

What is a Code of Practice?

The term 'Code of Practice' has a particular meaning under the Victorian **Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985** (the Act). Other codes of practice, such as the advisory codes developed by the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission or Standards Australia, voluntary codes agreed in an industry, or codes adopted by other states or countries do not come within the meaning of the term used in the Act. The Act provides for Codes of Practice "for the purpose of providing practical guidance to employers, self-employed people, employees, occupiers, designers, manufacturers, importers, suppliers or any other persons who may be placed under an obligation by or under this Act. . ." [S.55(1)].

A Code of Practice approved by the Minister for Industry Services comes into effect when "notice of approval is published in the Government Gazette or on such later day as may be specified in the notice, . . ." [S.55(6)]. A Code of Practice does not have the same legal force as Regulations. Contravention of, or failure to comply with, Regulations made under the Act is an offence [S.47(1)]. Failure to observe a provision of an approved Code of Practice is not in itself a breach of the Act [S.55(8)].

A Health and Safety Representative is able to cite an approved Code of Practice in a Provisional Improvement Notice as a means by which an alleged non-compliance with the Act or Regulations may be remedied [S.35(2)(a)]. Similarly, an Inspector may cite an approved Code Of Practice as a means of remedying alleged non-compliance when issuing an Improvement Notice or Prohibition Notice [S.45(2)(a)].

The Act provides for codes to be used as evidence of contravention or failure to comply with a provision of the Act or regulations under the Act. The relevant section is section 56 and it is reprinted below.

Where in any proceedings under this Act it is alleged that a person contravened or failed to comply with a provision of this Act or the regulations in relation to which an approved code of practice was in effect at the time of the alleged contravention or failure-

- (a) the approved code of practice shall be admissible in evidence in those proceedings; and*
- (b) if the court is satisfied in relation to any matter which it is necessary for the prosecution to prove in order to establish the alleged contravention or failure that-*
 - (i) any provision of the approved code of practice is relevant to that matter; and*
 - (ii) the person failed at any material time to observe that provision of the approved code of practice-*

that matter shall be taken as proved unless the court is satisfied that in respect of that matter the person complied with that provision of this Act or the regulations otherwise than by way of observance of that provision of the approved code of practice.

The practical effect of this section is that provisions in the code constitute compliance with the provision of the Act or a regulation to which the code is giving practical guidance. The provisions in a code are, however, not mandatory. That is, a person may choose to comply with the relevant provision of the Act or regulation in some other way, provided that the alternative method used also fulfils the requirements of the Act or regulations.

This publication is copyright. No part may be reproduced by any process except in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968. Copyright Victorian WorkCover Authority Melbourne Australia
First published 1988; Reprinted 1995. ISBN 0 7306 7260 3
Sales: WorkCover Victoria Level 3, 485 Latrobe Street, Melbourne. (03) 9641 1555

1. Authority

- 1.1 This Code of Practice is approved pursuant to Section 55 of the **Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985** (the Act)
- 1.2 Section 21 of the Act requires an employer, to "*provide and maintain so far as is practicable for employees a working environment that is safe and without risks to health*" and "*to provide adequate facilities for the welfare of employees at any workplace . . .*".
- 1.3 "Adequate facilities for the welfare of employees at the workplace" may include appropriate first aid facilities and suitably trained persons.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of the Code of Practice is to provide practical guidance on meeting the requirements of Section 21(2)(d) of the Act which establishes a statutory duty on the employer to "provide adequate facilities for the welfare of employees at any workplace under the control and management of the employer". The Code provides guidance in the provision of first aid facilities.

Section 21(2)(e) of the Act establishes a duty on the employer to provide such information, instruction, training and supervision to employees as are necessary to enable the employees to perform their work in a manner that is safe and without risks to health. The Code provides practical guidance on how to fulfil that duty in relation to first aid equipment and ensuring appropriate training and provision of first aiders.

3. Definitions

'First aid in the workplace' is defined as the provision of emergency treatment and life support for people suffering injury or illness at work.

4. Establishing what is appropriate

- 4.1 In determining what are appropriate first aid facilities and suitably trained people, employers may consider the following systematic approach:
- identify causes of work injury and work-related illness;
 - assess the risk of work injuries and work-related illness occurring;
 - determine the appropriate first aid facilities and training; and
 - evaluate the first aid facilities and training.
- 4.2 In following this process the employer should consider the following factors in assessing the first aid needs of the workplace:
- (i) **Size and layout of the workplace**
- In relation to the size and layout of a workplace, an employer should consider:
- the nature of work being performed at different work stations;
 - the distance an injured or ill person has to be transported to first aid;
 - the ease with which this can be undertaken; and
 - the level of first aid available throughout the workplace.

