

Health and Safety Practice Guidance Note

**Workplace Regulations**

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The Workplace Regulations aim to ensure that workplaces meet the health, safety and welfare needs of each member of the Northumberland Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (the Trust) workforce, both able bodied and those staff with disabilities. Several of the Regulations require things to be ‘suitable’ as defined in regulation 2(3) in a way which makes it clear that traffic routes, facilities and workstations which are used by people with disabilities should be suitable for them to use. These Regulations apply to a very wide range of workplaces, not only factories, shops and offices but, 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 work sites (but not construction sites).

## **2. WHAT DO THE REGULATIONS COVER**

- 2.1 The regulations cover a wide range of workplace requirements including the provision and maintenance of a safe working environment. The comfort and welfare arrangements made available for staff, the way work is performed and the equipment used in any work task or process. These guidance notes will give managers and staff information on how a safe work environment should be maintained. This guidance is not meant to duplicate every aspect of the Workplace Health Safety and Welfare approved codes of practice. However, further advice and assistance with monitoring these requirements can be sought from the Patient Safety and Estates Officers.

## **3. WHAT IS A WORK PLACE**

- 3.1 A workplace is part of premises which are not domestic premises and are made available to any person as a place of work, and includes –
- 3.1 (a) Any place within the premises to which such person has access while at work, and,
- 3.2 (b) Any room, lobby, corridor, staircase, road or other place used as a means of access to or egress from that place of work or where facilities are provided for use in connection with the place of work other than a public road;

## **4. MAINTENANCE OF WORKPLACE, EQUIPMENT, DEVICES AND SYSTEMS**

- 4.1 The workplace, and the equipment and devices mentioned in these Guidance Notes, should be maintained in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair. 'Efficient' in this context means efficient from the view of health, safety and welfare.
- 4.2 If a potentially dangerous defect is discovered, the defect should be rectified immediately or steps should be taken to protect anyone who might be put at risk, for example by preventing access until the work can be carried out or the equipment replaced. Where the defect does not pose a danger but makes the equipment unsuitable for use, for example a toilet with a defective flushing mechanism, it may be taken out of service until it is repaired or replaced, but if this would result in the number of facilities being less than that required by the Regulations, the defect should be rectified without delay.
- 4.3 Steps should be taken to ensure that a suitable system of maintenance is in place ensuring that.
- Repair and maintenance is carried out properly
  - That there is a system of regular maintenance (including, as necessary, inspection, testing, adjustment, lubrication and cleaning) is carried out at suitable intervals.
  - Any potentially dangerous defects are remedied, and that access to defective equipment is prevented in the meantime.

- regular maintenance and remedial work is carried out properly, and a suitable record is kept to ensure that the system is properly implemented and to assist in validating maintenance programmes.

## 5 TEMPERATURE (Thermal Comfort HSE guidance)

- 5.1 Thermal comfort is very difficult to define. This is because you need to take into account a range of environmental and personal factors when deciding on the temperatures and ventilation that will make your staff feel comfortable. The best that you can realistically hope to achieve is a thermal environment which satisfies the majority of people in the workplace, or put more simply, 'reasonable comfort'.
- 5.2. The temperature in workrooms should normally be at least 16 degrees Celsius unless much of the work or activity or involves severe physical effort such as gymnasiums in which case the temperature should be at least 13 degrees Celsius. These temperatures may not, however, ensure reasonable comfort, depending on other factors such as air movement and relative humidity. These temperatures refer to readings taken using an ordinary dry bulb thermometer, close to workstations, at working height and away from windows.
- 5.3 In patient environments, in the Wards, Units, Departments and Community homes where particularly vulnerable patients and service users are housed NHS guidance would recommend that an environment of between 19 degrees and 23 degrees Celsius be maintained.

