

THE PROVISION OF FIRST AID BOXES AT THE WORKPLACE

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We continue to receive enquiries relating to the provision of first aid boxes at work.

Regulation 3 (1) ; (2) and (3) of the General Safety Regulations to the Occupational Health and Safety Act (Act 85 of 1993) prescribes these requirements.

When should first aid be provided at the workplace?

The regulation states that "an employer shall take all reasonable steps that are necessary under the circumstances, to ensure that persons at work *receive prompt first aid treatment* in case of injury or emergency."

"All reasonable steps" includes the training of employees in first aid skills by a recognized training institution.

Employees and other persons on the workplace are entitled to receive prompt first aid treatment without unnecessary delay.

When should first aid boxes be provided?

The Regulation makes provision that first aid facilities must be provided "Where *more than five employees are employed* at a workplace"

Correct placement of the first aid boxes

"The employer must provide a first aid box or boxes at or near the workplace, *available and accessible for the treatment* of injured persons at that workplace."

How many first aid boxes should be provided?

The number of boxes required should be determined by the employer, taking the following into account:

- the type of injuries that are likely to occur at a workplace,
- the nature of the activities performed and
- the number of employees employed at such workplace

What should the first aid box contain?

Suitable first aid equipment, as listed *in the prescribed Annexure*. (You will find the Annexure at the back of the General Administrative Regulations)

Annexure

Government Notice R.2245 of 7 August 1992

Minimum contents of a First Aid Box

In the case of shops and offices, the quantities stated under items 1, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 17, and 18 may be reduced by half.

Item 1	Wound cleaner / antiseptic (100ml)
Item 2	Swabs for cleaning wounds
Item 3	Cotton wool for padding (100g)
Item 4	Sterile gauze (minimum quantity 10)
Item 5	1 pair of forceps (for splinters)
Item 6	1 pair of scissors (minimum size 100mm)
Item 7	1 set of safety pins
Item 8	4 triangular bandages
Item 9	4 roller bandages (75mm x 5m)
Item 10	4 roller bandages (100mm x 5m)
Item 11	1 roll of elastic adhesive (25mm x 3m)
Item 12	1 Non-allergenic adhesive strip (25mm x 3m)
Item 13	1 Packet of adhesive dressing strips (minimum quantity 10 assorted sizes)
Item 14	4 First aid dressing (75mm x 100mm)
Item 15	4 First aid dressings (150mm x 200mm)
Item 16	2 Straight splints
Item 17	2 Pairs large and 2 pairs medium disposable latex gloves
Item 18	2 CPR mouth pieces or similar devices

May the employer keep any other articles or substances like painkillers and vitamins in the first aid box?

Regulation 3 states that the employer must ensure that *only articles and equipment as mentioned above or other similar equipment or medicine* is kept in the first aid box or boxes.

General remarks and comments:

Articles used for first aid purposes should always be replaced as soon as possible after it has been used.

The employer must perform regular inspections of the first aid boxes in the workplace to ensure that the boxes contain the prescribed "minimum contents".