



WORKPLACE WELFARE AND GENERAL WORKING ENVIRONMENT (OSH001)

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HSE portal

For better HSE practice

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Module 1: Welfare at work

1. Module 1: Welfare at work

‘Welfare facilities’ are those that are necessary for the well-being of employees, such as washing, toilet, rest and changing facilities, and somewhere clean to eat and drink during breaks.

Employers must ‘so far as is reasonably practicable’, provide adequate and appropriate welfare facilities for their employees while they are at work.

1.1. Toilet and washing facilities

To be adequate, toilet and washing facilities must:

- Be enough for those expected to use them.
- Have separate facilities for men and women.
- Be clean.
- Have supply of toilet paper and, for female employees, a means of disposing of sanitary dressings.
- Be well lit and ventilated.
- Have hot and cold running water.
- Have enough soap or other washing agents.
- Have basins that are large enough to wash hands and forearms if necessary.
- Have means for drying hands, e.g., paper towels or a hot air dryer.
- Have showers where necessary, e.g., for particularly dirty work.



The needs of those with disabilities should be considered in welfare provision.

Where staff work in remote workplaces without suitable plumbing and a water supply, the employer should provide chemical toilets and washing facilities, such as water containers.

Use of public toilets and washing facilities should be a last resort and not used just because they are the cheaper option. This would not be acceptable where the provision of better facilities would be reasonably practicable.

1.2. Drinking water

The employer should make sure that drinking water in the workplace is:

- Free from contamination and is preferably from the public water supply.
- Easily accessible by all employees.
- Adequately supplied taking into consideration the temperature of the working environment and types of work activity.
- Possible to be consumed using cups or a drinking fountain.

Drinking water does not have to be marked unless there is a significant risk of people drinking non-drinking water.

1.3. Seating area

There should be a suitable seating area for workers to use during breaks. This seating area should:

- Be clean and located where food will not get contaminated.
- Have washing facilities nearby.
- Have means of heating food or water for hot drinks.

- Be maintained at good hygiene standards.

1.4. Changing rooms

If the work activity requires employees to change into and wear specialist clothing (overalls, a uniform, thermal clothing etc), then the employer must provide enough changing rooms for the number of people expected to use them. Each changing room should:

- Be readily accessible.
- Contain, or lead directly to, clothing storage and washing facilities.
- Have seating.
- Have a means for hanging clothes _ a hook or peg may be sufficient.
- Give users sufficient privacy.

Separate use of changing facilities should be available to men and women.

1.5. Clothes storage

To prevent employees' own clothing coming into contact with work-soiled clothing or getting dirty or wet, separate storage for clean and contaminated clothing should be provided. The storage should:

- Allow wet clothing to be hung up to dry out during the course of the day.
- Be well ventilated.



1.6. Sources of information on workplace welfare requirements

Information on workplace welfare requirements can be obtained from:

- Enforcement bodies such as the Health and Safety Executive (website: <http://www.hse.gov.uk>) and OSHA (website: <http://www.osha.gov>).
- Professional bodies such as IOSH (website: <http://www.iosh.com>) and IIRSM (website: <http://www.iirsm.org>).

1.7. Module quiz

Select the best answer for the questions below:

Q1: Your boss wants you to tell him what is meant by welfare facilities, which of the following would be your answer?

- A) Welfare facilities are those necessary for the health of employees.
- B) Welfare facilities are those necessary for the tasks of employees.
- C) Welfare facilities are those necessary for the safety of employees.
- D) Welfare facilities are those necessary for the well-being of employees.

Q2: You manage a company that is based in the united states and you have 120 workers doing tasks require them to take a shower after work. How many showers you should made available for your male workers (100 workers)?

- A) 5.
- B) 10.
- C) 20.
- D) 25.

Answers:

The correct answer for question one is D. Welfare facilities are those necessary for the well-being of employees.

The correct answer for question two is B. Since your company is based in the united states, you have to comply with OSHA standards which entails that where showers are required to be provided in the workplace, one shower must be provided for every 10 employees of each sex.

Answer to question two can be found in OSHA General Industry Digest that can be found at: https://www.osha.gov/Publications/osh_a_2201.pdf.



Module 2: General working environment

2. Module 2: General working environment

2.1. Ventilation

Workplaces need to be adequately ventilated. Fresh, clean air should be drawn from a source outside the workplace, uncontaminated by discharges from flues, chimneys or other process outlets, and be circulated through the workrooms.

Ventilation should also remove and dilute warm, humid air and provide air movement which gives a sense of freshness without causing a draught.

If the workplace contains process or heating equipment or other sources of dust, fumes or vapours, more fresh air will be needed to provide adequate ventilation.

