

## **H&S Information Sheet #3**

## **Managing Health & Safety**

### **Introduction**

Accidents often arise from an easily identifiable **Incident**, but rarely result from a single cause. Take the case of a volunteer who trips over a sack in the sorting room.

### **Immediate Causes**

The **Immediate Causes** of an Incident are usually unsafe acts and conditions. On that day there may have been an excessive number of sacks in the sorting room blocking the walkways. The van driver may have put them there instead of in the storage pen. The volunteer herself may have been trying to step over the sack.

### **Basic Causes**

Underlying the Immediate Causes of an Incident are the **Basic Causes**, related to the job or to the person. The design of the backroom may be such that volunteers always have to reach across sacks to do their work. The van driver may not have received proper training in where to deliver the stock. The Shop Manager may not have instilled in the volunteers the need to maintain good housekeeping practices in the sorting area. The volunteer herself may be elderly and a little unsteady on her feet.

### **Lack of Management Control**

Identifying the Basic Causes, therefore, could reveal a **Lack of Management Control**. Guidance may never have been given on the design of shop backrooms. Basic housekeeping standards may never have been set for the Shop Manager to monitor and maintain. Risks may never have been assessed in the backroom or for the most vulnerable workers.

**Accidents can often be prevented by good management systems such as:**

- **programmes to control accidents**
- **standards setting out the level of performance required**
- **monitoring to ensure compliance with these standards**

### **Risk Management**

The purpose of H&S Management can be summarised as being to:

- identify and remove Hazards
- control any remaining Risks
- influence behaviour
- encourage safe working

**Hazard is something with the potential to cause harm.**

**Risk is a combination of the severity of harm with the likelihood of it happening.**

**Control Measure is an item or action to remove a hazard or reduce a risk.**

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to develop a management system for Health and Safety at Work. Directors and managers can be held personally responsible for failure to control health and safety.

Inspectors visiting a workplace will want to know how Health and Safety is managed. If an accident occurs, a charity's systems, procedures and employees will come under scrutiny.

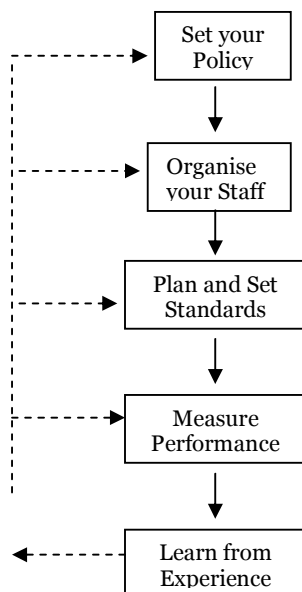
## Safety Matters in Charity Retailing

The HSE recommends an approach to the management of H&S that is based upon the principles of Quality Management used by many successful companies. This approach places emphasis on “managing quality in” rather than “inspecting defects out”.

By following this approach a charity will develop, and then continuously improve, effective H&S systems that protect people, control loss and ensure compliance with legal obligations.

### 5 Key Steps

The 5 fundamental steps involved are similar to those followed in the management of any business process, as shown overleaf.



### Policy

An organisation is required by law to produce a Policy Statement. This needs to show a genuine commitment to the health and safety of **anyone who may be affected** by its work. It should also describe the roles and responsibilities of different levels of management and the arrangements for managing and monitoring.

All employees should know about the H&S policy and the arrangements in place to put it into effect. Local Authority inspectors expect to see it on display at all premises.

*PDSA has produced a laminated A3 version of its Policy Statement for ease of display in shop backrooms.*

### Organising Staff

Senior managers are expected by the HSE to recognise their role in engaging the active participation of workers in improving health and safety.

