



Emergency Preparedness

First Aid: The Training and Supplies Your Company Needs

Matt Morgan | Sep 03, 2020

Businesses have a responsibility to ensure the health and safety of their employees at the workplace—but accidents will still happen. That’s why businesses also must be prepared with supplies and personnel to provide aid when employees become injured or ill.

First aid comes in many forms, from the simplest adhesive bandage for a cut finger to a device that can restart a person’s heart. Not only do these supplies and equipment need to be readily available, but also employees must also be trained in how to use them (though the bandage may need no explanation).

In the case of a medical emergency at an industrial facility, swift and decisive action could mean the difference between life and death. Will your employees know what to do?

What Businesses Must Provide for Employees

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is general in its direction for providing medical services in the workplace:

“The employer shall ensure the ready availability of medical personnel for advice and consultation on matters of plant health. In the absence of an infirmary, clinic or hospital in near proximity to the workplace which is used for the treatment of all injured employees, a person or persons shall be adequately trained to render first aid.” (29 CFR 1910.151)

Five Parts to Workplace First-Aid Training

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration's *Best Practices Guide: Fundamentals of a Workplace First-Aid Program* lays out five elements to consider when providing first-aid training for workers at your facility:

- 1. Teaching methods.** The curriculum should be based on the latest scientific evidence and include hands-on training, such as using mannequins and first-aid supplies. The lessons should involve a variety of injury and illness scenarios.
- 2. Preparing to respond to a health emergency.** This includes instruction on interacting with local emergency medical services, performing under pressure and protecting against infectious materials.
- 3. Assessing the scene and the victim.** Training should include how to evaluate the site of an accident—the nature of the injury and any hazards that may still exist—and how to attend to the victim.
- 4. Responding to life-threatening emergencies.** Tailored for a specific worksite, training should teach employees about performing CPR, using an automated external defibrillator (AED), maintaining an open airway of the victim and managing shock.
- 5. Responding to non-life-threatening emergencies.** Also specific to the individual workplace, training should instruct how to render first aid for wounds, burns, broken bones, eye injuries and heat exposure.

Among the *many letters of interpretation* on this medical and first-aid standard, OSHA clarifies medical personnel as being “in near proximity” when they can get to a workplace and administer aid within three to four minutes of receiving a call for help.

“In order to address something quickly, especially if it’s critical, you have to feel comfortable. If training is part of the culture, it becomes more routine to assist when issues arise.”

Malcolm Smith
LineDrive

No matter where you are in the country, three to four minutes is probably not enough time for an ambulance to reach your facility. On average, emergency medical services take seven to eight minutes to arrive, and in rural locations, it takes double that time or even longer, according to reports.

Clearly, waiting for help to arrive is not a sound emergency preparedness plan, to say nothing of exposing the business to OSHA compliance issues. When emergency personnel are more than a few minutes away, it becomes the responsibility of the employer to be proactive and have at least one person on-site who’s trained to give first aid.

Read more: OSHA Recordable vs. Reportable Incidents: How to Tell the Difference

A Guide to First-Aid Training and Procedures

First-aid training is “any nationally accepted and medically sound first-aid program that covers the fundamentals of first aid,” OSHA says. In particular, the agency names the **American Heart Association**, the **American Red Cross** and the **National Safety Council** as primary providers of first-aid training, but there are private educational groups, too.

Groups like these have online courses as well as on-site training to provide workers with essential knowledge to deliver first aid quickly and effectively, such as how to react in a variety of situations involving injury and illness and how to respond to emergencies that are life-threatening and not life-threatening.

Read more: First-Aid Training Tips for Small Businesses

When training is over, you’re not done. Rather, the techniques that are taught will become a routine procedure through repetition. Periodically reviewing the company’s first-aid program and refreshing employee training will assure workers and build their confidence to act quickly when they are needed in an emergency.

“In order to address something quickly, especially if it’s critical, you have to feel comfortable,” says Malcolm Smith, business development director at LineDrive, which helps companies increase worker safety and facility productivity. “If there is that refresh of the mind, and training is part of the culture, it becomes more routine to assist when issues arise, versus someone basically being in a shocked position and not being able to assist.”

First-Aid Supplies to Have on Hand

OSHA does not require any specific types or amounts of first-aid products for general manufacturing businesses—only that “adequate **first-aid supplies** shall be readily available” (**29 CFR 1910.151(b)**).

Instead, the agency defers to a voluntary consensus standard developed by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the International Safety Equipment Association (ISEA). The American National Standard – Minimum Requirements for Workplace First Aid Kits and Supplies (**ANSI/ISEA Z308.1-2015**) includes a list of first-aid products, and the amount and size of those products, in two categories of kits that should be available based on the needs of the workplace.

Class A first-aid kits have a basic assortment of products to address the most common needs in a workplace, such as bandages, scissors, burn treatments, cold packs and eyewash.

Class B first-aid kits (also referred to as cabinets) contain all of the products in Class A kits but in greater quantities to address the needs of larger workforces and more complex work environments. Class B kits also have a splint and a tourniquet.

*For details on the types of ANSI first-aid kits, read **Class A vs. Class B First-Aid Kits: Which Is Right for You?***

It’s up to each business to determine which class of kit, and how many kits, are needed at the facility. It’s also up to each business to determine whether additional first-aid products would be good to have above this recommendation.

Given the prevalence of heart attacks in the workplace—the American Heart Association says more

than 10,000 happen each year—OSHA recommends businesses consider having an automated external defibrillator (AED) among their first-aid supplies and equipment. An AED is an easy-to-use medical device that delivers a shock to the heart to help it reestablish a normal beat, which dramatically improves a person's chances of survival.

Also, many companies include over-the-counter medications—such as antacids and pain relievers—in their first-aid kits, even though they are not required to do so. It's a simple add, and one that might keep a worker feeling well enough to finish out the shift instead of going home, says John Cutich, national account manager at Medique Products, a supplier of first-aid and medical products for the workplace.

Specific to COVID-19, companies might consider including more hand sanitizer and more gloves in their first-aid kits than the standard calls for, and masks, Cutich adds.

"If a manufacturer is doing the right things and supporting their employees with top-quality first aid—not going to a hardware store and buying a little kit and putting it on the table in the lunchroom—employees recognize that," says Doug Eichner, senior strategic account manager at LineDrive. "Employees know that they're being treated well."

What products have you added to your first-aid supplies to benefit your employees? Let us know in the comments.

www.mscdirect.com/betterMRO

Copyright ©2024 MSC Industrial Supply Co.