

Safety Matters in Charity Retailing

Information Sheet No. 7

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SUPPORTING CHARITY RETAIL

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Active Monitoring

Performance measuring forms one of the essential features of effective safety management as defined by the HSE and described in Information Sheet No. 3. To ensure that workplace risk control measures are effective and being implemented, the following should be carried out:

Active Monitoring	Reactive Monitoring
before things go wrong	after accidents or incidents

(Information Sheet No. 8 contains more information on Reactive Monitoring.)

Just as with finance or sales, an organisation needs to measure H&S performance to find out how successful it is. It needs to know whether standards are being implemented and whether management controls are working. Relevant questions to ask include:

- Do we know how well we perform in H&S?
- Have we accurate records of injuries, ill health and accidental loss?
- Are we meeting our H&S objectives and standards?
- Are our controls for risks good enough?
- Are we complying with the H&S laws that affect charity retailing?

The people who work in an environment are usually the best sources of information about what is actually happening in the workplace. Therefore, a structured approach to gathering information from them would form a useful part of the monitoring strategy.

Involving local staff and volunteers in monitoring can also help to create the “**positive H&S culture**” that was identified in Information Sheet No. 3 as being critical to effective risk management.

Inspections

Delegating responsibility to Shop Managers for checking to ensure that standards are being maintained helps to develop such a culture.

PDSA expects Shop Managers to ensure standards are maintained on a day-to-day basis through regular, formal and informal inspections.

The importance of this is reinforced through the use of a backroom wall chart. This contains a summary of the various checks that are required to be completed at regular intervals. The Manager is expected to sign the chart when these are completed.

Charity shops run by volunteers, without a paid Shop Manager, can also be involved in carrying out regular H&S inspections. A volunteer H&S Officer could be appointed at each shop to:

- complete regular inspection checklists
- report findings to the Shop Leader and Area Manager
- deliver H&S training to volunteers

Shift or day leaders could also be asked to complete simple checklists to ensure that basic H&S standards are being maintained.

Another method of Active Monitoring is to use internal or volunteer auditors to complement the role of line managers.

Oxfam's Internal Audit department operates a team of volunteer internal auditors who visit shops on a cyclical basis. Their brief includes monitoring H&S standards.

Housekeeping Standards

The importance of maintaining good housekeeping standards in charity shops cannot be overemphasised. Many shop backrooms are small. There is little control over how much the public will donate or when, so stock can accumulate very rapidly.

A large amount of stock in a small space creates Slips, Trips and Falls hazards. The risk of injury caused by such hazards is exacerbated by the fact that large numbers of volunteers in charity shops are elderly.

**Slips, Trips and Falls are the cause of
37% of major injuries.
90% of these are fractures.**

Frequency

The HSE defines Active Monitoring as **regular** inspections and checks. The frequency of these will vary according to the control measure being monitored:

- basic housekeeping standards need to be checked on a daily or weekly basis
- contents of the First Aid box might be checked on a monthly or quarterly basis
- documented full visual inspections of portable electrical appliances might only be required twice a year

Shop Managers normally carry out the most frequent safety inspections. Their line Managers usually check that these have been done and conduct the less frequent ones (e.g. those done twice yearly or annually).

Some Shop Managers conduct inspections that in other charities are carried out by Building Services (e.g. inspecting the fabric of the building and testing emergency lighting).

There are some issues which shop staff can be trained to cover, if outside assessors are not brought in. One example is testing for legionella bacteria: please note that ensuring the cleanliness of commercial property's water supplies is the responsibility of the **tenant** in sole occupancy buildings.

PDSA delegates the testing of the emergency lighting to its Shop Managers who hold a copy of the PDSA Building Services Manual.

There is always the possibility of safety inspection tests becoming a "checklist-ticking-exercise". Once staff have absorbed the need for maintaining the key control measures, less frequent checking may be more appropriate. For example, weekly inspections could be carried out monthly and monthly checks could be made quarterly.

The contents of inspection checklists vary from charity to charity, but the lists below give an indication of some of the control measures usually checked at the following frequencies.

Daily

- Fire escapes clear, unobstructed
- Floors clean, no trip hazards
- Stairs clean, unobstructed
- Temperature above the minimum
- Signing in/out book in use

Weekly

- Lighting & heating working OK
- Fire extinguishers accessible
- Fire/security alarms tested
- Kitchen/toilets clean

Monthly

- No hazardous substances – or hazardous substances approved, and stored safely
- First Aid box contents up to date
- PPE – good condition
- Accident book up to date

Quarterly

- H&S notice board up to date
- Stock stored safely
- Stepladder, kick stool, trolleys tested
- Sufficient Appointed Persons (First Aid)

Half-yearly

- Safety signage
- Fire drill record
- Electrical appliances – documented full visual check
- Staff H&S training records up to date
- Smoke alarm batteries working

Annually

- Fire extinguishers within service date
- Thermometers working OK
- Risk assessments up to date – including COSHH and Manual Handling
- Emergency lighting continuous 3-hour test

Every two years

- Routine testing/monitoring for legionella bacteria (ensuring that tap water exceeds a temperature of 50 degrees within two minutes, and that the cold water was below four degrees after two minutes)

Copies of safety inspection checks should be readily accessible as Environmental Health Officers may ask to see them when they visit.

Annual H&S Reports

Summarising progress achieved against the objectives in an annual H&S report is a useful way of reviewing all the work done throughout the year. This could include information gathered on accidents and incidents as well as information gained from regular inspections.

Preparing an annual report would help a charity to assess:

- how well it is performing in H&S
- if it is meeting its own objectives and standards
- whether its risk controls are good enough
- if it is complying with H&S laws
- whether it has accurate records of injuries, ill health and accidental loss