

# SEGMENT SEVEN - Workplace Safety

After studying this segment you should have a greater understanding of the hazards associated with workplaces in general and how the risks inherent in the workplace can be minimised.

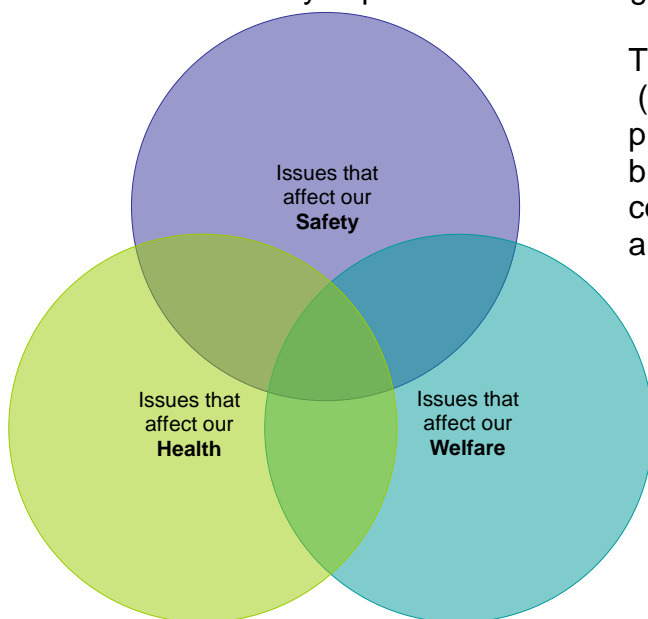
## AIMS OF THE SEGMENT

The main aim of this segment is to help you understand the importance of a safe working environment and be able to:

- Describe health & safety aspects of the building structure, design layout and services;
- Explain the importance of good storage, stacking, maintenance and housekeeping;
- Outline the welfare facilities needed including:
  - WC facilities;
  - Washing facilities;
  - Drinking water and rest facilities.
- Describe and give examples of the categories of safety signs.

## THE WORKPLACE (HEALTH, SAFETY & WELFARE) REGULATIONS

That's quite a mouthful, but these regulations are the ones that control so much of the health & safety aspects of the buildings in which we work.



The Regulations and their associated ACOP (Approved Code of practice) lay out precisely what is required to ensure that the buildings we work in contribute to our continuing health & safety at work. There are three main strands to the Regulations.

Issues that affect your **safety** include:

- The **stability** and **solidity** of the building – will it fall down?
- **Maintenance** of the building and the equipment in it.
- The amount of working space you have – is it enough?
- The **condition** of floors, stairs etc.
- The risk of **falling** or being hit by a falling object – guard rails etc.
- Safety of **windows**, skylights, doors, gates, escalators etc.
  
- **Lighting** – sufficient lighting is essential if people are to work safely.

In short everything about the design and construction of the building and how it is looked after.

### SAQ

Q. Is your workplace lit with artificial lighting? Yes/No Please mark as appropriate

Q. Do you have emergency lighting installed? Yes/No

Issues to do with your **health** are also included in these regulations. The main points are:

- **Ventilation** – it must be suitable and sufficient to provide you with fresh or purified air. Some hazards will require additional specific ventilation.
- **Temperature** – The temperature of the workplace should be reasonable, usually at or above 13<sup>0</sup>C or 16<sup>0</sup>C, but not too hot. This is a bit of a problem in the seafood industry where we need to keep things cool to ensure we maintain the quality of our products. In these instances it is acceptable to use warm clothing as a form of PPE. Fish and Chip shops often have the opposite problem.
- Cleaning and removal of waste is both a safety issue and a health issue.
- Workstations and seating. Whether you are working in an office, a shop or on the production line in a factory, the design of your workstation can have a long term impact on your health. As an employer you have a responsibility to evaluate the affect of this on your employees. As an employee you have a responsibility to inform your employer if you feel your workstation is a problem.

Issues to do with your **welfare** are also included in these regulations . Welfare issues we will look at later in this segment.

## LOOKING AFTER THE WORKPLACE

### Storage and Stacking

We will now look at important issues within the workplace itself, the way in which equipment and materials are moved, stored and looked after.

Almost every workplace has to store and stack materials. Whether you work in a fishmongers or the largest fish processor in the country, you will need to store and stack everything from containers to cleaning materials, from fish to financial documents. How you do it can have an impact on health & safety.

The benefits of good storage and stacking are a reduced chance of accidents, injury and ill health. Other benefits will include better performance and productivity.