Typical Areas	Air Temperature
Offices	18 -19°C
General activity rooms	18 -21°C
Geriatric Wards	21°C
Bedrooms	18°C
Entrance and circulation	16°C
Shower and bathrooms	21°C
Service and store rooms	10-16°C
Hydrotherapy Pool	26°C

- 5.4 Where, despite the provision of local heating or cooling, workers are exposed to temperatures which do not give reasonable comfort, suitable protective clothing and rest facilities should be provided. Where practical there should be systems of work (for example, task rotation) to ensure that the length of time for which individual workers are exposed to uncomfortable temperatures is limited.
- 5.5 Where a reasonably comfortable temperature cannot be achieved throughout a workroom, local heating or cooling (as appropriate) should be provided. In extremely hot weather fans and increased ventilation may be used instead of local cooling. Access to plentiful supplies of mains potable drinking water should be made available.

## **5.6 Thermometers**

- 5.6.1 Thermometers should be available at a convenient distance from every part of the workplace to persons at work to enable temperatures to be measured throughout the workplace, but need not be provided in each room.

## **6 VENTILATION**

- 6.1 Enclosed workplaces should be sufficiently well ventilated so that stale air, and air which is hot or humid because of the processes or equipment in the workplace, is replaced at a reasonable rate.
- 6.2 The air which is introduced should, as far as possible, be free of any impurity which is likely to be offensive or cause ill health. Air which is taken from the outside can normally be considered to be 'fresh', but air inlets for ventilation systems should not be sited where they may draw in excessively contaminated air (for example close to a flue, an exhaust ventilation system).
- 6.3 The air which is introduced should, as far as possible, be free of any outlet, or an area in which vehicles manoeuvre). Where necessary the inlet air should be filtered to remove particulates. In many cases, windows or other openings will provide sufficient ventilation in some or all parts of the workplace. Where necessary, mechanical ventilation systems should be provided for parts or all of the workplace, as appropriate.
- 6.4 Mechanical ventilation systems (including air-conditioning systems) should be regularly and properly cleaned, tested and maintained to ensure that they are kept clean and free from anything which may contaminate the air.

## **7. LIGHTING**

- 7.1 People generally prefer to work in natural rather than artificial light. In both new and existing workplaces workstations should be sited to take advantage of the available natural light. Natural lighting may not be feasible where windows have to be covered for security reasons or where process requirements necessitate particular lighting conditions.
- 7.2 Lighting should be sufficient to enable people to work, use facilities and move from place to place safely and without experiencing eye-strain. The nature of the work involved would determine the level of lighting needed. For instance, very fine work in activities such as arts or crafts or when moving or handling a patient or service user so staff can see exactly what they are doing.
- 7.3 **Light measurements**
- 7.3.1 There are accepted standards of lighting dependant upon the work being carried in a particular environment. The patient safety officers have light measuring equipment which can determine whether these standards are being met or if there is a problem with too much light causing glare or dazzle.
- 7.3.2 Stairs should be well lit in such a way that shadows are not cast over the main part of the treads. Where necessary, local lighting should be provided at individual workstations and at places of particular risk such as pedestrian

crossing points on vehicular traffic routes. Outdoor traffic routes used by pedestrians should be adequately lit after dark.

- 7.3.3 Dazzling lights and annoying glare should be avoided. There are various methods of reducing light nuisance and every effort should be made to diffuse light evenly without compromise. Lights and light fittings should be of a type, and so positioned, that they do not cause a hazard (including electrical, fire, and radiation or collision hazards). Light switches should be positioned so that they may be found and used easily and without risk.
- 7.3.4 Emergency lighting should be powered by a source independent from that of normal lighting. It should be immediately effective in the event of failure of the normal lighting, without need for action by anyone. It should provide sufficient light to enable persons at work to take any action necessary to ensure their, and others', health and safety.

## **8 WELFARE**

- 8.1 Drinking water should normally be obtained from a public or private water supply by means of a tap on a pipe connected directly to the water main.
- 8.2 Water should only be provided in refillable containers where it cannot be obtained directly from a mains supply. Such containers should be suitably enclosed to prevent contamination and should be refilled at least daily.
- 8.3 Drinking cups or beakers should be provided unless the supply is by means of a drinking fountain. In the case of non-disposable cups a facility for washing them should be provided nearby.

### **8.4 Sanitary Conveniences (TOILETS)**

- Suitable and sufficient sanitary conveniences shall be provided at readily accessible places. Conveniences shall not be suitable unless the rooms containing them are adequately ventilated and lit.
- They and the rooms containing them are kept in a clean and orderly condition; and,
- Separate rooms containing conveniences are provided for men and women except where and so far as each convenience is in a separate room the door of which is capable of being secured from inside.

