

A Duty Holder's Guide to Health and Safety (HASAWA 1974)

What the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and its management regulations require of you, in plain English.

What it is

HASAWA is the overarching law that places a general duty on employers to protect the health and safety of their workers and others. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 set out how to manage it in practice.

Who the duty holder is

The main duty falls on the employer, with further duties on those in control of premises, the self-employed and employees themselves.

What it requires of you

- Provide a safe workplace, safe equipment and safe systems of work, so far as is reasonably practicable.
- Carry out suitable and sufficient risk assessments and act on what they find.
- Put in place arrangements to plan, organise, control, monitor and review health and safety.
- Provide information, instruction, training and supervision, and consult your workers.
- Have a written health and safety policy if you employ five or more people.

How often

Risk assessments

Reviewed regularly and whenever the work, site or team changes

What happens if you don't

Breaching health and safety law can lead to improvement and prohibition notices, prosecution, unlimited fines and, for the most serious failures, imprisonment, as well as the human cost of avoidable harm.

Sources: [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#), [Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999](#)

This guide is general guidance, not legal advice, and is a summary only. Duties and intervals can change and depend on your circumstances. Always check the current regulation and take competent-person advice. Last reviewed June 2026.