

# Get wise to First Aid Kits in the workplace



A guide on caring for your workforce and keeping on the right side of the law.

## What the Law Says

The Health and Safety (First Aid) regulations 1981 states: **“An employer shall provide, or ensure that there are provided, such equipment and facilities as are adequate and appropriate in the circumstances for enabling first-aid to be rendered to his employees if they are injured or become ill at work.”**

## The role of the HSE

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provides a code of practice and guidance to help you meet your obligations under the law. Whilst this is guidance and not law, following this will ensure that you meet your legal obligations regarding First Aid in the workplace and will demonstrate, if ever questioned, that your First Aid provision has been considered against a risk assessment and is appropriate.

This code of practice and guidance covers all manner of topics relating to first aid, like first aid training, where it gives some practical guidance about how many trained first aiders you need in a workplace. With the contents of first aid kits, it only gives a list of the type of products that you might include in a first aid kit, and points to the BSI for further guidance.

## Needs Assessment

The HSE guidance focuses on the importance of a needs assessment. All employers should conduct a needs/risk assessment in order to decide on which first aid kits are needed and where they should be sited. The British Standard BS 8599-1 provides some very useful guidance to help employers match their needs with BS8599-1 compliant kits.

## The British Standard

A range of workplace first aid kits are detailed in British Standard BS 8599-1. These kits have been professionally designed to help you fully comply with the HSE code of practice and guidance, and hence fully meet your obligations under the law. The standard is regularly reviewed to keep it up to date.

The BS 8599 range comprises:

- BS 8599-1 Small Workplace First Aid Kit
- BS 8599-1 Medium Workplace First Aid Kit
- BS 8599-1 Large Workplace First Aid Kit
- BS 8599-1 Travel Workplace First Aid Kit

## Other Workplace First Aid Kits

Since the HSE guidance is not binding, some workplace first aid kits are available that fall well short of the British Standard. By using these kits, an employer is not breaking the law. If however there is an incident, and an employee suffers harm that could have been prevented should a British Standard kit have been available, it might be difficult for employers to legally defend themselves.

Some kits are called HSE first aid kits, there is no such standard. Some kits quote BHTA, (British Healthcare Trades Association) standard, this standard was withdrawn in 2012 and replaced with the BSI standard.



**Choosing the right First Aid Kit**

Choosing the right first aid kit is now even easier. Decide if your work environment is **LOW HAZARD** or **HIGH HAZARD** by reading the table (below). Then how many employees there are in your workplace, and finally which of the three sizes of kit you will need, e.g. small, medium or large. It's that simple!

**LOW HAZARD**

e.g. shops, offices, libraries etc.

| Number of Employees | Size of First Aid Kits         |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| Less than 25        | Small                          |
| 25-100              | Medium                         |
| more than 100       | Large<br>(1 per 100 employees) |

**HIGH HAZARD**

e.g. light engineering and assembly work, food processing, warehousing, extensive work with dangerous machinery or sharp instruments, construction, chemical manufacture etc.

| Number of Employees | Size of First Aid Kits        |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Less than 5         | Small                         |
| 5-25                | Medium                        |
| more than 25        | Large<br>(1 per 25 employees) |

**Contents of BS 8599-1 Workplace First Aid Kits**

| Contents   | S  | M  | L   | Off-Site |
|--|----|----|-----|----------|
| Sterile adhesive dressings   | 40 | 60 | 100 | 10       |
| Nitrile disposable gloves (pairs)                                      | 6  | 9  | 12  | 2        |
| Burn dressing Min 100cm <sup>2</sup>                                   | 1  | 2  | 2   | 0        |
| Resuscitation face shield  | 1  | 1  | 2   | 1        |
| Guidance leaflet   | 1  | 1  | 1   | 1        |
| Contents list  | 1  | 1  | 1   | 1        |
| Shears (suitable for cutting clothing, including leather)              | 1  | 1  | 1   | 1        |
| Sterile finger dressing  | 2  | 3  | 4   | 0        |
| Sterile eyepad dressing  | 2  | 3  | 4   | 0        |
| Sterile medium dressing  | 2  | 4  | 6   | 0        |
| Sterile large dressing   | 2  | 3  | 4   | 1        |
| Conforming bandage (min 7.5cm width and 4m stretch length)             | 1  | 2  | 2   | 0        |
| Triangular bandage   | 2  | 3  | 4   | 1        |
| Foil blanket (130cm x 210cm)   | 1  | 2  | 3   | 1        |
| Adhesive tape rolls (Individually wrapped, min 2.5cm width, 5m length) | 1  | 2  | 3   | 0        |
| Alcohol free moist cleansing wipes                                     | 20 | 30 | 40  | 4        |

**Where can I order a kit?**

Please contact BHTA on 020 7702 2141 to find your nearest First Aid Supplier to you.

**British Standard 8599-2**

Copies of the document are available to purchase from the BSI web shop link <https://shop.bsigroup.com/> or by telephone on 0345 086 9001.

[www.bhta.com](http://www.bhta.com)

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*Better health, better care, better value*