

Top Compliance (Pty) Ltd

Occupational Health and Safety

Your business' safety is our concern

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June 2026

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First Aid Readiness in the Workplace

A workplace emergency can happen at any time. A person may be injured by a fall, machinery, sharp objects, chemicals, burns, electrical equipment, or a sudden medical emergency. When this happens, the first few minutes are critical. First aid readiness is therefore not only a good workplace practice; it is part of the employer's legal duty to provide and maintain a working environment that is safe and without risk to the health of employees.

In terms of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993, Section 8, every employer must provide and maintain, as far as reasonably practicable, a working environment that is safe and without risk to the health of employees. This includes having proper emergency arrangements in place. Section 13 further requires the employer to ensure that employees are informed of hazards and the precautionary measures that must be followed. First aid procedures, emergency numbers and incident reporting processes must therefore be communicated to employees and not simply placed in a file.

Trained First Aiders

The General Safety Regulations, Regulation 3, deals specifically with first aid, emergency equipment and procedures. Regulation 3(1) requires the employer to take all reasonable steps necessary to ensure that persons at work receive prompt first aid treatment in case of injury or emergency.

Where more than 10 employees are employed at a workplace, the employer must ensure that a competent first aider is readily available during normal working hours. The required minimum ratio is generally:

- one first aider for every group of up to 100 employees in an office or shop; and
- one first aider for every group of up to 50 employees in any other workplace.

However, employers should remember that these are minimum requirements. The risk profile of the workplace must also be considered. A low-risk office will not have the same first aid needs as a factory, workshop, laboratory, school, kitchen, maintenance department, warehouse or construction-related environment. Higher-risk workplaces may require more trained first aiders, additional emergency equipment, and more detailed procedures.

First aiders must also be properly appointed, trained and available. A certificate in a file is not enough if the person is absent, unknown to staff, or not available during working hours. Employers should ensure that first aiders are clearly identified, that their certificates are valid, and that employees know who to call in an emergency.

Stocked and Accessible First Aid Boxes

General Safety Regulation 3(2) requires that where more than five employees are employed at a workplace, the employer must provide a first aid box or boxes at or near the workplace. These boxes must be available and accessible for the treatment of injured persons.

A first aid box should not be locked away where employees cannot access it during an emergency. It should be placed where it can be reached quickly, taking into account the layout and risks of the workplace. In larger workplaces, more than one first aid box may be needed.

First aid boxes should be inspected regularly to ensure that:

- the contents are complete;
- used items are replaced immediately;
- expired items are removed and replaced;
- sterile items remain sealed;
- the box is clean and clearly marked;
- the responsible person is identified; and
- the inspection checklist is completed honestly and consistently.

It is also important that the contents of the first aid box are suitable for the workplace risks. For example, areas where chemicals are used may require eye wash facilities or additional emergency equipment. Kitchens may require suitable burn dressings. Workshops and factories may require additional wound care supplies, depending on the risk assessment.

Emergency Numbers and Communication

Emergency numbers must be clearly displayed and easy to find. During an emergency, employees should not waste time searching for the correct contact details. Emergency numbers should be placed near telephones, first aid boxes, reception areas, notice boards, security points and high-risk areas.

The list should include, where applicable:

- ambulance or emergency medical services;
- fire department;
- police or security;
- local hospital or clinic;
- poison information centre, where relevant;
- internal first aiders;
- management contact persons;
- evacuation marshal or emergency coordinator; and
- maintenance or facilities support.

Employees must also know what to do when an emergency occurs. This includes who must be contacted, who must meet the ambulance or emergency services at the gate, who must control the scene, and who must complete the incident documentation afterwards. Emergency procedures must be practical, communicated and tested.

Incident Reporting

All injuries, incidents and near misses must be reported. A small injury or near miss may be a warning sign of a more serious event waiting to happen. Internal incident reporting allows the employer to investigate the root cause, correct unsafe conditions, update the HIRA and Safe Work Procedures, and prevent a recurrence.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act, Section 24, requires certain incidents to be reported to the inspector. This includes incidents where a person dies, becomes unconscious, loses a limb or part of a limb, or is injured or becomes ill to such a degree that they are likely to die, suffer a permanent physical defect, or be unable to work for a prescribed period.

Incident reporting should therefore include:

- immediate care of the injured person;
- making the area safe;
- notifying the supervisor or responsible person;
- recording witness details;
- completing the internal incident report;
- investigating the root cause;
- updating HIRA, SWP, training and checklists where required;
- discussing findings with the OHS committee where applicable; and
- reporting to the Department of Employment and Labour where legally required.

