

Workplace and equipment Inspections are you checking ...

Talking Health, Safety and Wellbeing. The weekly article to help you keep fit and stay healthy and safe in your place of work. This week's article talks about carrying out workplace and equipment inspections to ensure your work area and work equipment is in a safe condition.

Unnecessary workplace incidents occur because of simple failings such as poor housekeeping, poor condition or maintenance of equipment. Regular workplace and equipment inspections and maintenance will prevent these unnecessary workplace incidents from occurring.

Why carry out inspections?

Employers are required to provide a safe place of work, safe access and egress and safe plant, equipment and systems of work. You need to carry out inspections in order to see whether you are providing and maintaining a safe workplace and working arrangements. Inspections are a vital element of any health and safety management system. They should be used as a measure of confirming that you are providing and maintaining a safe workplace.

Workplace and equipment inspections are important because if carried out effectively, they allow you to identify and remedy problems before they become more serious or result in an incident or accident. Inspections can be used to check safe conditions, identify hazardous conditions and allow you to put in place corrective measures to improve the workplace or equipment.

Why is maintenance and inspection important?

One of the few absolute duties an employer has under health and safety legislation is to ensure that work equipment is maintained in a safe condition for use and inspected in certain circumstances to ensure that it is, and continues to be, safe for use. Subsequently some inspections are required by law such as an annual check on gas boilers. Statutory inspections on premises equipment that should be carried out by a competent person.

Equipment should always be suitable for the work being undertaken; be maintained and inspected so that employees, pupils, service users, contractors and visitors are not put at risk. It is not enough to repair an item if it breaks down; regular maintenance and inspection should be carried out to minimise the potential for equipment failing or becoming unsafe.

How to go about conducting a workplace inspection?

Take a methodical approach, the inspection should be planned and the workplace inspection checklist should be used as a means of identifying areas that need to be checked or looked at. Take time to look at work and breakout areas; equipment in use; surface and floor conditions; fire precautions, emergency equipment and exits; first aid equipment; hygiene and welfare arrangements; condition of any asbestos containing materials; management of hazardous substances. This list is not exhaustive but provides a useful guide. The workplace inspection checklist provides more detailed guidance of what to look at.

Record the findings on the checklist and allocate any actions for any remedial work that needs to be completed. This information should be taken to health and safety committees and management team meetings for progression. A review of outstanding actions should be undertaken before carrying out an inspection to confirm items have been progressed and completed.

A copy of the workplace inspection checklist can be found on the Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Beacon Page

http://beacon.coventry.gov.uk/directory_record/5584/workplace_inspection_checklist

How often should inspections be carried out?

Workplace inspections should be carried out on a quarterly basis (termly in schools and educational establishments). Equipment should be inspected in line with manufacturers inspections or in line with a statutory inspection planner or inspection regime.

Who should be involved in the workplace and equipment inspections?

Managers, team leaders and supervisors and employees, including trade union and employee safety representatives, should be involved in inspections of their area or department.

In conclusion it is important that both managers and drivers manage the risks within the workplace in order that we have a safe place to work, safe equipment, safe access and egress. Workplace inspection are key in doing this.

Next week's article will talk about practical safety aspects as the festive season draws closer.