



Top Compliance (Pty) Ltd

Occupational Health and Safety

Your business' safety is our concern

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“Good enough” safety in the workplace. When compliance becomes complacency.

In many workplaces, health and safety is approached with the mindset of being “good enough.” Policies are in place, files appear complete, and [mandatory training](#) has been conducted, at least on record. From the outside, the organisation looks compliant. However, “good enough” safety often reflects minimum legal compliance rather than effective risk management. While compliance is essential, stopping at the bare minimum creates a false sense of security and can expose employees, contractors, learners, and visitors to preventable harm.

The [Occupational Health and Safety Act, No. 85 of 1993](#) places a general duty of care on employers that extends far beyond paperwork. In terms of Section 8(1), every employer is required to *“provide and maintain, as far as is reasonably practicable, a working environment that is safe and without risk to the health of his employees.”* This duty is proactive and ongoing. It requires employers to continuously identify hazards, assess risks, and implement appropriate control measures. Simply having policies and procedures on file does not satisfy this obligation if those measures are not effectively implemented, maintained and monitored.

The concept of “reasonably practicable,” often misunderstood, is central to the Act. It does not mean doing the bare minimum or only what is convenient. Instead, it requires consideration of the severity of the hazard, the likelihood of harm, the state of knowledge about the risk, and the availability and suitability of control measures. When organisations rely on outdated risk assessments, generic procedures, or unchecked assumptions, they risk falling short of their legal obligations under Section 8(2), which requires employers to take steps such as eliminating or mitigating hazards, providing safe systems of work, and ensuring adequate supervision.

“Good enough” safety often becomes evident in how systems are maintained over time. Risk assessments may be repeated annually without meaningful review, despite changes in operations, staffing, equipment, or layout. This undermines the intent of Section 8(2)(d), which requires employers to establish precautionary measures against hazards and ensure they are maintained. A risk assessment that is not reviewed when circumstances change is no longer an effective legal control, it is merely an administrative exercise.

Human behaviour is another critical factor often overlooked in a “good enough” approach. Employees may have received training, yet unsafe acts persist due to production pressure, poor supervision, or impractical procedures. The Act addresses this directly. In terms of Section 8(2)(e), employers must provide such information, instruction, training, and supervision as may be necessary to ensure the health and safety of employees. Training must therefore be relevant, practical, and reinforced through ongoing supervision, not treated as a once-off compliance activity.

Leadership commitment plays a decisive role in whether safety is truly effective or merely adequate. When senior management views health and safety as a compliance burden rather than a legal and moral responsibility, this

attitude filters through the organisation. Conversely, visible leadership commitment strengthens compliance and accountability. This aligns with Section 16, which places [responsibility on chief executive officers](#) to ensure that the duties of the employer are properly discharged. Delegation does not remove accountability; it requires effective oversight and support.

Employees themselves also have legal duties, which are often weakened in environments where “good enough” safety is tolerated. Section 14 of the Act requires employees to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of others, and to cooperate with the employer in complying with the Act. However, employees can only fulfil these duties when employers create an environment where safety rules are consistently applied, enforced, and supported. Inconsistent enforcement or tolerance of unsafe shortcuts erodes both legal compliance and safety culture.

A further risk of “good enough” safety is the overreliance on lagging indicators such as injury statistics or days without incidents. While these metrics have value, they do not reflect underlying risks or unsafe conditions. The absence of reported incidents does not equate to the absence of hazards. Near misses, unsafe acts, and hazardous conditions must be identified and addressed proactively. This proactive approach is consistent with the intent of the Act and supports the employer’s duty to prevent harm before it occurs.

The financial and operational cost of “good enough” safety is often underestimated. Incidents lead to lost productivity, investigations, compensation claims, increased insurance costs, and potential enforcement action by the Department of Employment and Labour. In serious cases, non-compliance may result in criminal liability under Section 38, which provides for penalties where duties under the Act are not met. Beyond legal consequences, the human cost of injury or illness is irreversible and far outweighs any perceived short-term savings.

Moving beyond “good enough” safety does not require perfection, but it does require commitment to continuous improvement. Health and safety systems must be living systems, reviewed regularly, adapted to change, and informed by real workplace conditions. Meaningful consultation with health and [safety representatives](#) and employees, as envisaged in Sections 17 and 18, strengthens [hazard identification](#) and promotes shared ownership of safety outcomes.

In professional workplaces, “good enough” safety should never be considered an achievement. Compliance is the starting point, not the destination. Organisations that truly meet their obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act understand that effective safety management protects people, supports operational excellence, and demonstrates ethical leadership. By moving beyond minimum compliance and focusing on real risk reduction, employers create workplaces that are not only legally compliant, but genuinely safe and sustainable.

Effective health and safety is not about doing the minimum required, but about managing the real risks people face every day.

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

Yours in Health and Safety



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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