First Aid at Work: How Many First Aiders Does Your Business Need?

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The Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981 require every employer to provide adequate and appropriate equipment, facilities and personnel so that employees receive immediate attention if they are injured or fall ill at work. The regulations do not set a single number of first aiders for every business. Instead, employers must carry out their own assessment and be able to justify the

arrangements they put in place. Providing too little, or assuming a generic answer applies to your business, is a gap that can easily show up during a health and safety audit or inspection.

What the Law Actually Requires

The duty sits with the employer, not with an individual manager or a single trained person. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, employers must also assess risks generally, and the first aid needs assessment sits alongside that wider risk assessment rather than as a separate tick-box exercise. There is no prescribed ratio written into the regulations themselves; the numbers often quoted from official guidance are recommendations, not legal minimums, and an employer with unusual risks may need to provide more than the guideline figures suggest.

There is no separate legal requirement to write down the first aid needs assessment, but employers with five or more employees must record the significant findings of their general risk assessment, and the first aid findings should be reflected there. Every employer, whatever the size, still has the duty to assess and provide. It is sensible to write the assessment down regardless of headcount so you can show how you reached your conclusions.

Carrying Out a First Aid Needs Assessment

A proper needs assessment looks at your actual workplace, not a generic template, and should take in each of the factors listed below.

You also need to plan for absence. A single first aider who is off sick, on annual leave or working a different shift pattern leaves you with no cover at all, which may mean your provision is not adequate under the regulations.

- Type of work and specific hazards (chemicals, machinery, working at height, driving)
- Workforce size, shift patterns and geographical spread
- History of accidents, near misses and ill health
- Distance and response time from the nearest emergency care
- Presence of young workers, trainees, or staff with relevant health conditions
- Holiday, sickness and shift cover for existing first aiders

Sectors such as construction and warehousing and logistics typically need a more robust first aid arrangement because of the higher likelihood of serious injury, while a small office or shop will usually need much less.

Minimum Recommended Provision

As a starting point, lower hazard environments such as offices, shops and libraries are generally considered adequate with at least one appointed person where there are fewer than 25 employees, at least one trained first aider where there are between 25 and 50 employees, and roughly one additional first aider for every 100 employees beyond that, adjusted for your own risk profile.

Higher hazard environments such as construction sites, manufacturing and engineering workshops, and warehousing operations are generally expected to have at least one appointed person with fewer than five employees, at least one trained first aider with between five and fifty employees, and roughly one additional first aider for every fifty employees above that. These figures are a starting point, not a ceiling; if your assessment shows a need for more cover, you must provide it.

Choosing the Right Level of Training

Three levels of provision are commonly referred to in guidance. First Aid at Work (FAW) is a three-day course covering a broad range of injuries and illnesses and is generally suited to higher risk workplaces or as the main provision in larger organisations. Emergency First Aid at Work (EFAW) is a one-day course covering core life-saving skills and is usually adequate for lower risk workplaces, or to supplement FAW holders elsewhere in the business. An appointed person is not a trained first aider; their role is to take charge if someone is injured, call emergency services, and look after the first aid kit.

For FAW, EFAW or appointed person courses you will need a competent first aid training provider, so check their qualifications and how their courses are quality assured. What a health and safety consultancy can do is help you work out, before you book anything, how many people need which level of training, and build that into your wider policies and procedures so the provision matches your risk profile.

Certificates for FAW and EFAW are valid for three years, after which a requalification course is required. Guidance recommends annual refresher training in the interim to keep skills current, so build this into your training plan rather than waiting for certificates to lapse.

First Aid Equipment and Facilities

At minimum you need a suitably stocked first aid kit, and the contents should reflect your risk assessment rather than a generic list bought off the shelf. A typical kit includes sterile plasters in assorted sizes, sterile eye pads, triangular bandages, safety pins, sterile wound dressings of various sizes, disposable gloves and a first aid guidance leaflet. There is no legal requirement for a kit to contain medication such as paracetamol or antiseptic cream, and most guidance actively advises against including tablets or creams in a workplace kit.

Higher risk sites may need additional provision such as eyewash stations, burns dressings or a dedicated first aid room, particularly where the workforce is large or the site is remote from emergency care. Check kits regularly, with a named person responsible for restocking used or expired items; an empty or out of date kit found during an incident is a common and entirely avoidable failing.

Records, Reviews and Common Mistakes

Every instance of first aid treatment should be recorded, including the name of the person treated, the date and time, what happened, and the treatment given. This record serves two purposes: it supports any later investigation or insurance claim, and it feeds back into your risk assessment by

showing where incidents are actually occurring. Where an injury meets the threshold under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013, it must also be reported separately; first aid records alone do not satisfy that duty.

Review the needs assessment whenever something changes materially, such as premises, workforce size, work activity, or following a relevant accident, and periodically even if nothing obvious has changed. Common mistakes include relying on one first aider with no cover, failing to update provision after the business grows or moves, and treating an appointed person as a trained first aider.

Who Is Responsible

Responsibility for adequate first aid arrangements sits with the employer, but in practice day to day oversight of training records, kit checks and cover rotas is usually delegated to a health and safety manager, office manager or site manager. That person needs enough authority to book training, order equipment and insist that cover arrangements are followed.

If you are unsure whether your current first aid arrangements would stand up to scrutiny, an independent review as part of a broader health and safety audit is often the quickest way to find out. Integral Safety, based in Coalville and working across the East Midlands, can help you carry out a proper first aid needs assessment, review your wider policies and point you towards a suitable first aid training provider. Get in touch to talk through your first aid requirements.

Talk to Integral Safety Ltd

We are health and safety consultants based in Coalville, Leicestershire, working with businesses across the East Midlands. If anything in this guide applies to your workplace, we can help.

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This guide is general information about UK health and safety law and practice, correct as at 11 November 2026. It is not advice on your particular circumstances. The latest version is at https://integralsafetyltd.co.uk/blog/first-aid-at-work-how-many-first-aiders.