



# Health, Safety and Well-Being Guide for the Horse Breeding and Racing Sectors

This Guide is for information purposes only.  
This is not a legal document or a legal interpretation  
of the legislative provisions.



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,  
Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine



Irish Racehorse Trainers Association

# **Health, Safety and Well-Being Guide for the Horse Breeding and Racing Sectors**

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## Foreword by Martin Heydon TD

Being from Kildare I have always felt a deep connection to the thoroughbred horse. It is an intrinsic part of our culture and heritage and is a major contributor to economic activity and employment in rural areas.

Our breeding and racing industries are world leaders and something we can take great pride in as a nation.

However, we must not forget that working with horses presents a number of unique risks. Figures from the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) show there have been five fatalities involving horses in the last ten years. There are also non-fatal incidents that occur every year.

I want to commend Horse Racing Ireland for its commitment to focusing on this area. As Minister with responsibility for Farm Safety I have seen first-hand the impact fatal and non fatal incidents can have on a business. I also know that proper planning and attention to health and safety can mitigate risks.

I have no doubt this guide will be a useful asset for the industry in strengthening the culture around health, safety and wellbeing in the horse breeding and racing sectors.

### **Martin Heydon**

MINISTER OF STATE AT THE DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND THE MARINE  
WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR FARM SAFETY

# List of key terms and abbreviations

**Competent Person:** under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 section 2(2), people are deemed to be competent when, having regard to the tasks they are required to perform, and taking account of the size or hazards (or both) of the task they must undertake or of the establishment in which they must undertake them, they have had sufficient and appropriate training and when they possess sufficient and appropriate experience and knowledge for the nature of the work to be undertaken.

**Control:** actions or measures that can reduce the risk of exposure to a hazard in the workplace and/or reduce the severity of such a hazard should it occur.

**Employee Welfare:** strategies for protecting and supporting employees' mental health while they are working in an organisation or team.

**Hazard:** the properties of a substance or device and the characteristics of a situation or process that have the potential to cause harm to people's health and safety.

**Health and Safety Statement:** the employer's written programme of how they will safeguard the health and safety of their employees and of anyone else on their premises.

**Hierarchy of Control:** the order in which you should assess potential solutions to hazards and risks in your workplace: Can the hazard be eliminated? Can the hazard

be substituted? Can the risk of the hazard be reduced by administrative changes? Can the hazard be controlled only by the use of PPE?

**IAP:** Industry Assistance Programme. A programme set up by HRI to help members of the industry to cope with life challenges and problems.

**Likelihood:** the degree of probability that a hazard will occur; usually measured on a simple scale of low, medium or high risk.

**PPE:** personal protective equipment.

**Risk:** the level of likelihood that a worker will be harmed by exposure to a hazard combined with the degree of severity of harm that will occur in the case of exposure to a hazard.

**Risk Assessment:** the systematic identification of hazards and the implementation of controls to eliminate or minimise the risk of these hazards causing harm.

**Safety Statement:** your summary of your general policies and ongoing commitment to health and safety in your workplace.

**Severity:** a measure of how much damage exposure to a hazard may do to people.

**SHWW:** Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005.

**SOPs:** safe operating procedures; work procedures designed by employers and supervisors to maximise the safety and efficiency of processes in the workplace.

