



Workplace Safety

Class A Vs. Class B First-Aid Kits: Which Is Right for You?

Gillian Scott | Sep 20, 2018

A standard that went into effect in 2016 introduced two classes for first-aid kits—Class A and Class B—with each class containing the supplies needed to treat injuries typical for certain facilities. The updated standard increased in the amounts of some supplies that the kits should contain and, in other cases, introduced new supplies to the list.

The standard also introduced four type levels for kits, with the requirements for each type varying based on the work environment it was designed for.

Employers are also asked to assess the level of risk in their workplace so they can have the right supplies on hand should an injury occur.

A good first-aid kit is more than just a collection of adhesive bandages. In low-risk facilities, kits should have the equipment needed to deal with common workplace injuries, such as sprains, minor cuts and scrapes. But if more high-risk tasks are being completed in your facility, you may need a more comprehensive first-aid kit.

In 2015, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the International Safety Equipment Association (ISEA) updated the standard *ANSI/ISEA Z308.1-2015*, Workplace First Aid Kits and Supplies. The updated standard, effective in 2016, introduced two classes of first-aid kits: Class A kits, with contents designed for the most common types of workplace injuries, and Class B kits, which are designed for more complex injuries or for use in high-risk environments.

“In deciding how best to meet the needs of workers, we looked at the increasing rates of workplace incidents where first-aid treatment was administered and we considered the current practices in treating such injuries,” *said* David Lapp, chairman of ISEA First Aid Group and senior product manager at Honeywell Safety Products, when the standard was introduced.

OSHA and First-Aid Kit Requirements

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration's regulation for first aid, **29 CFR 1910.151 (b)**, states that "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. Adequate first aid supplies shall be readily available."

Erica Osley, marketing director for eye, face and head products with Honeywell Industrial Safety, writing for *OH&S* in 2016, says the OSHA standard is for work sites with more than five employees and does not specify the supplies that first-aid kits should contain.

"In the matter of kit specifications and minimum content requirements OSHA refers to the American National Standards Institute (ANSI)," she writes.

"Employers should be mindful that the meaning of 'adequate' depends on the workplace," notes Craig Simonsen of the *Seyfarth Shaw workplace-safety law blog*. "Accordingly, employers should evaluate the kinds of injuries that occur in their workplaces when deciding on the contents and quantity of materials in a first-aid kit."

Kit requirements can also vary by state.

"Some state-plan states may have slightly different or more stringent requirements than those of federal OSHA," writes **Lisa Neuberger**, a compliance specialist with J.J. Keller & Associates, in an *American City Business Journals* article. "In California, CalOSHA requires that a physician approve the contents of workplace first-aid kits. If you are in a state-plan state, be sure to check your state's requirements."

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Erica Osley, marketing director for eye, face and head products with Honeywell Industrial Safety, notes in *OH&S* that the 2015 standard "represents a fundamental shift in the way employers will approach injury readiness."

"It starts with a foundation built upon supplying the right assortment of **first-aid items** based on possible injuries and the appropriate quantity of items based on the number of workers each kit will serve," she says.

Osley says Class A kits are best suited for low-risk workplaces with 40 or fewer employees. Typically, a Class A first-aid contents checklist would include 71 items, such as:

- Adhesive bandages
- Tape
- Scissors
- Breathing barrier
- Burn treatments
- Eyewash

- Hand sanitizer

Class B kits are designed for higher-risk environments such as heavy manufacturing and foundries. According to Osley, a Class B first-aid kit contents checklist would include Class A kit items in greater quantities, as well as additional products designed to “triage serious or life-threatening injuries,” such as:

- A padded splint
- A tourniquet

What’s Required in First-Aid Kits Now?

The 2015 standard updates a previous standard from 2009. Osley says many items that had previously been only recommended for inclusion in both kits are now required.

Among the changes is a requirement that both classes of kits should now include scissors, a breathing barrier, burn dressing, cold pack, eye covering, skin wash, and hand sanitizer. In addition to requiring a splint and tourniquet, Class B kits must also now include 4-inch roller bandage in addition to the 2-inch roller bandage now required for Class A kits.

The quantities of supplies are also different. For instance, under the old standard, first-aid kits required six burn treatments. Under the new standard, Class A kits require 10 burn treatments, while Class B kits require 25.

“By expanding the items in a basic first-aid kit, employees will have greater access to items needed to treat their injuries as quickly as possible,” Lapp said.

Want more information on first-aid kits? Read “Safety Standard Spotlight: First-Aid Kits” to learn how OSHA 300 logs and 301 incident reports can help.

New Classification Types of Class A and Class B First-Aid Kits

The standard also designates different types of kits for different work environments. According to ***First Aid Only***, uses break down as such:

- Type I kits are designed for indoor use and are not portable; they’re permanently mounted to a wall or other structure. They are for general indoor use, office use or use in a general manufacturing facility.
- Type II kits are designed for indoor use, but come with handles and are portable. As with Type 1 kits, they’re for general indoor use, office use or manufacturing environments.
- Type III kits are portable and for use in either indoor or outdoor environments, but not where there is a high potential for damage due to environmental factors or rough handling. The kits can be mounted and have a water-resistant seal. They are for general indoor use and sheltered outdoor use.
- Type IV kits, which must pass tests for corrosion, moisture and impact resistance, are suitable for outdoor use and places where they may be subject to rough handling. They are designed for use in the transportation, utility and construction industries or in the armed forces.

“The multi-tiered approach of designating kits allows employers to make practical choices based on the nature of the work area, recognizing that each workplace differs in potential risk and task load,” Lapp said.

Conduct Assessing Risk to Tailor First-Aid Kits to Your Workplace

In addition to laying out the requirements for first-aid kit contents, the new ISEA standard sets requirements for employers to assess the risks in their workplace, says Osley. This is to ensure that the types and quantities of supplies on hand meet the needs of an individual facility.

“Risk assessments can be conducted in a variety of ways, from reviewing BLS (Bureau of Labor Statistics) and OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) injury data to employing a medical professional to evaluate a facility and make recommendations; the best approach is an informed approach and may involve a combination of inputs,” writes Osley. “This mandated assessment of possible injuries and appropriate first response protocols is key to tailoring first-aid kits based on each workplace’s unique risk factors.”

What first-aid supplies do you rely on the most? Share your experience.

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