Once the needs of the relevant statutory health and safety regulations have been met, it is necessary to make them specific to the organisation itself; in this case, a company which is engaged in building services engineering operations. The company must develop a set of policies which meet the requirements of these regulations and translate them to meet its own needs. To achieve this, the company must install its own health and safety management system. This management system must:

- establish and support its health and safety policy
- implement changes to legislation as they apply to the organisation
- monitor and enforce health and safety regulation within the organisation.

This system is built around a set of roles, with each having clearly defined responsibilities. Typical health and safety roles are described in more detail in Topic guide 16.5.

This topic guide will cover:

- health and safety policy
- safe systems of work, including method statements and permits to work.
1 Health and safety policy

All organisations must have a written health and safety policy. This shows:
• the main areas of health and safety to be covered
• how they will be actioned within the organisation
• who is responsible.

The policy must be authorised at a high level within the organisation, then reviewed on a regular basis. As well as an overall policy there may be a need for more specific detailed documents that describe emergency and other health and safety related procedures. These can be written booklets or paper documents, and can be available as online information or as posters located strategically about the building. An example of this is fire emergency posters.

Figure 16.2.1 shows an example form for a health and safety policy (based on Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidelines).

| Company |
| Manager |
| Assistant manager |

**STATEMENT OF GENERAL POLICY**
The main headings and areas of health and safety, for example:
- prevention of accidents
- staff training
- consultation with staff
- emergency procedures
- maintenance of health and safety.

**RESPONSIBILITY OF: Name/Title**
Who is responsible for implementing these actions?

**ACTION/ARRANGEMENTS (customise to meet your own situation)**
How the main areas covered by the policy are actually carried out by the company

| Location of first-aid facilities and information |
| Location of health and safety information |
| Contact |
| Policy signed by: |
| Review date: |

*Figure 16.2.1: An example form for a health and safety policy.*

The main areas covered by a health and safety policy are described on the following page.
Prevention of accidents

The old adage that ‘prevention is better than cure’ is certainly true. What needs to be considered here are the controls necessary to reduce the risk of accidents occurring. By its very definition an accident is an unexpected event, so by attending to the hazards which cause accidents, the likelihood of that accident occurring is reduced. Risk assessments, which are discussed in detail in Topic guide 16.4, are an effective tool for accident prevention.

Emergency procedures

A policy must detail the actions to be taken in the event of an emergency. An emergency can include fire, flood, and gas or chemical leakage. It also includes injury to personnel and the methods by which they will be evacuated from site.

Detailed evacuation procedures must be clearly displayed throughout an organisation’s premises. This section of a policy should either detail these procedures or explain where they can be found. Training should be put in place with evacuation exercises held regularly.

Staff training

Training is essential, not only in direct relation to health and safety, for example fire emergency procedures and first aid, but indirectly through the correct use of equipment and materials, and good working practices. In this section of a policy, the organisation needs to detail responsibilities for this training. There are many levels and types of training for health and safety, including:

- induction sessions for anyone new to a site
- regular first-aid instruction
- specific training for equipment, processes or tools
- training for individual roles within a health and safety management system
- qualifications in health and safety.

Supervision

Supervision must be provided for anyone who is training to use an item of equipment or plant. It may also be required for someone carrying out a particular task for the first time, or taking on a different role. Typically, a policy will detail the requirements for supervision, the identity of the supervisor and the extent to which supervision should take place. It should also state the point at which an employee can work independently. Supervision is intended to protect both the trainee and anyone working with them. It also ensures that any work a trainee carries out while in the training phase of their employment will be safe and fit for purpose.

Use of plant

The construction industry is increasingly reliant on machinery to carry out its operations, from hand-held equipment such as nail guns and drills to large plant such as excavating machines and cranes. All machinery is hazardous. A policy should describe safe use and maintenance of plant, including guidelines such as those outlined below.
16.2: Organisational requirements

- All access equipment should be regularly tested and inspected, and only used if in good condition.
- Safety equipment should be properly stored, inspected and worn.
- Equipment such as lifts and hoists should be maintained regularly.
- Training must be given before plant is used; this can be either a formal or informal introduction and demonstration of its safe use.