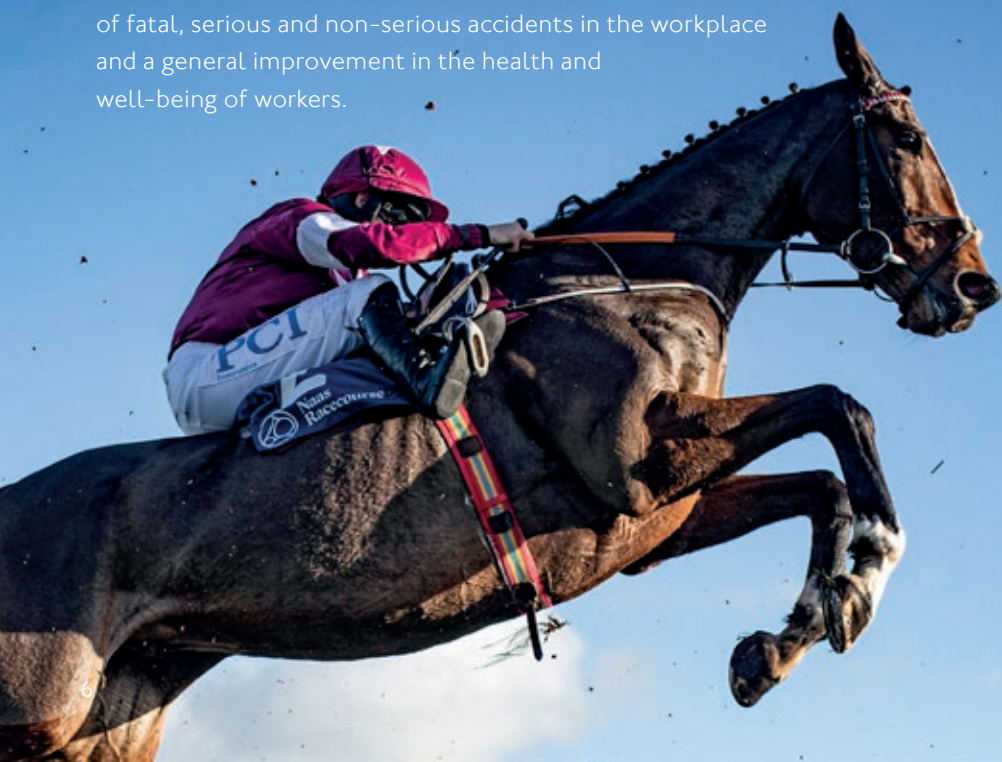


# Introduction

Welcome to the first edition of Horse Racing Ireland's *Health, Safety and Well-Being Guide for the Horse Breeding and Racing Sectors*, your guide to creating the safe and healthy workplace for all that will fulfil your obligations under health and safety law.

In recent years, Ireland's business culture has experienced a health and safety revolution. By implementing in the Republic of Ireland the requirements of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 (SHWW) and its associated regulations, and in Northern Ireland the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000 and the Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978, businesses in both jurisdictions have become familiar with the process of eliminating or minimising the risks to health and safety in doing everyday business by using the simple method of risk assessment and health, safety and welfare policies. In doing this, they have been supported and supervised by statutory organisations such as the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) and the Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI).

The result has been a remarkable reduction in the rate of fatal, serious and non-serious accidents in the workplace and a general improvement in the health and well-being of workers.





This is not only a welcome reduction of human suffering but also a reduction of the costs to business of problems caused by failures in health and safety practice.

Whether you run or work in a small or a large business, health and safety law applies to you: anyone who runs a business has the ultimate responsibility for creating a safe and healthy working environment; anyone who works in (or even visits) such an environment has a responsibility to maintain it; and everyone – whether employer, employee, contractor or visitor – will be held accountable for doing so.

In the contemporary world, the efficiency of modern businesses is measured not just by the bottom line, but also by the way they treat their employees, their people. Businesses that demonstrate their commitment to health and safety also demonstrate that they have fulfilled their legal and moral obligations to the world at large. They prove that they realise their business objectives in ways that demonstrate true efficiency, not just the illusion of it.

And when these obligations are ignored because they are treated as a burden, we see the personal cost in the daily tragedies of death and serious injury, and the cost to businesses of increasing rates of absenteeism and insurance, and ultimately of the loss of reputation as a result of prosecution and conviction under health and safety law.

We in the Irish horse breeding and horse racing industry are rightfully proud of our world class reputation as a leader in our field. This is the result of years of hard work and of our willingness to be flexible and innovative in our working practices.

But it is also undeniable that working with horses is hazardous and that, unfortunately, our very willingness to make do with whatever comes to hand and to find the quickest route to the desired destination, has led in the area of health and safety to our accumulating a record that is not in keeping with our aspiration to maintain our status as a world class industry.

As one of the major rural employers, our industry is treated for the purposes of health and safety as part of the larger agricultural and forestry sector. Unfortunately, this sector has a high incident rate and as a labour-intensive industry, the horse breeding and racing community is particularly vulnerable.

Therefore, it is no longer acceptable to dismiss injuries as ‘part of the job’ or as ‘occupational hazards’, and it is in everyone’s interest to implement measures that reduce the likelihood of injury at work. HRI recognises that its position in the industry gives it both the responsibility and a unique opportunity to provide leadership and

support in bringing about the transformation in the culture of health and safety in our industry that is both necessary and essential.

In keeping then with our belief that health and safety is not an optional extra but an essential component of the running of a modern business, HRI has begun the project of revolutionising attitudes towards the practice of health and safety in the Irish horse breeding and horse racing industry by commissioning a survey of the current state of health and safety practice (see box below).

