

Five most common health and safety mistakes

A free guide from Marsh Commercial



Five common health and safety mistakes and how to avoid them

Here to help you fulfil your legal obligations and create safe and more effective businesses.

1. The basics

When it comes to health and safety, you need to get the basics right. Here are some frequent slip-ups we see, and some questions you can ask yourself to check you've got what you need in place.



Fire

- Have you got a Fire Risk Assessment in place?
This has been a requirement since 2005 (Regulatory Reform Fire Safety order 2005).
- Have you serviced, tested and maintained your fire items? E.g. – are your fire extinguishers in date? Do you have regulation fire safety items and are they in date?
- Are your escape routes clear? Have you locked any fire doors?
- Are fire procedures in place and have you identified an evacuation point? Do you have your assembly point signs up and visible to staff and visitors?
- Is there means of raising the alarm?
- Have you trained your team?



First Aid

- Have you completed a First Aid needs assessment to comply with the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981?
- Are the contents of your First Aid kit in stock and in date? Are they suited to your work environment and any potential issues?
- Have you got a First Aid procedure in place?
- Have you trained your team? Do you need a fully trained First Aider and have you done an assessment to evidence your First Aid requirements?



Housekeeping and hygiene

Housekeeping and hygiene has become more and more crucial during the pandemic, but there are still many businesses that haven't made any changes to their hygiene practices. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) continues to monitor and inspect the COVID-safety measures that businesses have put in place, so it's vital that you've still got this under control.

- Are you keeping workstations and storage areas in a safe and clean condition?
- Are you encouraging people to clean and disinfect areas they've been working in at the end of the day? Are you providing them with the materials to do this?
- Have you made sure that your floors are clear of slip and trip hazards? Do you have signs to indicate if a floor is wet? Are cables tidied away and not a tripping hazard?



2. Taking shortcuts

When it comes to taking shortcuts with health and safety measures and controls, the key question to ask yourself as a business owner is:

What might the reasons be for the shortcut?



Are your staff under pressure to meet deadlines?



Have they not been trained properly in the operation of machinery?



Has your leadership team given your teams the correct information about health and safety measures and expectations?



Are you, as a manager, carrying out regular checks to make sure that your health and safety control measures are being followed?



Some common health and safety shortcuts we see when visiting businesses include:

- Machine guarding being overridden or modified
- Modified racking
- Poor hygiene in food preparation areas
- Un-ducted extraction.

3. Risk assessments and controls

Risk assessments are the building blocks of a positive health and safety culture in your business.

As an employer you have obligations under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to assess risks in your business and take action to either eliminate hazards or put in place controls.

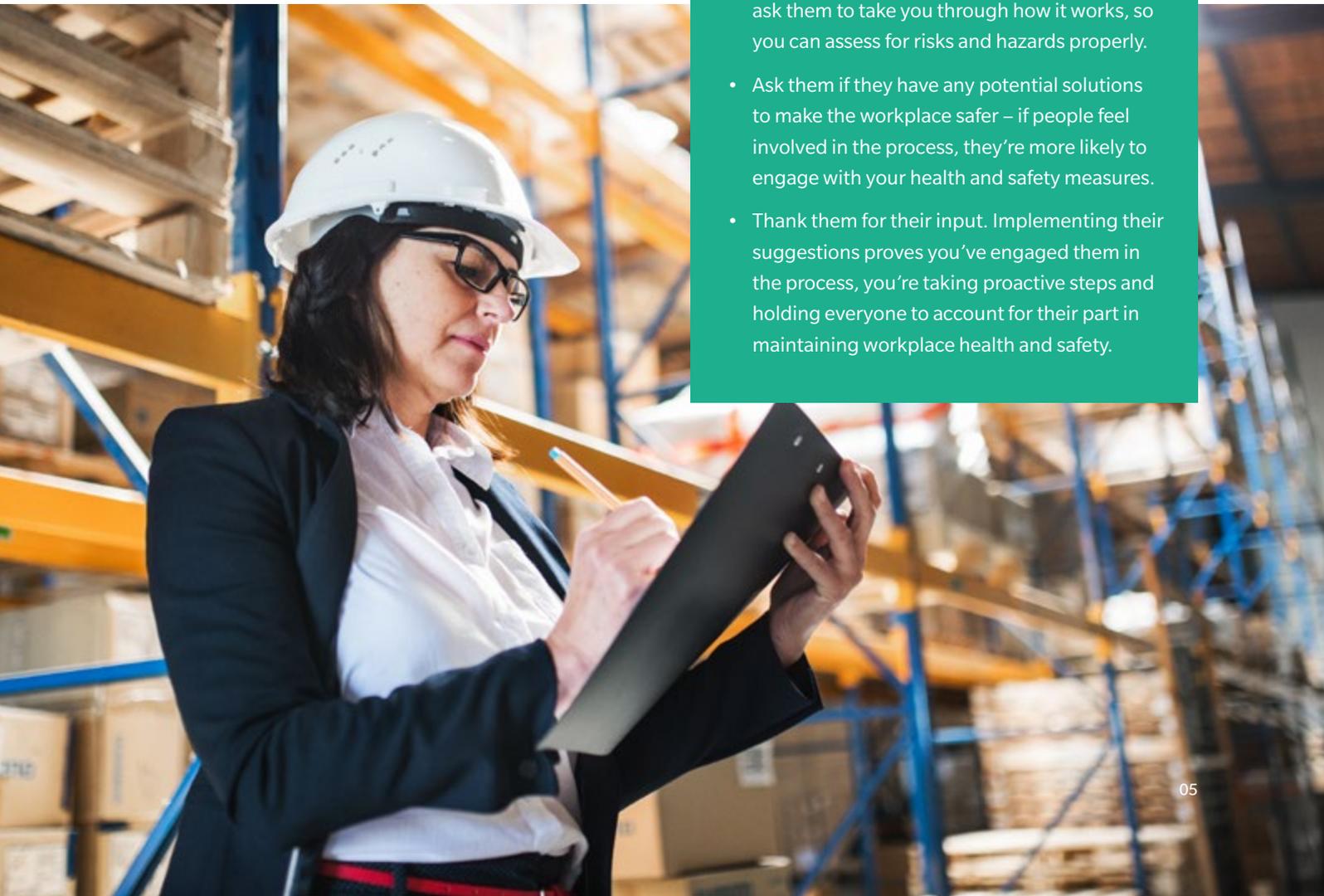
And if you have five or more people working for you, you must also put your risk assessment in writing.

