

## INTRODUCTION

Training can be defined as ‘the process of employing a formal program of instructional methods and techniques, for the purpose of developing a person’s competencies’. Although it can include the provision of information and instruction it should also be designed to change a person’s behaviours, beliefs and attitudes. The primary aim of health and safety training can be seen, therefore, as the desire to improve and enhance a person’s skills, knowledge and/or attitudes to enable that person to carry out their work safely. A trained and competent workforce is one of the foundations of occupational health and safety, and it is for this reason that it is relatively heavily legislated – most statutory instruments will contain at least one reference for an employer to provide training.

The requirement to provide training on occupational health and safety issues has developed through common law and legislation. Case-law has long since established the principle that an employer has to ensure that it has a trained and competent workforce. Legislation built upon those principles with the introduction of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 which required employers to ‘provide such information, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety at work of their employees’. These general duties have been reinforced by the provisions contained in the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.<sup>1</sup> Other specific regulations, such as the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005,<sup>2</sup> also contain specific requirements to train, instruct and inform employees in relation to specific risks.

Health and safety training should be viewed as an investment which in the long term will benefit the organisation. It can, for example:

- enhance an individual’s performance of a task, reduce the likelihood of error and hence contribute to greater efficiency and productivity;
- reduce the risk of costly accidents, injuries and incidents causing damage to plant and equipment;
- contribute towards greater confidence and improved morale in employees;
- assist in defending negligence claims, for example, where it is alleged that an employee’s lack of competence contributed towards an accident.

The majority of employers accept that they will need to invest some of their organisation’s resources into providing some form of health and safety training for their employees. They realise that apart from the legal requirements to provide such training, there is also a need to protect the company’s most valuable assets, namely the employees. Such training may range from the relatively simple and universal ‘induction training’ through to assistance with more advanced and specialist training where the employee undertakes a more formal training course leading to a recognised qualification. Such training is often, however, undertaken ad hoc, without the necessary investment in the planning, delivery or associated infrastructure that is required to ensure that the training is effective in the long term. Training, if it is to be effective, must be adequately supported at all levels of the organisation.

Training, by itself, will not provide all the solutions to a safe and healthy workforce. There will, in addition, need to be a sufficiently committed organisation in which other forms of risk control are effectively exercised. Other factors that the employer will need to consider in controlling risk would include:

- eliminating the risk;
- substituting the risk for a lower risk;
- controlling the risk at source;
- providing safe systems of work;
- providing adequate supervision; and
- providing personal protective equipment.

It will be seen, however, that training and the provision of knowledge effectively underpins these other risk control factors. Without the requisite level of training, for example, employees would not be able to follow safe systems of work or use personal protective equipment effectively.

<sup>1</sup> SI 1999/3242

<sup>2</sup> SI 2005/1643

In addition to meeting legal requirements, the provision of training will also help to produce positive attitudes to safety in employees at all levels of the organisation, which will assist in fostering what is commonly referred to as a 'positive safety culture'. In such a culture, safe behaviour is encouraged and expected. It can be argued that the provision of training in a vacuum and without the climate of a positive health and safety culture is unlikely to achieve the desired effect of behavioural change for any length of time. The information contained within this Manual will assist the employer in providing a more holistic approach to training within its organisation.

The employer will need to be sure that the training is 'adequate' for the purposes for which it is provided. In deciding what level and extent of training would be 'adequate', the employer must take account of number of factors, such as the:

- size of the organisation;
- complexity of the organisation's operations;
- nature of the hazards and risks;
- existing levels of knowledge and capabilities of employees; and
- position and level of responsibility of the employees.

In lower-risk environments, employers may only need to provide general, basic health and safety training to satisfy their legal obligations. Conversely, in higher-risk environments, more extensive training will be required to achieve the same level of risk control.

An important point to be aware of is that the provision of training in itself will not necessarily result in a competent workforce. Some form of validation will be required to ensure that the knowledge imparted during the training has been assimilated by the employee and is being put into practice. Training also has its limitations and should not be seen as a sole substitute for the provision of adequate physical controls and safe systems of work.

Many employers shy away from providing training for employees because of concern over how to arrange such training and the potential costs involved. These concerns may be true to a certain extent, where training is provided by external training providers, but where training is provided in-house, its effectiveness, if carried out correctly, can be high and the costs low. Although external training providers can provide expert assistance on a wide range of subjects, employers will often engage them to provide training on a limited number of topics, leaving significant gaps in the employees' knowledge. A Training Needs Analysis will reveal that employees need training in a wide range of areas, and this training will need to be systematically planned and implemented. The majority of that training, however, does not have to be carried out by 'experts', nor does it have to be undertaken in a 'classroom' setting. It can be carried out by competent persons within the organisation, if they have the right information to communicate. There may be instances, however, where it is necessary to send employees on specialist training courses run by outside organisations, but this should be seen as an investment in the future. It should be remembered that an organisation is only as effective as the people who work in it.