Windows or other openings may provide sufficient ventilation but, where necessary, mechanical ventilation systems should be provided and regularly maintained.

2.2. 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'.



Individual personal preference makes it difficult to specify a thermal environment which satisfies everyone. For workplaces where the activity is mainly sedentary, for example offices, the temperature should normally be at least 16 °C. If work involves physical effort, it should be at least 13 °C (unless other laws require lower temperatures).

The risk to the health of those working in hot or cold environments increases as conditions move further away from those generally accepted as comfortable. Risk of heat stress arises, for example, from working in high air temperatures, exposure to high thermal radiation or high levels of humidity, such as those found in foundries, glass works and laundries. Cold stress may arise, for example, from working in cold stores, food preparation areas and in the open air during winter.

Assessment of the risk to workers' health from working in either a hot or cold environment needs to consider both personal and environmental factors.

Personal factors include:

- Body activity.
- The amount and type of clothing.
- Duration of exposure.

Environmental factors include:

- Ambient temperature and radiant heat.
- Sunlight, wind velocity and the presence of rain or snow if the work is outside.

Actions arising from this assessment may include:

- Introducing engineering measures to control the thermal effects in a workplace environment such as:

- Insulating any plant which acts as a radiant heat source, thereby improving air movement, increasing ventilation rates and maintaining the appropriate level of humidity.
 - Orientating the building so that it doesn't suffer from the effects of solar loading, or where this is not possible, by the use of blinds or shutters on windows.
 - Using cab heaters in fork-lift trucks working in cold stores if it is not reasonably practicable to avoid exposure.
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- Restriction of exposure by, for example, re-organising tasks to build in rest periods or other breaks from work. This will allow workers to rest in an area where the environment is comfortable and, if necessary, to replace bodily fluids to combat dehydration or cold. If work rates cause excessive sweating, workers may need more frequent rest breaks and a facility for changing into dry clothing.
 - Medical pre-selection of employees to ensure that they are fit to work in these environments.
 - Use of suitable personal protective clothing (which may need to be heat resistant or insulating, depending on whether the risk is from heat or cold)
 - Training in the precautions to be taken.
 - Supervision, to ensure that the precautions identified by the assessment are taken.
 - Acclimatisation of workers to the environment in which they work, particularly for hot environments.

2.3. Lighting

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

If necessary, local lighting should be provided at individual workstations and at places of particular risk such as crossing points on traffic routes.

Lighting and light fittings should not create any hazard.

Automatic emergency lighting, powered by an independent source, should be provided where sudden loss of light would create a risk.

2.4. 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.

Cleaning and the removal of waste should be carried out as necessary by an effective method. Waste should be stored in suitable receptacles.

2.5. Room dimensions and space

Workrooms should have enough free space to allow people to move about with ease.

The volume of the room when empty, divided by the number of people normally working in it, should be at least 11 cubic metres. All or part of a room over 3.0 m high should be counted as 3.0 m high.

11 cubic metres per person is a minimum and may be insufficient depending on the layout, contents and the nature of the work.

2.6. Sources of information on general working environment requirements

Information on general working environment requirements can be obtained from:

- Enforcement bodies such as the Health and Safety Executive (website: <http://www.hse.gov.uk>) and OSHA (website: <http://www.osha.gov>).
- Professional bodies such as IOSH (website: <http://www.iosh.com>) and IIRSM (website: <http://www.iirsm.org>).

2.7. Module quiz

Select the best answer for the questions below:

Q1: For which of the below working environment factors will good control help controlling another factor in the list?

- A) Temperature.
- B) Ventilation.
- C) Lighting.
- D) Cleaning.

Q2: Recent rules by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) imply that exposure to welding fumes, including those produced from mild steel must be controlled by effective engineering measures. What was the reason?

- A) The huge amount of complaints received recently from those exposed to welding fumes.
- B) The recently-discovered influence that welding fumes have on workers' respiratory systems.
- C) The recently-discovered influence that welding fumes have on workers' sight.
- D) The recent classification of welding fumes as a human carcinogen.

Answers

The correct answer for question one is B. Good ventilation helps controlling workplace temperature.

The correct answer for question two is D. The recent classification of welding fumes as a human carcinogen made the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) introduce new rules that apply to all industries and imply that any exposure to welding fumes must be controlled by effective engineering measures.

Answer to question two can be found in the IOSH magazine article 'HSE updates guidance on enforcement for welding fumes' which can be viewed in the link below:
<https://www.ioshmagazine.com/article/hse-updates-guidance-on-enforcement-for-welding-fumes>.