### **8.5 Washing Facilities**

- 8.5.1 Suitable and sufficient washing facilities, including showers if required by the nature of the work or for health reasons, shall be provided at readily accessible places.
- 8.5.2 Washing facilities shall not be suitable unless:
- They are provided in the immediate vicinity of every sanitary convenience, whether or not provided elsewhere as well.
  - They are provided in the vicinity of any changing rooms required by these regulations, whether or not provided elsewhere as well; they include a supply of

clean hot and cold, or warm, water (which shall be running water so far as is practicable).

- They include soap or other suitable means of cleaning; they include towels or other suitable means of drying; the rooms containing them are sufficiently ventilated and lit. please refer to practice guidance note contained within Infection, Prevention and Control Policy, **IPC- PGN-04.1 - Hand hygiene and use of alcohol rub**
- They and the rooms containing them are kept in a clean and orderly condition; and separate facilities are provided for men and women, except where and so far as they are provided in a room the door of which is capable of being secured from inside and the facilities in each such room are intended only to be used by one person at a time.

## 8.6 Guide

Number of people at work	Number of Toilets	Number of wash stations
1 to 5	1	1
6 to 25	2	2
26 to 50	3	3
51 to 75	4	4
76 to 100	5	5

## 8.7 Facilities for Rest and to Eat Meals

8.7.1 Suitable and sufficient rest facilities shall be provided at readily accessible places. Rest facilities provided shall where necessary for reasons of health or safety include, in the case of a new workplace, an extension or a conversion, rest facilities provided in one or more rest rooms, or, in other cases, in rest rooms or rest areas; include suitable facilities to eat meals where food eaten in the workplace would otherwise be likely to become contaminated.

8.7.2 Suitable facilities shall be provided for any person at work who is a pregnant woman or nursing mother to rest. Suitable and sufficient facilities shall be provided for persons at work to eat meals where meals are regularly eaten in the workplace. Please see practice guidance note **HS-PGN-06 New and Expectant Mothers**

## 8.8 Room Occupancy Dimensions and Space

8.8.1 Workrooms should have enough free space to allow people to get to and from workstations and to move within the room, with ease. The number of people who may work in any particular room at any one time will depend not only on the size of the room, but on the space taken up by furniture, fittings, equipment, and on the layout of the room.

8.8.2 Workrooms, except those where people only work for short periods, should be of sufficient height (from floor to ceiling) over most of the room to enable safe



access to workstations. In older buildings with obstructions such as low beams the obstruction should be clearly marked.

- 8.8.3 The total volume of the room, when empty, divided by the number of people normally working in it should be at least 11 cubic metres. In making this calculation a room or part of a room which is more than 3.0 m high should be counted as 3.0 m high. The figure of 11 cubic metres per person is a minimum and may be insufficient if, for example, much of the room is taken up by furniture etc.
- 8.8.4 The figure of 11 cubic metres referred to in the previous paragraph does not apply to:
- (a) retail sales kiosks, attendants' shelters, machine control cabs or similar small structures, where space is necessarily limited; or
  - (b) rooms being used for lectures, meetings and similar purposes.
- 8.8.5 Workstations including seating, and access to workstations, should be suitable for any special needs of the individual worker, including workers with disabilities.
- 8.8.6 Each workstation should allow any person who is likely to work there adequate freedom of movement and the ability to stand upright. Spells of work which unavoidably have to be carried out in cramped conditions should be kept as short as possible and there should be sufficient space nearby to relieve discomfort.
- 8.8.7 Guidance on computer workstation design and ergonomics should be sought from practice guidance note **HS-PGN 05 - Display Screen Equipment**.