Use of substances

The term substance covers any chemical used in the workplace – everything from paint to adhesives. While there are risks involved in the use of any chemical substance, some substances are toxic and need to be handled and stored securely. While use and handling of chemical substances is covered by the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) regulations, a policy needs to translate these requirements for the company or organisation. It needs to cover:

- training required for use and general handling of substances
- correct storage methods
- correct usage
- clear labelling
- correct transportation methods.

Communication between employer and employee, and/or visitors

Communication in this case includes ensuring that employees, sub-contractors and visitors to site are made familiar and conversant with both health and safety policy in general and with how it is applied within the company or organisation. It also covers disseminating the information about specific processes, machinery and chemical substances. In turn, sub-contractors must communicate the precautions and methods they will use to ensure safe working both for themselves and for others.

Case study: Health and safety policies – there for a good reason

At the end of a small construction project, a two-storey extension on a house deep in the countryside, the supervisor instructed one of the labourers to burn the rubbish left over from the work. The labourer protested that he did not think it was legal to do this anymore. The supervisor told him that they were miles from anywhere so no one would know and that they did not have the time to mess about with transfer notes and phoning specialist waste disposal contractors. Finally, he informed the labourer that if he did not burn the rubbish as quickly as possible he would be looking for another job the next day.

Not wanting to join the ranks of the unemployed, the labourer gave in and attempted to light the fire. Because it had been left out for several days, much of the waste material was damp and would not ignite. Fearful for his job, the labourer found a can of petrol, used for the dumper truck, and sprinkled it liberally over the rubbish pile. A struck match resulted in a brief flare-up but it went out again. Panicking now, the labourer splashed more petrol onto the smouldering wood and cardboard packaging.

Suddenly the petrol ignited and not only consumed the waste pile in a ball of flames, but ran up the petrol stream to the can in the labourer’s hand. Even though he immediately dropped the can and ran, the labourer’s clothes were already burning. He had enough sense to roll on the ground and tear off his coat. He received burns to his hand and back, and was off sick for several weeks.
16.2: Organisational requirements

Portfolio activity (2.1)
Examine the health and safety policy used by your company or organisation. Does it include the points described above?
How does the policy describe:
• emergency procedures
• training
• supervision?

Portfolio activity (1.1–1.6, 2.1, 2.2, 2.5)
Hold an inquiry into the incident described in the case study above. Discuss it with two other people.
1 Consider these questions.
• What did the labourer fail to do?
• What were the hazards, both to the individual and to the environment?
• What should the labourer have done when ordered to carry out this action?
2 How should the waste have been disposed of legally?

2 Safe systems of work

Consultation with staff
Health and safety applies to everyone in the organisation – employees as well as management and their representatives. It is important to keep lines of communication open with staff on matters of health and safety. This will not only bring to light any concerns but also give the employee a voice in an issue which affects them directly. It will also help measures to be accepted that are sometimes seen as unnecessary or an obstacle to the activities carried out in an area. Describe who is responsible for a task and how it will be achieved, for example through regular meetings and email communication.

Maintenance of health and safety
Regular inspections are an effective way of maintaining health and safety. It is human nature to want to get a job done quickly but this can lead to corners being cut and a general disregard for the rigours of a safe and healthy approach.

All equipment and services relating to health and safety must be kept in working order. No emergency exits should be obstructed; all fire extinguishers should be regularly maintained. A policy should state who is responsible for these checks and inspections, how regularly they should be carried out and how this will be done.

