

Welfare at work

Guidance for employers on welfare provisions



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Introduction

If you employ anyone (however short the period) you must 'so far as is reasonably practicable', provide adequate and appropriate welfare facilities for them while they are at work. This means you must provide such facilities unless it is clearly unreasonable in terms of time, trouble, cost and physical difficulty.

'Welfare facilities' are those that are necessary for the well-being of your employees, such as washing, toilet, rest and changing facilities, and somewhere clean to eat and drink during breaks.

This leaflet gives you simple, practical advice on how you can meet these requirements. The information may also be of interest to employees and the self-employed.

It summarises the requirements of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992. See 'Find out more' for other useful information.

You may also find it useful to discuss your needs with manufacturers and suppliers of welfare facilities, services and consumables.

What toilet and washing facilities do I need to provide?

You have to provide adequate toilet and washing facilities for your employees. 'Adequate' means you have to provide:

- enough toilets and washbasins for those expected to use them – people should not have to queue for long periods to go to the toilet;
- where possible, separate facilities for men and women – failing that, rooms with lockable doors;
- clean facilities – to help achieve this walls and floors should preferably be tiled (or covered in suitable waterproof material) to make them easier to clean;
- a supply of toilet paper and, for female employees, a means of disposing of sanitary dressings;
- facilities that are well lit and ventilated;
- facilities with hot and cold running water;
- enough soap or other washing agents;
- a basin large enough to wash hands and forearms if necessary;
- a means for drying hands, eg paper towels or a hot air dryer;
- showers where necessary, eg for particularly dirty work.

You must always consider the needs of those with disabilities.

How many facilities do I need to provide?

The following tables show the minimum number of toilets and washbasins that should be provided.

Table 1 Number of toilets and washbasins for mixed use (or women only)

Number of people at work	Number of toilets	Number of washbasins
1-5	1	1
6-25	2	2
26-50	3	3
51-75	4	4
76-100	5	5

Table 2 Toilets used by men only

Number of men at work	Number of toilets	Number of urinals
1-15	1	1
16-30	2	1
31-45	2	2
46-60	3	2
61-75	3	3
76-90	4	3
91-100	4	4

What if staff work in remote workplaces without suitable plumbing and a water supply?

You may need to provide chemical toilets and washing facilities, such as water containers.

What if my employees are working at temporary worksites?

'So far as is reasonably practicable' you need to provide flushing toilets and running water. Portable cabins converted into toilet facilities are available from hire companies. If this is not possible, consider alternatives such as chemical toilets and water containers.

Use of public toilets and washing facilities should be a last resort and not used just because they are the cheaper option. This would not be acceptable where the provision of better facilities would be reasonably practicable.

Do I need to provide drinking water?

Yes. The law requires that you provide drinking water and ensure that:

- it is free from contamination and is preferably from the public water supply
 - bottled water dispensers are acceptable as a secondary supply;
- it is easily accessible by all employees;

- there are adequate supplies taking into consideration the temperature of the working environment and types of work activity;
- cups or a drinking fountain are provided.

Drinking water does not have to be marked unless there is a significant risk of people drinking non-drinking water.

Do I have to provide a room for those who smoke?

No. It is against the law to smoke in virtually all enclosed public places and workplaces in England, including most work vehicles. Similar legislation exists in Scotland and Wales. Further information is available at www.smokefreeengland.co.uk.

What arrangements should I make for meal breaks?

There should be a suitable seating area for workers to use during breaks – it needs to be clean and located where food will not get contaminated.

There should be washing facilities nearby, and a means of heating food or water for hot drinks. You must maintain good hygiene standards.

What facilities do I need to provide for changing and storing clothing?

If the work activity requires your employees to change into and wear specialist clothing (overalls, a uniform, thermal clothing etc), then you must provide enough changing rooms for the number of people expected to use them.

Where a changing room is provided it should:

- be readily accessible;
- contain, or lead directly to, clothing storage and washing facilities;
- provide seating;
- provide a means for hanging clothes – a hook or peg may be sufficient;
- ensure the privacy of the user.

Separate use of changing facilities should be available to men and women.

Try to prevent employees' own clothing coming into contact with work-soiled clothing or getting dirty or wet. Provide separate storage for clean and contaminated clothing which:

- allows wet clothing to be hung up to dry out during the course of the day;
- is well ventilated.

Separate guidance is available from HSE Books on the provision of personal protective equipment (see 'Find out more').

Do I need to provide rest facilities for pregnant women and nursing mothers?

Yes, if it is 'reasonably practicable' for you to do so. You may need to provide a room for pregnant women/nursing mothers to rest or lie down.

If I do all this, have I done enough?

No. You must also ensure that the facilities are kept clean and in good condition, and that there is always an adequate supply of toilet paper, soap etc. This means that you need to put in place an effective system to maintain them to a high standard, including regular cleaning.

Ask yourself – would you be happy to use the welfare facilities you provide for your employees?

Find out more

Workplace health, safety and welfare: A short guide for managers
Leaflet INDG244(rev1) HSE Books 2006 (single copy free or priced packs of 15
ISBN 978 0 7176 6192 3)

Workplace health, safety and welfare. Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L24 HSE Books 1992
ISBN 978 0 7176 0413 5

A short guide to the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992
INDG174(rev1) HSE Books 2005 (single copy free or priced packs of 15
ISBN 978 0 7176 6141 1)

Provision of welfare facilities at fixed construction sites Construction Information
Sheet CIS18(rev1) HSE Books 1998

Provision of welfare facilities at transient construction sites Construction Information
Sheet CIS46 HSE Books 1997

Further information

HSE priced and free publications are available by mail order from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA Tel: 01787 881165 Fax: 01787 313995 Website: www.hsebooks.co.uk (HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops and free leaflets can be downloaded from HSE's website: www.hse.gov.uk.)

For information about health and safety ring HSE's Infoline Tel: 0845 345 0055 Fax: 0845 408 9566 Textphone: 0845 408 9577 e-mail: hse.infoline@natbrit.com or write to HSE Information Services, Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly CF83 3GG.

This document contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

This leaflet is available in priced packs of 20 from HSE Books, ISBN 978 0 7176 6264 7. Single free copies are also available from HSE Books.

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