No employee should be discouraged from reporting an incident. Failure to report can delay treatment, weaken the investigation, affect compensation processes, and expose the employer to legal risk.

COIDA and Injury on Duty Procedures

If an employee is injured during the course and scope of employment, the matter may need to be handled as an Injury on Duty claim under the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act 130 of 1993.

Employees must report the injury to the employer as soon as possible. The employer must then follow the prescribed Compensation Fund process and submit the required documentation within the required timeframe. In general, an injury on duty must be reported to the Compensation Fund within seven days after the employer receives notice of the accident.

The COIDA/IOD process may include:

- recording the details of the accident;
- obtaining witness information;
- completing the required Compensation Fund documentation;
- issuing the correct forms for medical treatment;
- ensuring that medical reports are obtained from the treating doctor;
- submitting the claim through the prescribed Compensation Fund process;
- keeping copies of all documents submitted;
- following up on the claim; and
- ensuring that the incident investigation and corrective actions are completed.

Where applicable, employers must also consider whether the incident falls under another compensation system, such as the Rand Mutual Assurance process for certain industries.

Practical Management Requirements

To ensure first aid readiness, management should regularly check that:

- first aiders are trained, appointed and available;

- first aid certificates are valid;
- first aid boxes are stocked, clean, marked and accessible;
- emergency numbers are displayed and up to date;
- employees know the emergency procedure;
- incidents, injuries and near misses are reported;
- reportable incidents are escalated correctly;
- COIDA/IOD documentation is completed and submitted on time;
- HIRA and SWP documents are reviewed after incidents; and
- corrective actions are implemented and monitored.

First aid readiness is not about having a box on the wall for audit purposes. It is about being prepared to respond quickly, correctly and calmly when a person is injured or becomes ill at work. Trained first aiders, stocked first aid boxes, visible emergency numbers, proper incident reporting and correct COIDA/IOD procedures all form part of an effective health and safety system.

A well-prepared workplace can reduce the severity of injuries, improve emergency response, support legal compliance, and demonstrate that the employer takes the health and safety of employees seriously.

For more information, please contact us on info@topcompliance.co.za

Yours in Health and Safety

				
Occupational health and safety auditing and consulting		Online safety shop		
				
Appointments, checklists and templates	First aid equipment	Signage	Legal posters	Safety Equipment

Courses offered by Top Compliance (Pty) Ltd

ONLINE ACADEMY - https://academy.topcompliance.co.za/		
Occupational Health and Safety Courses	Online	Onsite Excluding travel
Safety representative – Legal Liability	R980.00	R1300.00
The Occupational Health and Safety Act & responsibilities of management – Legal Liability	R1250.00	R 1730.00

Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	R735.00	R875.00
Food facility health & safety course in terms of R638	R735.00	R875.00
Basic Ladder Safety Course	R735.00	R875.00
Fire Fighting and Prevention Courses		
Fire Marshal - Basic firefighting	R735.00	R875.00
Fire & Evacuation marshal - Basic firefighting with emergency action planning	R810.00	R950.00
First aid		
Level 1 - US 119567 - Perform basic life support and first aid procedures – THEORY MODULE	R400.00	-

ONLINE ACADEMY - https://academy.topcompliance.co.za/		
Occupational Health and Safety Courses		
Safety representative – Legal Liability		
The Occupational Health and Safety Act & responsibilities of management – Legal Liability		
Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment		
Food facility health & safety course in terms of R638		
Basic Ladder Safety Course		
Fire Fighting and Prevention Courses		
Fire Marshal - Basic firefighting		
Fire & Evacuation marshal - Basic firefighting with emergency action planning		

ONSITE TRAINING	
First Aid Courses:	
Level 1 - US 119567 - Perform basic life support and first aid procedures	2 days
Level 2 - US 120496 - Provide risk-based primary emergency care/first aid in the workplace	3 days
Level 3 - US 376480 - Provide first aid as an advanced first responder	3 days
Level 1 & 2 - US 119567 & 120496	3 days
Level 1, 2 & 3 - US 119567, 120496 & 376480	5 days
Level 2 & 3 - US 120496 & 376480	3 days
Child and infant CPR & choking	6 hours
Adult CPR & choking	6 hours
Adult CPR & choking and AED	1 day
Occupational Health and Safety Courses	
Safety representative – Legal Liability	1 day
The Occupational Health and Safety Act & responsibilities of management – Legal Liability	1 day
Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment	1 day
Food facility health & safety course in terms of R638	6 hours
Basic Ladder Safety	6 hours
Fire Fighting and Prevention Courses	
Fire Marshal - Basic firefighting	6 hours
Fire & Evacuation marshal - Basic firefighting with emergency action planning	1 day