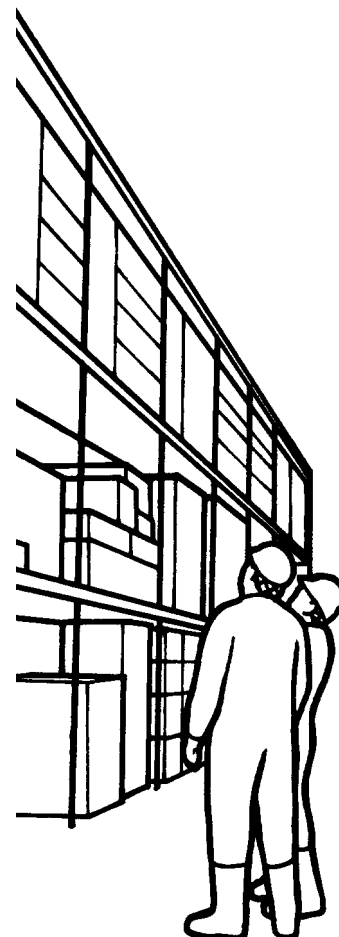
How is this achieved? Everything in its place and a place for everything! This saying might have been made for this part of the segment, as it identifies the basic principle underlying good storage and stacking. Whatever it is that you need to store, it should have a designated place which is both suitable in terms of design and strength, as well as adequate in terms of capacity.

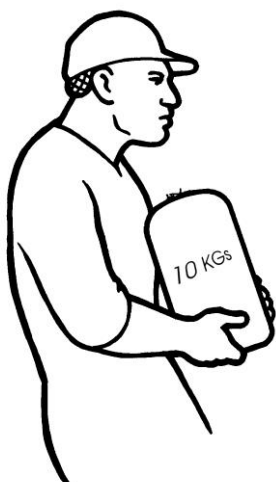
In my own office we have an excellent storeroom for storing the thousands of training packs produced and sold by Seafish every year, It didn't used to be like that though, the storeroom was cramped and disorganised and not only was it not safe but it wasn't efficient either.

We didn't have to change the shelving system or create a larger store to improve it; all we had to do was organise it. This meant taking out and disposing of all of the old and un-needed materials, getting boxes off the floor, labelling the shelves, buying the right kind of step ladder, unpacking large heavy boxes into several smaller and easier to handle ones – in short getting it organised.

I won't say that it wasn't hard work and that we don't have to keep an eye on it, but at least now you can find what you want and no-one should injure themselves moving boxes in and out.

In our store we have the heaviest boxes about 1m off the floor so you don't have to bend down to pick them up. The lighter boxes go nearer the floor and the lightest boxes are highest up. Just imagine a box with 30 of these H&S Open Learning modules in. Now think about moving 50 of those boxes. The other change we made to reduce our storage problem was to order smaller quantities of materials more frequently and to ask for them to be packed into smaller (and lighter) units.





These are all things that you can consider in your own workplace. If you need to store large bags of pre-mix or raw materials, why not think about buying them in smaller bags? I know of one company that went from 25kg sacks of salt for marinades down to 10kg bags. It didn't actually cost anymore as the staff could move them quicker and the supplier only charged a few pence extra, so it all balanced out.

### Housekeeping and Maintenance

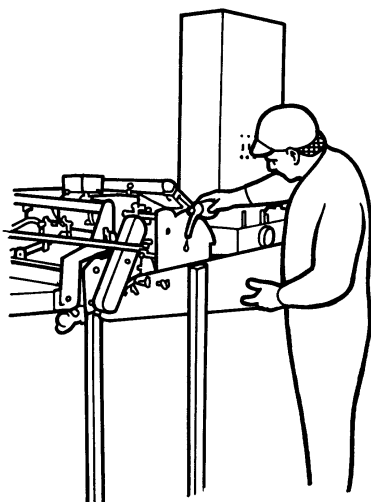
Often these two are confused. But it's quite simple. Housekeeping is something that you do every day or several times a day, to ensure that the mess

and disorder that is an aspect of everyday working life, is kept to a minimum, and by the end of the day, put right.

Housekeeping is not necessarily cleaning, as in our industry this is largely to do with hygiene and food safety. Housekeeping is more about putting equipment away, coiling up hoses when not in use, keeping walkways and traffic routes unobstructed.



Maintenance is the regular inspection and if required, repair and replacement of equipment and features subject to wear and tear.



It isn't just about equipment, it includes everything in your working environment, including the non slip coating on the floor of a fish factory or the exhaust chimney on a frier in a fish and chip shop. The important thing is, that it is planned and regular enough to catch most problems before they happen. Some of these problems could include the wearing out of a conveyer belt on a skinning machine or the accumulation of fat in the exhaust duct of a frier.

If not spotted and corrected in time, one can end up jamming the equipment, while the other can set fire to the shop.

**SAQ** The types of maintenance and housekeeping activities will vary from job to job. Please list the ones that are carried out in your workplace.

Housekeeping Activities	Maintenance Activities
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The housekeeping activities are those that are done each day/week to put the workplace back to its ideal condition, while maintenance activities are intended to avoid a breakdown or failure in plant, equipment etc.

## WORKFORCE WELFARE

As I mentioned earlier, there are three parts to the 1992 Workplace Regulations. We have looked at those parts that cover workplace safety issues and health issues and now we will briefly look at workplace welfare issues.

Just in case you are interested, the Welfare regulations start with Reg. # 20 (sanitary conveniences) and end with Reg. #25A (disabled persons).

Between # 21 and # 25A the following aspects are covered.

