✚ the remoteness of the site from emergency medical services
- ✚ the needs of travelling, remote and lone workers



- ✚ employees working on shared or multi-occupied sites
- ✚ annual leave and other absences of first aiders and appointed persons.

The HSE will provide updated guidance for employers on 1 October 2009 on how many first aiders will be needed depending on the size and nature of your organisation. However, it is up to each employer to maintain their risk assessment.

What is the difference between a first aider in the workplace and an emergency first aider in the workplace?

A risk assessment will highlight the level of risk in the workplace, using this information you will be able to decide what course is required for your first aiders.

Generally speaking, first aiders with a First aid at work certificate will be required in higher risk sites or places with a large workforce or high perceived level of risk; lower risk may only require Emergency first aid in the workplace trained staff, but this will dependant on other factors that a risk assessment will identify.

The syllabus for Emergency first aid in the workplace is similar to the current six hour Emergency aid course trained by St John Ambulance. So the new Emergency first aid in the workplace training will be appropriate for many of those currently holding an Emergency aid for appointed persons qualification.

**If you require any further information, clarification or assistance with the above, then please do not hesitate to contact us;**

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**Source – The Health and Safety Executive  
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