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Legal requirements of first aid in the workplace

Accidents and medical emergencies can happen at any time, whether at work, at home or in a public place, regardless of how safe the environment may appear. For employers, ensuring that employees are trained in first aid is not just a best practice but a legal obligation in South Africa under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) 85 of 1993 and its supporting regulations. More importantly, having staff members equipped with lifesaving knowledge and skills can be the difference between a minor incident and a tragedy.

In recent years, first aid training has become more accessible through modern learning approaches. Organisations can now benefit from blended training that combines online theory with in-person practical sessions. Delegates complete the theoretical component in their own time, at their own pace, before attending a practical day where they apply what they have learned in realistic, hands-on scenarios. This flexible method reduces downtime for businesses while still ensuring compliance with workplace health and safety requirements.

The importance of first aid in the workplace cannot be overstated. Emergencies rarely come with warning, and the ability of a trained colleague to step in quickly can save a life or prevent an injury from becoming more serious. Immediate care provided in those first few critical minutes before professional emergency services arrive often determines the outcome of the situation. Beyond the lifesaving aspect, prompt and effective response also helps to reduce the severity of injuries, improves the recovery process, and creates a workplace culture where safety and care are valued. When employees see that their wellbeing is a priority, it fosters trust and improves morale.

The legal framework places a clear responsibility on employers. According to the General Safety Regulations, every employer is required to provide first aid equipment and facilities suitable for their specific workplace. In any workplace where more than five employees are employed, at least one trained first aider must be appointed. The number of first aiders increases depending on both the number of staff and the level of risk in the environment. These first aiders must hold valid, up-to-date training certificates issued by an accredited provider. Non-compliance not only exposes employees to unnecessary danger but can also result in penalties, reputational damage, and potential legal action against the organisation.

First aid training is designed to give employees the knowledge and practical skills to respond effectively to a wide range of emergencies. Our programme covers all key areas required to meet legal standards and prepare staff for real-world incidents. Topics range from managing an emergency scene and understanding

basic anatomy and physiology to assessing an emergency and providing care for life-threatening conditions such as cardiac arrest, choking, shock, and severe bleeding. Delegates also learn how to treat wounds, burns, fractures, joint injuries, and head or spinal injuries, as well as how to position and monitor an unconscious patient. Respiratory disorders, managing bodily fluid spills, and the correct completion of a first aid report are also included, ensuring that trainees are fully prepared for both the medical and administrative responsibilities of a first aider.

The structure of the training reflects both convenience and quality. Day one is completed online, allowing delegates to engage with the theoretical material at a pace that suits them. This approach ensures that they arrive at the practical session with a solid foundation of knowledge. Day two focuses entirely on practical application. Under the guidance of professional trainers, delegates practice critical interventions such as CPR, choking (for adult, child and infant) wound management, stabilisation of fractures, and safe movement of patients. By the end of the course, they not only meet the requirements of the OHSA but also gain the confidence and competence to act decisively in an emergency at work, at home or in a public place.

First aid in the workplace is not only about meeting legal obligations; it is about protecting people. Every employer has a duty of care to provide a safe environment, and first aid training is one of the most direct and effective ways to honour that responsibility. Investing in training shows commitment to staff wellbeing, strengthens organisational resilience, and most importantly, equips employees with the skills that could one day save a colleague's life.

With the blended training model now available, there has never been a better time to prioritise first aid in your organisation. The convenience of online theory combined with the essential hands-on experience of a practical day ensures both compliance and competence. In an emergency, every second counts; and with trained first aiders in the workplace, those seconds can make all the difference.

With our flexible training option, you can now complete the theory component online in your own time, making it easier than ever to fit into your busy schedule. You'll only need to attend the practical session on day two to gain hands-on experience and complete your certification.

Should you require further assistance or advice feel free to email 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	-

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Occupational Health and Safety Courses
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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