Making H&S policy effective means getting staff involved and committed, thus developing a “**positive H&S culture**”. The 4 ‘Cs’ of such a culture are:

**Competence:** appointing someone competent to assist with H&S; ensuring all employees are adequately instructed and trained

**Control:** letting everyone know H&S is important; allocating responsibilities to specific people; holding people accountable

**Co-operation:** consulting staff or their representatives; involving them in planning, writing procedures and reviewing performance

**Communication:** providing information on hazards, risks and preventive measures to employees; discussing H&S regularly

*Acorns Children’s Hospice Trust has defined the H&S responsibilities for their Area Managers, Shop Managers, Maintenance Manager, Merchandise & Transport Manager (who controls the stock collectors). These are succinct summaries, each on one side of A4, of the post holders’ H&S duties.*

### Health and Safety Committees

An important way of promoting H&S at work is to provide a forum for managers and employees to discuss relevant issues. They supplement normal employee/employer channels for reporting and controlling workplace systems.

Typical functions performed by such committees include:

- reviewing accident statistics
- reviewing enforcing authority reports
- reviewing safety audits
- developing safety rules and safe systems
- monitoring standards and compliance

## Safety Matters in Charity Retailing

- monitoring training programmes
- monitoring the effectiveness of H&S communications

Ideally, a senior manager with the necessary authority to allocate resources should chair a Safety Committee containing a balance of line managers and safety representatives. A safety officer, who can provide information on statutory requirements, should attend along with experts on specialist topics as required

*Shaw Trust's H&S Committee meets five times a year and deals with all aspects of the charity's work. Two Regional Retail Managers attend. The agenda and minutes are circulated to all shops. Shop Managers are encouraged to submit items for discussion via their Regional Manager or directly to the charity's H&S Manager.*

*PDSA set up a separate H&S Committee to deal solely with their retail operation and this meets twice a year. One Area Manager and two Shop Managers sit on the committee along with one representative from each of Property Services, H.R., Training and Shop Operations. All shops are encouraged to raise any issue directly with the chairperson and receive a quarterly H&S bulletin. The bulletins deal with the main issues arising from the analysis of accident and incident trends.*

*Oxfam's Trading Division Safety Committee includes three Area Managers, one Shop Manager, two shop volunteers, as well as staff from the H.R. and Property Departments.*

## Planning and Standards

An H&S plan should ensure compliance with the relevant legislation. Planning involves setting objectives, identifying hazards, assessing risks and deciding how they can be eliminated or controlled.

(Information Sheet No.3 contains guidance on Risk Assessment, which is a crucially important part of the plan.)

*Oxfam's H&S Plan had target dates for achieving specific objectives. For example, there was a deadline set for assessing risks and agreeing control measures at all shops and depots.*

Standards help to build a positive culture and to control risks. They should be measurable, achievable and realistic. They should identify who does what, when and with what result.

*PDSA expects its shop managers to carry out inspections daily to check that:*

- *fire escapes and access thereto are clear*
- *floors are clean, in good condition and have no trip hazards*
- *stairs are clean and clear from obstruction*

## Measuring Performance

Control measures need to be monitored to ensure that they are being implemented and remain effective. The HSE expects organisations to show that they are monitoring health and safety at work by checking working conditions and systems of work.

**Active monitoring**, before things go wrong, involves regular inspections. (Information Sheet No. 7 contains more guidance on active monitoring with details of inspection checklists used by several charities.)

**Reactive monitoring**, after things have gone wrong, involves learning from mistakes. (Information Sheet No. 8 contains more guidance on investigating accidents to get to all the underlying causes.)

## Learning and Reviewing

The HSE expects senior management, at least annually, to review systems of control, including risk management and compliance controls.

Monitoring provides the information to enable an organisation to review policy and decide how performance can be improved.

Audits, conducted internally or by outsiders, complement monitoring activities by looking to see if the policy, organisation and systems are actually achieving the right results.

*Oxfam's H&S Plan was drawn up following an external audit, which revealed how standards and systems could be improved.*

### Self-employed Workers

Many charities contract stock collection work out to self-employed van drivers. Employers have obligations to protect contractors from harm caused by work activities. This would include work carried out away from employers' premises.