One big error we often see when it comes to risk assessments isn't necessarily not having them (although that happens too) but it involves not consulting and communicating the content of the risk assessment with the people that work in your business.

This is an equally important part of the risk assessment process because you need buy-in and engagement from your people to actually create a safer workplace. If your risk assessments are locked away and unseen, they don't provide value or safety.

So, how can you effectively communicate your risk assessments to your workforce? Here's some tips:

- Ask them for help! They will likely know more about process, procedures and equipment, so ask them to take you through how it works, so you can assess for risks and hazards properly.
- Ask them if they have any potential solutions to make the workplace safer – if people feel involved in the process, they're more likely to engage with your health and safety measures.
- Thank them for their input. Implementing their suggestions proves you've engaged them in the process, you're taking proactive steps and holding everyone to account for their part in maintaining workplace health and safety.



4. Training

Training can often feel like a ‘nice to have’ that many businesses, who may be pushed for time and resource, can let slip by the wayside.

However, investing in health and safety training is not only an important exercise, but also a legal requirement.

General training topics include:



Fire safety training



General health and safety awareness training



Manual handling training



DSE (Display Screen Equipment) training, where appropriate.

However, there may be some situations where you'll need to provide additional training, particularly if your employees are at higher risk. This can include:



If your risk assessment shows that new equipment or a new process requires training to ensure safe use.



Or if your employees are engaged in higher-risk workplace activities including:

- working in confined spaces
- working with a forklift
- working at height
- potential exposure to asbestos or legionella.

What does the law say?

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires business owners to provide whatever “information, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety at work of your employees.”¹

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 also outlines situations where Health and Safety training is of particular importance, such as when people start work for you, if they will be exposed to new or increased risks and where existing skills may have become rusty or need updating.²



¹ [hse.gov.uk/legislation/hswa](https://www.hse.gov.uk/legislation/hswa)

² [legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1999/3242/introduction/made](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1999/3242/introduction/made)

5. Monitoring and internal inspections

A key part of keeping your health and safety compliance up to scratch is making sure that you're constantly reviewing your arrangements and controls.

That way, you can assess whether everything is working as it should, and it gives you a chance to make any changes so that you remain compliant at all times.

Here are our top tips to keep your health and safety arrangement under constant review:



Conduct checks at regular intervals and keep a record

– we recommend completing a checklist, so you have an audit trail that demonstrates you're monitoring your health and safety measures regularly.



Take action where needed and communicate back to your employees

– if something isn't working, don't ignore it. Make the necessary changes as soon as possible and let anyone affected know what those changes are.



Update your risk assessments

– your risk assessments need to be reviewed and updated in line with any changes you make. Don't let them become outdated!

Need help with your risk assessments?

If you're unsure on how best to communicate your risk assessments with your people, or you need some guidance on how to properly complete a risk assessment, please contact your **Marsh Commercial advisor** or email riskmanagement@marshcommercial.co.uk

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