**Toilets** or 'sanitary conveniences'. These have to be accessible, suitable and sufficient. The Regulation goes on to cover ventilation, lighting etc but it is sufficient to know that every workplace must provide toilets for its employees.

**Washing** facilities are another requirement. These also have to be accessible, suitable and adequate, and should include hot water as well as cold. Do not confuse these facilities with the hand cleaning workstations you would use during working on a production line, in a fishmongers shop etc. Those are intended to ensure that food hygiene is maintained. The washing facilities covered by the 1992 Regulations include the face as well as the arms and hands, and may even include shower facilities if this is appropriate in your line of work.

Both the sanitary and washing facilities should ensure the privacy of the user.

**Drinking water** which is wholesome, readily accessible and adequate is provided for under Regulation #22. This is particularly important in working environments where dehydration is a possibility.

**Clothing**, or rather facilities to change into work clothing and accommodation in which to store personal clothing not worn at work, are the subjects of Regulations 23 and 24. Changing facilities should also include seating.



Regulation 25 covers the requirement to provide adequate **facilities for rest and to eat meals**. This particular regulation includes the need for rest rooms and rest areas with sufficient seating and tables. The regulation also states that the facilities should protect from contamination if that is a risk in the workplace.

The final regulation is an addition to Regulation 25. Reg. 25A requires that all of the welfare facilities (toilets, washing, drinking water, changing, clothing storage, rest and meals) used by disabled persons at work should be organised (adapted) to take account of their needs.

## SAFETY SIGNS

Safety signs play an important part in workplace safety.

Ideally as an employer, you would be able to remove and safeguard against every danger to health & safety in the workplace. In practice that is impossible and where there exists a risk, you have to bring it to the attention of your workforce.

That's where safety signs come into effect, they are one of the ways that you inform your employees that a risk or danger exists. But they are not a substitute for taking other actions to remove or reduce a risk.

Safety signs come in five different varieties intended for five different purposes.

There are signs to tell that something is prohibited or not allowed.

There are signs to tell you that something is mandatory or compulsory.

Other types of safety signs will provide a warning about a hazard or danger.

The last two types of signs provide information about emergency facilities, escape routes etc. Fire is such an important risk that it has its own specific type of safety signs, while signs for first aid, emergency exits and rescue facilities are all grouped together.

### Shape and Colour

The shape and colour of safety signs are one of the ways in which we can tell one group from another. The colours and shapes are specified in the regulations (Health & Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996).

### Red is for danger

The only red safety signs are either those that prohibit or ban something that is dangerous, or the fire signs.

### Yellow or Amber, please take care

These colours are reserved for those safety signs that **warn** of a dangerous situation so that you can take additional care or precautions.

### Green is for safety

Safety in the form of a first aid box, first aid station, emergency rescue, fire exit, place of safety, breathing equipment and any other source of safety is signposted with a green sign.

### Blue – you must do!

Easy to remember, if it's something you must do, then the sign is blue. Signs for mandatory behaviour such as wearing ear defenders, eye protection are all blue.

The shape of a sign is also important. Seeing is believing, and that was never more true than with safety signs - here are examples of each type. At the end of the module we have included a full colour insert of safety signs from real life situations for you to look over.

Prohibition Signs – a RED circular or round sign prohibiting behaviour likely to cause or contribute to a danger. Examples include smoking. These signs also indicate emergency cut-out switches, valves to stop the flow of gas etc.



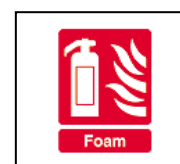
Warning Signs – a YELLOW triangular sign warning you of a possible danger. Examples include electricity, danger of falls from a height, slippery floors, moving equipment.

Mandatory or Compulsory Signs - these BLUE (blue you must do) round signs all specify something that you must do for your own safety or those around you. Typically these signs relate to the wearing of PPE.



Emergency Signs are rectangular and green. They provide information on the location of escape routes, first aid facilities and places of safety and refuge.

Fire signs do not warn of the dangers of fire, but rather tell you where the facilities for reporting and fighting fires are located. Fire signs will highlight the location of fire alarms and fire extinguisher points.



I would like you to take a look around your workplace and identify the kind of safety signs in use.

**SAQ** Please list them in the table below; simply write in what the sign covers and how many of that type you have found. I've given you a few to start with.

Prohibition	Warning	Mandatory	Escape etc	Fire
Smoking ( )	Electricity ( )	Ear defender ( )	First Aid ( )	Fire alarm ( )

### SUMMARY



This segment has shown you the importance of workplace safety, the provision of facilities and use of signs, and should allow you to describe why this is important to the health & safety of everyone in the workplace.

This segment also outlined the importance of proper maintenance, housekeeping, stacking and storage, in ensuring that workplace accidents are avoided.

You should also be able to describe some of the more common workplace safety signs in use today and name the category to which they belong (mandatory, warning, information etc).

Finally, we have looked at the welfare regulations in the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations.

Remember, examples of safety signs can be found at the back of this module, as well as all around you in the workplace.