For those self-employed workers who are retained on a long-term contract, whether for 1 day or 5 days a week, the obligations on the organisation retaining their services are greater than for those who are deployed for a short-term contract (such as shop-fitters working on a 3-4 week contract).

The extent of these obligations will differ according to whether the contractor is working under the control of the employer or is providing a distinct business service. The former are considered to be employees under H&S law when working under the direction of others. The latter are not, in most cases.

A van driver using his own vehicle is, like a window cleaner, a distinct service provider. A charity's H&S obligations to such contractors are similar to those in a client/service provider relationship (e.g. to ensure the goods being transported do not pose a risk to the driver). However, a van driver who uses a charity's vehicle would be classed as an employee **for H&S purposes**.

**The HSE recommends that organisations seek legal advice when defining H&S obligations to self-employed workers.**

*Oxfam has redefined its policy with regard to the deployment of self-employed van drivers. Prospective contractors are asked to declare what they propose to provide to carry out the work safely - such as a fire extinguisher and first aid box on their van and personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves.*

*The Manager signing the contract must:*

- *obtain a copy of the van driver's public liability insurance certificate*
- *show Oxfam's H&S policy statement to the driver and explain what his obligations are to co-operate in carrying out Oxfam's H&S policy*

- *show and talk through with him Oxfam's generic risk assessment for stock collections*

### Safe Systems of Work

Employers are required to provide a "safe system of work", formally defined as:

"The integration of personnel, articles and substances in a suitable environment and workplace to produce and maintain an acceptable standard of safety. Due consideration must be given to foreseeable emergencies and the provision of adequate rescue facilities."

**The 4 elements that constitute a safe system of work are:**

- **People**
- **Equipment**
- **Materials**
- **Environment**

A safe system of work combines these 4 elements to produce an integrated method of working that will ensure tasks are carried out in the safest way possible under the circumstances.

#### **People:**

- those doing the work should have the right capabilities and receive adequate training
- safe behaviour should be promoted and staff properly motivated to work safely
- the correct level of supervision should be exercised to ensure compliance

#### **Equipment:**

- all equipment should be suitable for its intended use and adequately maintained
- safety specifications should be considered (noise, ergonomics, etc.)
- specific risks should be controlled
- training for safe operation of equipment should be provided

## Safety Matters in Charity Retailing

### Materials:

- end products should conform to required standards
- any materials used during the work process should be considered
- appropriate waste disposal methods should be employed

### Environment:

- temperature, water quality, lighting and ventilation should be controlled
- chemical, biological and other hazards should be controlled
- there should be safe access and egress
- welfare facilities should be adequate
- variations due to time of day or year should be considered
- variations due to other persons in the work environment should be considered

**The 5 basic steps necessary to produce a safe system are:**

- **assessment of the task**
- **identification of hazards and risks**
- **definition of a safe method**
- **implementation of the safe system**
- **monitoring of the system**

Employers are required to ensure that adequate assessments are carried out and safe systems of work are developed **before** the task is undertaken.

The assessment should provide answers to these questions:

- What operations are carried out and how frequently?
- What equipment is used, or is necessary for, the task?
- Are any harmful substances used during the task?
- How can human error create problems?
- What effect does the location or work environment have on the task?

(Information Sheet No. 4 on Risk Assessment covers the identification of hazards and risks in more detail.)

For some straightforward tasks the safe system of work may be defined via verbal instructions. However, in some cases it may require more formal, written instructions to ensure correct implementation.

Adequate measures should be employed to ensure that the system is properly implemented and then monitored to make sure it is effective.

### Further Reading

*Managing health and safety.*  
HSE leaflet INDG 275

*Essentials of health and safety at work.*  
HSE publication ISBN 0 7176 0716 X

*Successful health and safety management.*  
HSE publication ISBN 0 7176 1276 7

*Health & Safety benchmarking. Improving Together.* HSE leaflet INDG 301

*Consulting employees on health and safety.*  
HSE leaflet INDG 232