First aid facilities and services should be located at points convenient to the workforce and where there is a significant risk of an injury occurring.

A workplace with a large physical area may require first aid to be available in more than one location, for example, when:

- the place of work is a long distance from accident and emergency facilities;
- small numbers of employees are dispersed over a wide area;
- access to treatment is difficult; and
- a workplace is on more than one floor.

(ii) the number and distribution of employees including arrangements such as shift work, overtime and flexible hours

Where there are separate work areas, it may be appropriate to locate first aid facilities centrally and provide portable first aid kits in each work area.

Where employees work away from their employer's premises, an employer will need to consider other factors including:

- whether employees work alone or in groups;
- employees' access to telephone and emergency radio communications; and
- the nature of the work being performed.

In these situations, an employer should consider providing small and more portable first aid kits to employees. Employees should be informed about the contents of these kits, their location and access arrangements..

Where work occurs in more than one shift, first aid facilities should be available whenever there are people at work. The number of people working overtime is often less than a regular shift, but additional hours of work heightens fatigue. This may increase the risk of accidents and injuries. An employer should ensure when overtime or shift work is being performed that appropriate first aid facilities and services are available for the number of people working each shift.

In work environments such as schools, museums, libraries and sporting venues where members of the public may be present, additional first aid services and facilities may need to be considered.

(iii) Nature of hazards and the severity of the risk

Certain work environments have greater risks of injury and illness due to the nature of the work being performed. This is an important criterion for deciding the first aid requirements as different first aid facilities may be required for different activities. For example, offices and libraries will require different first aid facilities to factories.

Where a workplace stores or uses highly toxic or corrosive chemicals, additional first aid facilities and services should be provided, particularly if specified in the relevant Material Safety Data Sheet. Facilities may need to include emergency showers and eyewash stations and where applicable, the provision of poison antidotes.

(iv) Location of the workplace

The distance of the workplace from ambulance, hospital and medical centres or occupational health services should be considered.

If it takes more than half an hour to get an injured or ill person to these services, a suitably trained first aider may be needed. The final decision will depend on a combination of factors such as employee numbers, the nature of the hazards present and the severity of the risk.

The time taken for medical aid to reach the casualty is more significant than distance. For workplaces in remote areas, additional first aid facilities and services should be provided. Where poor roads and adverse weather conditions may apply, facilities for aerial evacuation of injured or ill people should be included when planning first aid facilities. Efficient communications systems should be available for ensuring optimum response times.

(v) **Known occurrences of accidents or illnesses**

A review of accident, and injury and "near miss" incident data for the workplace may help identify problem areas. The use of data should not be the only means of identifying hazards as it covers past occurrences which may not reliably indicate potential injuries and illnesses.

4.3 Specialist practitioners and representatives of industry associations, unions and government may be of assistance in gathering and distributing health and safety information regarding workplace hazards, injuries and illnesses and in determining appropriate first aid resources.

4.4 Matters to be determined by an assessment having regard to the factors listed in clause 4.2 include the following:

(i) the selection, provision, and maintenance of first aid facilities, including:

- content of first aid kits;
- number and location of first aid kits;
- first aid rooms and their contents;

(ii) training, including:

- employee training and advice on availability of first aid assistance;
- first aiders;
- the languages in which information should be provided (Refer to the *Code of Practice for the Provision of Occupational Health and Safety Information in Languages other than English*); and

(iii) policies, procedures and processes associated with the use of first aid facilities and services.

4.5 Where appropriate, the employer should provide safety signs to identify and locate first aid facilities. Australian Standard AS 1319, (Safety Signs for the Occupational Environment) may provide useful guidance.

4.6 It is suggested that the employer record the first aid assessment processes undertaken and the outcomes of any assessments. This may be beneficial when reviewing first aid facilities and training needs. Appendix IV provides a possible first aid assessment.

5. Consultation

5.1 Section 31(2)(c) of the Act requires an employer, if practicable, "*to consult the health and safety representative of a designated work group on all proposed changes to the workplace, the plant or substances used at the workplace or the conduct of work at the workplace that may affect health and safety of any member of the designated work group*".