Risk-assessed method statement
As its name suggests, a method statement is a description of how a job or set of tasks will be carried out.
It should include:

- general details of the work and details of the company or individual responsible for its completion; the start and completion dates should also be included
- a summary of the hazards and a risk assessment which includes the methods for controlling the risk (note: a risk assessment is always required, a method statement is not)
- a step-by-step description of how the work will be carried out
- any other relevant information, such as shutdown procedures, access and perhaps a permit to work.

### Permit to work

A permit to work, an example of which is shown on page 7, must be issued prior to commencement of any particularly hazardous work. Examples of this are:

- working in a confined space
- working on live electrical systems or equipment
- working near machinery that is in operation
- working with or near a toxic substance
- working with hot works (e.g. welding or asphalting)
- an installation with photovoltaic (PV) panels that generate electricity as soon as placed in sunlight and hence are dangerous.

Where possible, the hazardous aspects of the works should be eliminated so that a permit to work is not required. However, this is not always possible. The roles involved with the issue of a permit are shown in Table 16.2.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site manager</td>
<td>Overall responsibility for issue and management of the permit-to-work system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior authorised person</td>
<td>Defines the work which requires a permit to work and disseminates this information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authorised person</td>
<td>Actually issues the permit to work to the competent person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent person</td>
<td>Signs the permit and carries out the work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operative</td>
<td>Works under the supervision of the competent person, such as a qualified gas fitter, electrician or welder</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A permit to work can only be used for the job it has been raised for. The person authorising the permit has overall responsibility for the safe execution of the work. The information on the permit should be accurate and include:

- the description, scope and location of the work to be undertaken
- the name(s) of the employee(s) who will carry out the work
- hazards and associated precautions
- start and finish times
- signatures and authorisation.

The finish time is particularly important because it will act as a prompt for the supervisor to check on the employee(s) if they have not returned from the work area.
**PERMIT TO WORK – ELECTRICIAN COPY**

**Description of work**
Installation of new supplies from a photovoltaic array to mains position in small factory unit. Cables to be run through a small service duct under the floor and secured to existing cable tray with other supply cables. This will require confined space working.

**Risk**
Risks associated with working in confined space, e.g. insufficient ventilation, injury from fittings and fixtures in the space, electric shock from photovoltaic panels.

**NOTE:**

**Controls**
Ensure two or more personnel are engaged on this task and that photovoltaic arrays are covered and not exposed to any light until the work is completed.

**Start time and date:** 09:00 Sunday 1st April  
**Finish time and date:** 15:00 Sunday 1st April

**Notes and comments (e.g. reasons for non-completion of job or any problems encountered)**
Work completed without problem. Control method of one electrician working in the service duct while the other was stationed at the duct entrance worked well. A walkie-talkie set provided for communication did not work in the enclosed area. Suggest alternative communication system for future work of this kind.

**Authorisations**

**Manager:**
Name:  
Signature:  Date:

**Competent person:**
Name:  
Signature:  Date:

**Electrician:**
Name:  
Signature:  Date:

**Completion**

**Manager:**
Name:  
Signature:  Date:  Time:

**Competent person:**
Name:  
Signature:  Date:  Time:

**Electrician:**
Name:  
Signature:  Date:  Time:

*Figure 16.2.3: A sample permit to work.*
Portfolio activity (1.1, 1.6, 2.2)
Examine a set of permits to work raised by your company.
1 Do they follow a similar format and have similar content to the ones discussed in this topic guide?
2 What is the process employed by your company to raise and close these permits to work?
3 Who authorises them?
4 Draw up a process chart for the process.
5 Think of one improvement that could be made to the permit-to-work system.

Checklist
At the end of this topic guide you should be familiar with:
✓ company health and safety policy and its typical content
✓ method statements – their purpose and format
✓ permits to work – their purpose, process and format.

Further reading and resources
Example method statements and template: www.healthandsafetyworksni.gov.uk/example_method_statements_and_template
Write a health and safety policy for your business: www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/write.htm

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