



Has your company implemented a strategy for promoting health and safety at work?

Rationale for question

Businesses have a responsibility to ensure employee well-being and safety in the workplace. Not only is it an ethical and legal duty, but effective management of health and safety issues also leads to fewer absences, improved staff retention, higher morale and higher productivity. A health and safety policy can provide protection for both employers and employees should a dispute arise related to injury or illness.

Health and safety is relevant to all places of work. For example, health risks might include:

- poor lifting techniques;
- incorrect handling of materials;
- working in noisy environments;
- working at a computer with poor set-up; and
- working long hours and to tight deadlines.

Safety risks might include:

- slips, trips and falls;
- poorly maintained facilities and equipment; and
- working with heavy machinery.

Notwithstanding the human cost of illness or injury, it is much more effective to implement practices and policies to protect health and maintain safety than it is to pay the costs of absence and sickness and risk the loss of business. An effective strategy allows a company to keep valued and experienced staff, to reduce sickness payment costs and reduce the cost of temporary staff or recruiting new staff. It also reduces the pressure on other employees covering when colleagues are sick.

A strategy for promoting health and safety may include:

- evaluating health and safety risks regularly;
- training staff in effective work practices;
- inspecting and monitoring company safety performance;
- improving operations to remove or reduce work-related injuries or sickness;
- reviewing health and safety at management level; and assigning responsibility for health and safety to a named individual.

Defining terms

A 'strategy' is a long term plan of action designed to achieve a particular goal taking into consideration the widest possible set of potential options and their impacts. It must include actions that are undertaken consistently. In the case of health and safety, it involves not only meeting minimum legal requirements, but also considering work environment and practices.

Primary and Secondary answer requirements

ANSWERING YES

Companies must:

1. explain the components of their health and safety strategy (as described in the rationale); and
2. describe how it is implemented and monitored.

Companies may:

1. mention any successes in dealing with health and safety issues, e.g. a reduction in workplace accidents or workforce sickness.

ANSWERING NO

Companies must:

1. explain why they do not or cannot answer YES to this question, listing the business reasons, any mitigating circumstances or other reasons that apply.

Companies may:

1. describe any future intentions regarding this issue.

DON'T KNOW is not a permissible answer to this question.

NOT APPLICABLE is not a permissible answer to this question.

NO ANSWER YET is only permissible under extraordinary circumstances and then for only a limited period.