Consultation should take place as early as possible when planning for the introduction of new or modified first aid facilities, to allow for changes arising from the consultation to be incorporated. Consultative procedures should allow enough time for the health and safety representatives and employees to consider the information and to discuss it with the employer.

Consultation should take place in respect to all aspects related to the provision of first aid. This should include

consultation on the provision of training, the provision of information, the provision of suitably qualified first aiders and first aid facilities.

6. First Aid Kits

- 6.1** Appendix II provides guidance on the possible contents of a first aid kit. The employer should consider the appropriate contents of a first aid kit for their workplace having regard to the factors listed in clause 4.2. Suggested contents of additional modules for workplaces with particular hazards are also included in Appendix II. Where a particular hazard exists, such as cyanide or insecticides, arrangements should be made to ensure that medical services are available with the capacity and facilities to deal with that hazard.
- 6.2** Appropriate first aid facilities will vary from one workplace to the next. Having regard to the factors listed in clause 4.2 an appropriate number of first aid kits should be provided by the employer.
- 6.3** The employer should consider the appropriate location of first aid kits. Kits should be clearly identifiable and accessible to employees. Employees should be advised of the location of first aid kits.
- 6.4** Employers should ensure that first aid kits are maintained in proper condition and the contents replenished as necessary.

7. Employee Awareness

- 7.1** The provision of information on first aid in the workplace should be an integral part of the induction of employees.
- 7.2** The employer should provide instructions to employees concerning the arrangements for provision of adequate first aid facilities at the workplace, the location of first aid kits, the names and work location of trained first aiders. The instruction should be provided when:
- an employee first becomes employed;
 - a change in the nature or type of duties performed occurs which may impact on first aid provision;
 - and at appropriate intervals thereafter, as determined by the outcome of the assessment.
 - (See Clause 4.2).

8. First Aiders

- 8.1** The appropriate number and competencies required of first aiders will vary from one workplace to the next. Having regard to the factors listed in clause 4.2 the employer should ensure that an appropriate number of suitably trained first aiders are provided for the welfare of employees at the workplace.

There is no typical number of first aiders for a workplace. In most workplaces, it is likely that an assessment will determine that at least one suitably trained first aider should be provided. Appendix IV provides an example first aid assessment and assessment outcome, including the number of first aiders for the workplace example.

- 8.2** The employer should ensure that a record of first aid treatment given is kept.

8.3 First Aid Training

The competencies required for first aiders at the workplace should be determined having regard to the outcomes of the assessment conducted (see clause 4.2). First aid training should be provided to ensure that first aiders have the determined competencies. Appendix III provides additional guidance on the subject matter for first aider training and first aider competencies.

Whenever the factors outlined in clause 4.2 change it is suggested that the employer should reassess competency requirements and subsequent training needs.

Training programs should ensure the upkeep of appropriate first aid knowledge and skills.

Training should, among other things, ensure an understanding of this code of practice.

9. First Aid Rooms

- 9.1** Employers should consider the need for a first aid room for their workplace having regard to the outcome of an assessment conducted (see clause 4.2).

9.2 Room Requirements

The size of the room provided should be sufficient for its purpose. The room should be well illuminated and ventilated. The access door to the room should provide easy access to injured people who may need to be supported or moved by stretcher or wheelchair. The room should have easy access to toilets.

List of Room Contents

The following items may be appropriate:

- resuscitation mask;
- sink and wash basin with hot and cold water supplied;
- work bench or dressing trolley;
- cupboards for storage of medicaments, dressing and linen;
- soiled dressing container;
- electric power points;
- medical examination couch with blankets and pillow;
- upright chairs;
- removable screen;
- desk and telephone;
- stretcher; and
- a First Aid Kit appropriate to the workplace.

Additional module(s) and additional items or equipment required as determined by the assessment should be provided for the first aid room.

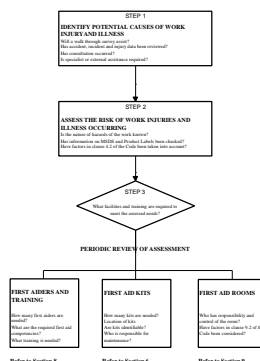
Where a first aid room is provided it should not be used for other purposes.

- 9.3** Each first aid room and its contents should be under the responsibility and control of a suitably qualified or trained person.

10. First Aid Practices

- 10.1** First aid practices should reflect currently accepted practices and, where available, nationally recognised standards of first aid practice should be referred to for guidance.