## 8.9 Accommodation for Clothing

- 8.9.1 Where staff are exposed to the elements or where substances or processes are involved which may be infectious, unpleasant or which may contaminate workers clothes
- 8.9.2 Suitable and sufficient accommodation shall be provided –
- (a) For the clothing of any person at work which is not worn during working Hours; and,
  - (b) For special clothing or work wear which is worn by any person at work but which is not taken home.
- 8.9.3 The accommodation can be a staff room where the items are secure or a lockable cabinet within that room where items are secure, free from the risk of damage or deterioration. Staff should have use of a peg as minimum or individual locker.
- 8.9.4 Where the work may involve risks to health from Infectious agents or damage separate accommodation should be provided where work clothes are separate from other clothing and where so far as is reasonably practicable, it allows or includes facilities for drying clothing; and it is in a suitable location.
- 8.9.5 Special work clothing includes all clothing which is only worn at work such as overalls, uniforms, thermal clothing and hats worn for food hygiene purposes.

Accommodation for work clothing and workers' own personal clothing should enable it to hang in a clean, warm, dry, well-ventilated place where it can dry out during the course of a working day if necessary.

## **9 HOT WATER MANAGEMENT AND SAFE SURFACE TEMPERATURES**

9.1 NHS Estates guidance on hot water management details the rationale of thermostatically controlling all high risk outlets by use of a Thermostatic Mixing Valve (TMV). **NHS Estates Guidance 1998**

9.2 The outlets which pose the highest risk to vulnerable patients and service users include baths, showers and bidets. Managers and Team Leaders have a duty to ensure all hot water outlets including facilities such as kitchen sinks and hand wash basins are risk assessed and if necessary controlled by a (TMV). Managers of Wards, Units and Departments where patients are not at risk from scalding can request that the water temperatures are raised as long as suitable and sufficient risk assessments have been conducted. **(See Appendix 1)**

9.3 The need to raise water temperatures may be for a variety of reasons for the comfort of the patient in which case a clinical assessment should be undertaken. To safeguard the spread of infectious agents or where food preparation is performed in which case a general risk assessment should be undertaken. In these examples and similar instances the temperatures should be set as low as is reasonable to achieve the desired effect or to comply with the relevant guidance.

9.4 The Estates Department will fit or oversee the work of fitting the TMV and once fitted will monitor the performance of the valves on a regular basis. Ward, Unit and Department Managers would be expected to maintain a regular weekly testing regime of all outlets keeping a record of the temperatures and informing estates of any excessive temperatures noted. **(See Appendix 3)**

### **9.5 Electric Showers**

9.5.1 Where the risk of scalding exists from patients or service users altering the water temperatures intentionally or accidentally, a fixed temperature shower should be fitted and the temperature set at the Trust guidance level. If a higher temperature is required the manager, team leader or supervisor should support this with a suitable assessment of the risks involved submitting this to the estates department.

### **9.6 Safe Surface Temperatures**

9.6.1 Any space heating device including thermal storage heaters oil filled radiators as well as conventional radiators, towel rails or other heating devices. Wherever patients or service users have access, the maximum surface temperature of the space heating device should not exceed 43 degrees Celsius. **(See Appendix 1)**

9.6.2 Options open to estates to ensure safety are;

- Guards which enclose the device and prohibit access
- Low surface temperature emitters
- Flow temperature control



## **9.7 Exposed Pipe Work**

- 9.7.1 Surface mounted pipe work whether vertical or horizontal which is exposed at Low level should be securely insulated or boxed in.

## **9.8 Radiator Guards**

- 9.8.1 Where guards are fitted to a device they should be of an agreed Trust standard design which prevents access to smaller hands and can easily be cleaned.

## **10 FLOORING AND FLOOR COVERINGS**

- 10.1 Every floor in a workplace and the surface of every traffic route in a workplace shall be of a construction such that the floor or surface of the traffic route is suitable for the purpose for which it is used. Other areas to consider are gymnasiums play areas and court yards where ball games and recreational activities take place.

- 10.2 The floor, or surface of the traffic route, shall have no hole or slope, or be uneven or slippery so as, in each case, to expose any person to a risk to his health or safety; and every such floor shall have effective means of drainage where necessary.

- 10.3 So far as is reasonably practicable, every floor in a workplace and the surface of every traffic route in a workplace shall be kept free from obstructions and from any article or substance which may cause a person to slip, trip or fall.