Comprehensive training on all aspects of an employee's work is, therefore, critical to the effective operation of the organisation. The guidance contained within this Manual will provide employers with a comprehensive range of health and safety training solutions for their organisations. Where more detailed and specific training is required, then the Reference Section at **Part 4** will direct the user to the most appropriate source.

Consideration should also be given to exploring the possibility of taking part in the current 'Investors in People' initiative. This nationally recognised scheme provides a comprehensive framework in which to identify, plan, implement and review an organisations overall requirements for managing the needs of both the organisation and employees.

In addition to the legal requirements surrounding the provision of occupational health and safety training, the provision of training is an essential element of many quality management systems. British Standard BS8800: 'Occupational health and safety management systems – guide' clearly sets out the requirements for competency and training within an organisation. The standard specifies that the training arrangements of the occupational health and safety management system should include the:

- identification of the competencies necessary of each member at all levels of the organisation;
- training needed to remedy any shortfalls in competencies;
- identification of the competencies necessary for effective team working, such as emergency response teams;
- provision of any training identified as being necessary in a timely and systematic manner;
- assessment of individuals to ensure that they have acquired and maintained the necessary level of competence; and
- maintenance of appropriate training/skills records.

The Standard also states that the following elements could be included in the organisational training programmes:

- a programme of induction and ongoing training for employees and those who transfer between divisions, sites, departments, areas, jobs or tasks in the organisation;
- training for all persons who manage staff, contractors and others such as temporary workers; and
- training for directors and top managers addressing their roles and responsibilities for ensuring the health and safety management system functions as necessary to control risks and minimise ill-health, injury and other losses to the organisation.

Training for non-employees is also covered where the risks are such that training would help reduce them.

The organisation should also devise means to ensure that the training is effective and understood.

OHSAS 18001: 'Occupational health and safety management systems – Specification' states that: 'Personnel shall be competent to perform tasks that may impact on OH&S in the workplace. Competence shall be defined in terms of appropriate education, training and/or experience.' It also states that training procedures shall take into account differing levels of responsibility, ability, literacy and risk. The Standard requires that 'the organization shall have procedures for ensuring that pertinent OH&S information is communicated to and from employees and other interested parties'.

The importance of training is also reflected in other standards such as the Health and Safety Executive's 'Successful Health and Safety management' (HSG65) which states: 'Training helps people acquire the skills, knowledge and attitudes to make them competent in the health and safety aspects of their work. It includes formal off-the-job training, instruction to individuals and groups, and on-the-job coaching and counselling.'

The purpose of this publication is to provide employers with comprehensive information to effectively manage health and safety training within their organisation. Emphasis has been placed on the provision of training for employees using the 'Safety Training Talks' as the primary means of engagement with employees. Although they can be delivered by the safety professional, a competent manager or supervisor will also be able to deliver effective training. The Safety Training Talks can be undertaken in a variety of settings and do not always need a 'classroom setting' as they rely on the fact that the talks will normally be given by line managers and to relatively few people. They also rely heavily on employees undertaking various activities, which are best supported in the actual work environment.

The information contained within this Manual will allow any employer to train its employees and provides a low-cost, but effective, solution to most organisations' training needs. It is often the case that employers recognise the need to train their workforce but are unsure of what information they should provide and how they should provide it. The result is often inaction on the part of the employer, with the consequence that the workforce lacks the required knowledge in which to work in a consistently safe fashion. The provision of a wide range of Safety Training Talks will ensure that employees are provided with a consistent approach to training provision.

As there is also the necessity to have a trained and competent management: a selection of training modules have also been provided so that managers can undergo relevant training.

Lack of, or incomplete, training is often found to be one of the root causes of accidents in the workplace. Employees are often found to be lacking in essential health and safety knowledge, or where this knowledge has been provided, it has not had the desired effect on changing the employees' behaviours and attitudes. Enforcing authorities, particularly during accident investigations, will often examine, in depth, the effectiveness of the training that has been provided.

The information contained within this Manual will assist the employer or safety professional in understanding:

- the main theories underpinning training;
- how people learn - and how they forget;
- various training techniques that can be used;
- the legislative background surrounding the requirements to provide health and safety training;
- how to identify training needs within an organisation;
- how to develop a training strategy effectively to deliver training requirements;
- implementing and reviewing training provision; and
- planning and running training sessions.

In addition, this Manual will provide a complete solution to health and safety training needs for employees, directors and managers.

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