Appendix I - SUGGESTED PROCESS FOR ASSESSING FIRST AID FACILITIES AND TRAINING



Appendix II - Occupational First Aid Kit

1. Container

The container should protect the contents of the kit from dust and damage. If any modules are to be included, the containers should be large enough to hold them, preferably in separate compartments. The container should be easily recognisable, for example, a white cross on a green background prominently displayed on the outside, and should not be locked.

2. Contents

A code of practice cannot prescribe the contents of a first aid kit. Appropriate first aid facilities will vary from one workplace to the next. Employers should ensure that first aid kits contain contents in quantities appropriate for their workplace, taking into consideration the outcomes of the assessment conducted (see clause 4.2 of the Code).

In most workplaces the following items are likely to be included in a basic first aid kit:

Emergency Services Telephone Numbers and Addresses
 Name and telephone number of workplace first aiders
 Basic First Aid Notes
 Individually wrapped sterile adhesive dressing
 Sterile eye pads
 Sterile covering for serious wounds
 Triangular bandages
 Safety pins
 Small sterile un-medicated wound dressing
 Medium sterile un-medicated wound dressing
 Large sterile un-medicated wound dressing
 Adhesive tape
 Rubber thread or crepe bandage
 Disposable gloves
 Scissors

ADDITIONAL MODULES

The employer should assess the need for additional modules for the first aid kit where particular hazards exist. Some examples of commonly needed modules in the workplace are as follows:

A. EYE MODULE

This module should be included in first aid kits in any workplace where:

- i. Chemical liquids or powders are handled in open containers;

- ii. Spraying, hosing, compressed air or abrasive blasting operations are carried out;
- iii. There is any possibility of flying particles;
- iv. Welding, cutting or machining operations are conducted; and
- v. Wearing of eye protection is recommended.

1. Container

This module should be kept in a container which clearly identifies its contents and purpose.

2. Contents

In most workplaces where an eye module is needed it is likely that the module would include:

- Guidance notes
- Eye wash (once only use container)
- Sterile eye pads
- Adhesive tape.

3. Remarks

The provision of this module does not necessarily replace the need for general eye wash facilities in a workplace with a particular hazard.

B. BURNS MODULE

This module should be included in first aid kits in any workplace where there is a possibility of a person sustaining a serious burn. Such places may include those where:

- i. Heat is used in the process;
- ii. Flammable liquids are used;
- iii. Chemical acids or alkalines are used; and
- iv. Other corrosive chemicals are used.

1. Container

This module should be kept in a container which clearly identifies its contents and purpose.

2. Contents

In most workplaces where a burns module is needed it is likely that the module would include:

- Guidance notes
- Assorted size burns dressings
- Clean sheeting (for covering burns).

3. Remarks

Size of dressings and sheeting should be determined having regard to the nature of the hazard at the workplace. For example, the risk from molten metal splashing at a fabricating plant may result in large burn dressing and sheeting being necessary.

This module does not replace the provision of drench showers where these are required by other regulations or suggested in codes.

C. OTHER USEFUL MODULES

The selection of other modules may arise out of the assessment process, for example, cyanide poisoning or snake bite kits. It is suggested that if the assessment indicates that additional modules are desirable, assistance from first aid professionals or first aid supply companies be sought in relation to appropriate contents.

Additional Contents of First Aid Kits for Use in Remote Locations

In workplaces where people work in remote locations, it is likely that the first aid kit will include the following items:

- emergency reference manual
- broad crepe bandages (for snake bites)
- cervical collar (for spinal/neck injuries)
- large clean sheeting (for covering burns)
- thermal blanket (for treatment of shock)
- whistle (for attracting attention)
- torch/flashlight
- note pad and pencil (for recording treatment given)

Appropriate contents will vary according to the nature of the work activity and its associated risks.

Appendix III - First Aiders

First aiders undertake the initial treatment of people suffering injury and illness at work. The treatment provided by first aiders should be consistent with their training and competence. When in doubt, first aiders should recommend that an employee seek medical advice.

First aiders should not be responsible for on-going medical care.

The level of first aid training provided to administer first aid in each workplace should be determined by the outcomes of the assessment process described in clause 4.2 of the Code. Training should be provided, where appropriate, in the following matters:

- resuscitation
- treatment and control of bleeding
- treatment of shocksment of the unconscious casualty
- management of the unconscious casualty
- contents of first aid kits and their use
- transport of casualties
- recognition of illness
- treatment of injuries to bones, muscles and joints
- treatment of minor injuries
- treatment of burns and scalds
- eye irrigation
- poisons
- simple record keeping
- universal precautions to minimise the spread of infectious diseases when treating wounds (refer to the *National Code of Practice for Health Care Workers and Other People at Risk of the Transmission of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Hepatitis B in the Workplace*)
- purchasing first aid supplies.