### **HRI survey health, safety & sustainability: A snapshot**

As the first step towards fostering improvements in health and safety standards in the industry, HRI commissioned REDC to carry out a survey of a cross section of members of the industry, both online and by interview, to canvas their attitudes towards health and safety and to gauge the levels of health and safety practice in the industry. This survey was carried out in the spring of 2022 and below are listed some of its most striking findings:

- > As many as 41% of respondents did not feel well informed on the subject of health and safety (the problem being most urgent in smaller yards);
- > A culture of risk assessment is lacking in the industry, with only 41% confirming that they risk assess at least once a year, and many prepared to admit that they risk assess only in response to a problem emerging;
- > No more than 50% of respondents said that they have a current safety statement;
- > Only 44% of respondents provide their staff with training, and of those, 58% would provide only informal training, and many are only training new staff members (and many felt the quality of this is declining);
- > There are no uniform standards of health and safety practice in the industry, with the most obvious divide being differences in practice between large and small yards.



The results of this survey show that all of the respondents to it recognise that health and safety is an important component of their business practice, with respondents highlighting the risks posed by hazards in the workplace, particularly those created by the use of machinery and the handling of horses, and conditions in which workers are often inexperienced and suffering from fatigue.

On the other hand, many of the respondents said that in facing the challenges to creating the best health and safety standards in the workplace posed by the difficulties of doing so in busy yards, with high staff turnover and a large number of inexperienced workers, they were unsure of where to turn for support and advice.

In these circumstances, respondents expressed an almost universal desire for leadership and support from HRI, with 85% of respondents saying they were open to it.

As a first step, we have created this manual for all of those who feel poorly informed about health and safety issues and don't know where to turn for information. This manual will help you understand what your legal (and moral) obligations are and equip you with the tools to help you meet those obligations. How it does this is laid out in the next section.

# Scope of this document

This guide has been compiled by us to help all sectors of the Irish horse breeding and horse racing industry to comply with their health and safety obligations under the SHWW and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000, together with the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996. It is also designed to be used by anyone in the industry who has responsibility for health and safety, including all industry employees. In order to achieve this, the guide has been broken down into the order of subject areas listed below:

- > Insurance implications for all businesses in the industry of health and safety laws and regulations;
- > Health and safety legislation in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland;
- > Specific responsibilities of various key industry staff members and general responsibilities of all employees;
- > The nature of safety statements and the principles of risk management and their application to work processes in the Irish horse breeding and horse racing industry;
- > Policies and SOPs, with examples and samples of such documents;
- > Induction and training programmes, including health safety and well-being programmes and employee welfare;
- > Emergency planning and procedures;
- > Pandemic response planning;
- > Accident reporting and general record keeping.

Our intention in creating this document is to advise members of our industry on the law and best practice for health and safety in both jurisdictions on this island: regulation and oversight of these aspects of the running of businesses is the responsibility of the HSA in the Republic of Ireland and HSENI in Northern Ireland.

## Health and safety statement and policy

This guide will also help you create the health and safety statement and health and safety policy for your business that the law requires of you. However, merely possessing this guide does not make you compliant with your legal obligations! If you have three or more employees (five or more in Northern Ireland), you must compile your own health and safety statement and policy.

## What do I do if I am in the Republic of Ireland and I have fewer than four employees?

If you are based in the Republic of Ireland and you have three or fewer employees, as long as there is a code of practice for your type of activity, you can fulfil your duty to compile a safety statement by complying with the relevant code of practice.

## Fulfilling your obligations

HRI understands that for many of you the task of ensuring that you comply with your legal health and safety obligations will involve the learning of new skills and the implementation of new processes, but we are convinced that the benefits of this extra effort far outweigh the burdens.

In the end, all that is required of you is that you do what is reasonably practicable in your circumstances to ensure the health and safety of yourself, your colleagues and anyone else who comes into your workplace, and that you make sure that your records prove that you have done so. The beauty of modern health and safety practices is that once they are implemented, they rapidly become part of the fabric of everyday business life, so seamless as to be barely noticeable, yet bringing about an unprecedented improvement in the quality of people's working lives.



# Insurance Requirements

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If you are ever tempted to ignore your health and safety obligations, just remember that your insurance company does not!

Any business that employs people is legally obliged to possess employer's liability insurance. If employees are injured or become sick as a result of their work, and if they can show that their injury or sickness is a result of negligence on the part of their employer, they may be able to claim compensation from their employer. Successful claims for negligence inevitably lead to increases in insurance premiums.