- 10.4 Surfaces of floors and traffic routes which are likely to get wet, have holes, bumps or uneven areas resulting from damage or wear and tear, and which may cause a person to trip or fall, should be made good. Until they can be made good, adequate precautions should be taken against accidents, for example by barriers or conspicuous marking.

- 10.5 Temporary holes, for example an area where floor boards have been removed, should be adequately guarded. Account should be taken of people with impaired vision or no sight. Surfaces with small holes (for example metal gratings) are acceptable provided they are not likely to be a hazard.

- 10.6 Surfaces of floors and traffic routes which are likely to get wet or be subject to spillages should be of a type which does not become unduly slippery. A slip-resistant coating should be applied where necessary.

- 10.7 Floors near to machinery which could cause injury if anyone were to fall against it (for example a woodworking or machine process) should be slip-resistant and be kept free from slippery substances or loose materials.

## **11 PREVENTING SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS**

- 11.1 Managers seeking to improve work areas and procure new flooring must have the right information to enable them to source products which are suitable for preventing slips and trips. It is essential that they can be sure that the product description gives a good indication of how the flooring will perform in its intended use and how it should be cleaned and maintained. Furthermore, manufacturers and suppliers have a legal duty to provide accurate descriptions of their products to ensure the performance and serviceability.

- 11.2 Many wards and units use wheeled transport and moving and handling aids such as trolleys, wheel chairs, mobile hoists, and specialist chairs where the wheels may not glide as intended. The performance of these items will need to be considered where cushioned flooring is fitted to limit injury from patient falls and where staff may find difficulty in maneuvering the items when under load.
- 11.3 **Design out problems** - Good design can also prevent contamination from getting onto the floor, e.g. fit canopies over entrances, and fix leaks on machines and installations where liquids are used.
- 11.4 **Review work activities** - Contamination comes in various forms, fluids, dust, food and drink, polythene, cardboard. It is usually created by the work activity, so an assessment of the activity and way in which people work is essential if it is to be prevented from getting on to the floor.
- 11.5 **What tasks are taking place?** - What tasks might compromise the ability to walk safely? Is there a need to carry, lift, push or pull loads? Are people rushing about? Do they have hands free to hold on to hand rails? Are they being distracted? Scrutinize the work activities and process flow to see if it can be handled better. Don't forget about vulnerable people, that is, anyone who may have a poor knowledge of the risks or poor health and agility? What about visitors or members of the public?
- A Can floor roughness be improved?** Firstly through better cleaning systems and lastly through etching or other roughness enhancing techniques. Remember etching and other techniques won't work on all floors, will shorten the life of the floor and will probably need to be repeated.
- B Replace the floor** - Replacing the floor should in most instances be a last course of action, but in others might be the only course of action
- 11.6 **Role of Slip- Resistant Footwear**
- 11.6.1 Selection and use of the most appropriate footwear for the work environment can have a dramatic effect on reducing accidents. If there is still a residual slip risk after slip controls have been put in place, footwear with slip-resistant properties has an important part to play in further reducing the risk. There are several Slips and trips case studies which show how slip-resistant footwear has helped to reduce accidents in different environments. Manufacturers and suppliers have a key role in ensuring that suitable products are available and that companies have the information to enable them to make the right choice. Please refer to practice guidance note **HS-PGN-04 - Personal Protective Equipment**
- 11.7 **Preventing falls from height**
- 11.7.1 Much of the work involved within the Trust which requires work at height will be assessed as low level risk where staff have to use ladders or steps to access cupboards or perform domestic cleaning duties. Our estates and grounds and gardens staff may have to conduct work at height which would be described as hazardous and often involves the use of work equipment. All of these tasks are covered by the work at height regulations and managers should take all precautions to ensure compliance with the regulations and plan and assess the task to be undertaken.

Please refer to the Trust's policy, **NTW(O)33 - Risk Management** on formulating risk assessments. Further guidance on the use ladder and access equipment can be obtained from the patient safety department.

## 11.8 What is 'work at height'?

11.8.1 A place is 'at height' if (unless these Regulations are followed) a person could be injured falling from it, even if it is at or below ground level.