FIRST AIDER COMPETENCIES

1. Where the risk of serious injury or illness is low, first aiders should have competencies in first aid procedures for the type of injury and illness which may be encountered at the workplace. In addition, first aiders should have competencies in first aid procedures for life threatening situations and other emergencies.

First aiders should:

- (a) be able to undertake the initial treatment of injuries and illnesses occurring at the workplace;
 - (b) be able to record details of first aid given; and
 - (c) have an understanding of relevant legislation.
2. Where there is a higher risk of serious injury or illness, first aiders should, in addition to the above, have broader competencies, including a wider knowledge of the hazards of the working environment, occupational health and safety legislation, first aid room requirements and equipment usage..

Responsibilities of first aiders at higher risk workplaces could also include advising an employer on first aid facilities, including first aid kits, rooms and procedures, and maintaining a first aid room, first aid equipment and kits.

3. In certain high risk situations, an employer should consider providing an occupational health service for managing

injuries and adverse health effects of workplace exposures, for example, lead, pesticides, infectious diseases. In these work environments and particularly where the number of employees exceeds 300, the employer should consider employing a full-time occupational health professional with relevant first aid experience, such as a registered nurse.

Appendix IV - First Aid Assessment

Note: This example was developed by a workplace utilising the suggested procedure and this code of practice. It is included as an example only. This summary documentation does not reflect the consultative processes and all the detailed discussion that took place and refers to a particular work environment. It therefore should not be directly transposed to other workplaces.

ABC WORKPLACE CO.OFFICE AND FACTORY**ASSESSMENT FACTORS****1. SIZE AND LAYOUT OF THE WORKPLACE**

AREA:	1000 square metres
MAX DISTANCE TO FIRST AID	65 metres
NO. OF FLOORS	2
ACCESS BETWEEN FLOORS	Lifts and stairs

2. NUMBER AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYEES

NUMBER OF STAFF	80
SHIFTS	3
OVERTIME WORKED	Yes - regularly
ARE ANY EMPLOYEES ISOLATED?	Yes
ARE MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PRESENT?	Yes

3. NATURE OF HAZARDS AND SEVERITY OF RISK

KNOWN HAZARDS	Hazardous chemicals Toxic substances Manual handling Cuts and lacerations Scalding
SEVERITY OF RISK	Low
DO MSDS AND PRODUCT LABELS SPECIFY ANY FIRST AID REQUIREMENTS?	Yes - anti-poison treatment

4. LOCATION OF THE WORKPLACE

NEAREST HOSPITAL	6 kilometres
NEAREST MEDICAL/OH SERVICE	2 kilometres
TIME TO MEDICAL SERVICE	10-15 minutes

5. KNOWN OCCURRENCES OF ACCIDENTS AND ILLNESSES

(LAST 12 MONTHS)	2 x scaldings
ACCIDENT DATA	9 x lacerations 2 x dizziness from inhalation of hazardous fumes 15 x sprains
NEAR MISSES	2 incidents where a trolley carrying various chemicals overturned

OUTCOMES OF ASSESSMENT

1. CONTENTS OF THE FIRST AID KIT	Basic kit, with Burns Module and Poisons treatment
2. NUMBER AND LOCATION OF KITS	6 - 2 on the office floor and 4 on the factory floor
3. FIRST AID ROOM	Yes
4. COMPETENCIES REQUIRED OF FIRST AIDERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emergency procedures during the first few minutes after life threatening incident; 2. The first aid treatment of injuries, particularly cuts and burns (chemical exposures to identified chemicals), provision of anti-toxins, calming of distressed personnel 3. Recording of details of first aid given
5. TRAINING REQUIRED FOR FIRST AIDERS	Training required for proficiency in all of the above areas i
6. TRAINING REQUIRED FOR STAFF	4. Location of first aid kits; names, telephone numbers and location of first aiders; knowledge of First Aid code of practice
7. NUMBER OF FIRST AIDERS REQUIRED	9 - minimum 3 per shift (1 in office and 2 in the factory)
8. LANGUAGES INFORMATION REQUIRED IN	English, Vietnamese, Turkish