



Health, safety and welfare

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 for the first time establish a consistent set of standards for most workplaces including schools, colleges and universities. They replace earlier legislation which applied only to factories or offices and introduce some new elements, including requirements relating to windows and rest facilities (in particular dealing with provisions for non-smokers and pregnant and nursing mothers).

Employers have a general duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practical, the health, safety and welfare of their employees at work. People in control of non-domestic premises have a duty under the Act towards people who are not their employees but use their premises. The new Regulations expand on these duties and are intended to protect the health and safety of everyone in the workplace, and ensure that adequate welfare facilities are provided for people at work.

The Regulations aim to ensure that workplaces meet the health, safety and welfare needs of all members of a workforce, including people with disabilities. Several of the Regulations require things to be 'suitable'. They make it clear that things should be suitable for anyone. This includes people with disabilities. Where the workforce includes people with disabilities, it is important to ensure the workplace is suitable for them, particularly traffic routes, toilets and workstations.

The Regulations expand upon the duties placed upon employers and those in control of premises by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Many of the requirements are being explicitly applied to all work environments for the first time.

The regulations cover:

- health and safety in the workplace
- welfare facilities for people at work
- maintenance of the workplace.