11.8.2 The Work at Height Regulations 2005 applies to all work at height where there is a risk of a fall liable to cause personal injury. They place duties on employers, the self-employed, and any person who controls the work of others (e.g. facilities managers or building owners who may contract others to work at height) to the extent they control the work.

11.8.3 The Regulations require duty holders to ensure:

- all work at height is properly planned and organised;
- all work at height takes account of weather conditions that could endanger health and safety;
- those involved in work at height are trained and competent;
- the place where work at height is done is safe;
- equipment for work at height is appropriately inspected;
- the risks from fragile surfaces are properly controlled; and,
- the risks from falling objects are properly controlled.

11.8.4 You must:

- ensure that no work is done at height if it is safe and reasonably practicable to do it other than at height;
- ensure that the work is properly planned, appropriately supervised, and carried
- out in as safe a way as is reasonably practicable;
- plan for emergencies and rescue;
- take account of the risk assessment carried out under regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations.
- where they cannot eliminate the risk of a fall, use work
- equipment or other measures to minimise the distance
- and consequences of a fall should one occur.
- use work equipment or other
- measures to prevent falls where they
- cannot avoid working at height; and,
- avoid work at height where they can;

## 12 GLAZING

12.1 The main risks associated with glass and glazed areas are impact from a collision due to a slip trip or fall, the most likely locations for impacts leading to injuries are in doors and door side panels and at low level in walls and partitions. In doors and door side panels, the risk is at its greatest between floor and

shoulder level, when near to door handles and push plates: especially when normal building movement causes doors to stick. Hands, wrists and arms are particularly vulnerable. An initial impact between waist and shoulder level may be followed by a fall through the glazing, resulting in additional injury to the face and body. See: **N1/2 Protection against impact (see Page 11)**

## 13 PROTECTION AGAINST IMPACT

### N1/2

## Section 1: Protection against impact

### Critical locations

**1.1** The following locations may be considered 'critical' in terms of safety;

- a. between finished floor level and 800mm above that level in internal and external walls and partitions (see Diagram 1);
- b. between finished floor level and 1500mm above that level in a door or in a side panel, close to either edge of the door (see Diagram 1).

### Reducing the risks

- 1.2** Glazing in critical locations should either,
- a. break safely, if it breaks (see paragraph 1.3); or
  - b. be robust or in small panes (see paragraphs 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6 and Diagrams 2 and 3); or
  - c. be permanently protected (see paragraphs 1.7 and 1.8 and Diagram 4).

### Safe breakage

**1.3** Safe breakage is defined in BS 6206:1981 Specification for impact performance requirements for flat safety glass and safety plastics for use in buildings: clause 5.3, and is based on an impact test which requires the result of the impact to be limited to creating:

- a. a small clear opening only, with a limit to the size of the detached particles; or
- b. disintegration, with small detached particles; or
- c. breakage resulting in separate pieces that are not sharp or pointed.

In terms of safe breakage, a glazing material suitable for installation in a critical location would satisfy the requirements of Class C of BS 6206 or, if it is installed in a door or in a door side panel and has a pane width exceeding 900mm, the requirements of Class B of the same standard.

### Robustness

**1.4** Some glazing materials, such as annealed glass, gain strength through thickness; others such as polycarbonates or glass blocks are inherently strong. Some annealed glass is considered suitable for use in large areas forming fronts to shops, showrooms, offices, factories and public buildings. Reasonable glass thickness/dimension limits for annealed glass which may be used in these locations are shown in Diagram 2 (see also paragraph 2.1).

Diagram 2 Annealed glass thickness/ dimension limits

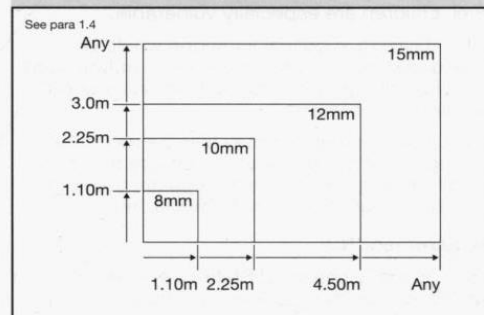


Diagram 1 Critical locations in internal and external walls

