

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 cover a wide range of basic health, safety and welfare issues and apply to most workplaces (with the exception of those workplaces involving construction work on construction sites, those in or on a ship, or those below ground at a mine).

Requirements under these Regulations

Employers have a general duty under section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of their employees at work. People in control of non-domestic premises have a duty (under section 4 of the Act) towards people who are not their employees but use their premises. The Regulations expand on these duties and are intended to protect the health and safety of everyone in the workplace, and ensure that adequate welfare facilities are provided for people at work.

These Regulations aim to ensure that workplaces meet the health, safety and welfare needs of all members of a workforce, including people with disabilities. Several of the Regulations require things to be 'suitable'. Regulation 2(3) makes it clear that things should be suitable for anyone. This includes people with disabilities. Where necessary, parts of the workplace, including in particular doors, passageways, stairs, showers, washbasins, lavatories and workstations, should be made accessible for disabled people.

Interpretation

'Workplace' - these Regulations apply to a very wide range of workplaces, not only factories, shops and offices but also, for example, schools, hospitals, hotels and places of entertainment. The term workplace also includes the common parts of shared buildings, private roads and paths on industrial estates and business parks, and temporary worksites (except workplaces involving construction work on construction sites).

'Work' - means work as an employee or self-employed person.

'Premises' - means any place including an outdoor place. 'Disabled person' - has the meaning given by section 1 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

The measures outlined in the following 3 sections contribute to the general working environment of people in the workplace.

Health

Ventilation - workplaces need to be adequately ventilated.

Temperatures in indoor workplaces - environmental factors (such as humidity and sources of heat in the workplace) combine with personal factors (such as the clothing a worker is wearing and how physically demanding their work is) to influence what is called someone's 'thermal comfort'.

Work in hot or cold environments - the risk to the health of workers increases as conditions move further away from those generally accepted as comfortable. Assessment of the risk to workers' health from working in either a hot or cold environment needs to consider both personal and environmental factors.

Lighting - should be sufficient to enable people to work and move about safely.

Cleanliness and waste materials - every workplace and the furniture, furnishings and fittings should be kept clean and it should be possible to keep the surfaces of floors, walls and ceilings clean.

Room dimensions and space - workrooms should have enough free space to allow people to move about with ease.

Workstations and seating - workstations should be suitable for the people using them and for the work they do place their feet flat on the floor.

Safety

Maintenance - the workplace, and certain equipment, devices and systems should be maintained in efficient working order (efficient for health, safety and welfare).

Floors and traffic routes - 'Traffic route' means a route for pedestrian traffic, vehicles, or both, and includes any stairs, fixed ladder, doorway, gateway, loading bay or ramp.

There should be sufficient traffic routes, of sufficient width and headroom, to allow people and vehicles to circulate safely with ease.

Floors and traffic routes should be sound and strong enough for the loads placed on them and the traffic expected to use them. The surfaces should not have holes or be uneven or slippery, and should be kept free of obstructions and from any article or substance which may cause a person to slip, trip or fall.

Falls into dangerous substances - the consequences of falling into dangerous substances are so serious that a high standard of protection is required. Dangerous substances in tanks, pits or other structures should be securely fenced or covered. Traffic routes associated with them should also be securely fenced.

Transparent or translucent doors, gates or walls and windows - windows, transparent or translucent surfaces in walls, partitions, doors and gates should, where necessary for reasons of health and safety, be made of safety material or be protected against breakage

Windows - openable windows, skylights and ventilators should be capable of being opened, closed or adjusted safely and, when open, should not pose any undue risk to anyone.

Doors and gates - These should be suitably constructed and fitted with safety devices if necessary.

Escalators and moving walkways - should function safely, be equipped with any necessary safety devices, and be fitted with one or more emergency stop controls which are easily identifiable and readily accessible.

Welfare

Sanitary conveniences and washing facilities - suitable and sufficient sanitary conveniences and washing facilities should be provided at readily accessible places.

Drinking water - an adequate supply of high-quality drinking water, with an upward drinking jet or suitable cups, should be provided.

Accommodation for clothing and facilities for changing - adequate, suitable and secure space should be provided to store workers' own clothing and special clothing. Changing facilities should also be provided for workers who change into special work clothing.

Facilities for rest and to eat hot meals – should be suitable and sufficient, ready accessible rest facilities should be provided. Seats should be provided for workers to use during breaks.

Find out more

Workplace health, safety and welfare INDG244 (rev2) go to <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg244.pdf>

Further information

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