However, employers who have taken reasonable steps to prevent accidents or harm occurring to their employees, and who can prove that they have done so, will be in a better position to deal with compensation claims. By complying with your health and safety obligations, by creating safe operational processes in your workplace and by keeping a good record of what you have done, you take the kind of reasonable steps the law expects of you to prevent accidents and harm to people in your workplace. Such measures also give employers their best chance of obtaining better insurance terms and premiums when they are renewing their insurance policies.

On the other hand, if you are unable to prove to your insurance company that your employees are properly trained and that you provide them with a safe working environment, then it is much more likely that they will settle a claim and also more likely that that settlement will be on the higher rather than the lower end of the scale.

## Common insurance issues

The issues that insurance companies most often point to when justifying increases in insurance premiums are:

- > The absence of detailed injury reports;
- > The provision of inadequate safety statements and/or the failure to issue them to employees;
- > The absence of training records;
- > The use of hazardous machinery;
- > The failure to provide appropriate PPE and the failure to enforce its use where it is provided.



## **Absence of detailed injury reports**

Insurance companies complain that trainers and stable managers are not recording accidents or incidents properly or notifying them of their occurrence in accordance with the terms of their policies.

Accident, incident and near miss investigations should be completed by a competent person. Wherever possible, such investigations should include CCTV footage, witness statements and evidence taken from health and training records of the maintenance of health and safety standards.

## **Inadequate safety statements, often not issued to employees**

Insurance companies complain that the safety statements they are shown are often inadequate and that they find that it is often the case that they have not been issued to employees. Employers are legally obliged to create adequate safety statements and if these haven't been issued to their employees then in the event of a claim it will be impossible to prove that their employees have been adequately informed of the risks involved in their work.

## **Lack of training records**

Employers must keep written records of the training they give their employees and these records should be signed by the relevant employees. If employers can't prove that they have provided their employees with adequate training, they will be vulnerable to accusations that they have failed to provide a safe working environment.

## **Use of hazardous machinery**

Insurance companies have also highlighted the fact that a growing number of claims are arising from accidents associated with hazardous machinery. Claims are being generated not only by the use of heavy machinery, but also by the use of devices like trimmers and quad bikes. To avoid expensive claims, employers must ensure that their employees are properly trained, that they have proper procedures to follow and that all of this is properly recorded.

## Failure to provide or enforce the use of PPE

Insurance claims also arise from the failure to provide or enforce the use of appropriate PPE, not only when employees are handling horses but also when they are using hazardous machinery or chemicals.

## Injuries for which claims are most commonly made

Insurance companies report that the most common injuries for which they have received claims are the following:

- > Slips and trips (particularly on wet, slippery, icy or uneven surfaces);
- > Injured backs caused by manual handling or mucking out;
- > Eye, head and limb injuries caused by hazardous machinery or chemicals;
- > Injuries whilst working with horses caused by:
  - > Spooked horses;
  - > Falls from horses;
  - > Head butts from horses;
  - > Feet crushed by horses stepping on them;
  - > Being knocked to the ground by horses;
  - > Horse kicks;
  - > Horse bites.

Although a high proportion of workplace injuries in the horse breeding and racing sector may go unreported, they are still generating an increasing number of insurance claims, so insurance premiums are going up.



# Health and Safety Legislation

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In the Republic of Ireland, the duty of employers and employees to provide and maintain a safe and healthy working environment is governed by the Safety, Health and Welfare in the Workplace Act 2005 and by the various regulations created to implement the framework which SHWW introduced. In Northern Ireland the same role is performed by the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000, together with the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996.

These pieces of legislation set out the following:

- > The duties that employers owe to their employees and to other persons who enter their workplaces;
- > The duties that employees owe to themselves, to their employer and to their co-workers;
- > The requirements for hazard identification and risk assessment;
- > The obligation to create a safety statement.

The legal duties created in these pieces of legislation apply to all employers, employees (including those who are employed for a fixed term or temporarily) and self-employed people (including contractors).

These pieces of legislation also set out the rights and obligations of employers and employees in the area of health and safety, and empower the application of significant penalties, including substantial fines, for breaches of their provisions.



# Roles and Responsibilities

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Health and safety legislation in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland imposes the same duties of care on employers and on employees.

## Duties of employers

The legislation imposes a duty on employers to ensure as far as is reasonably practicable the safety, health and welfare of their employees at work in order to prevent injury to them during work or illness as a result of it. Among other things, an employer must:

- > Provide and maintain a safe workplace which uses safe plant and equipment;
- > Prevent risks to health and safety arising from the use of any article or substance or from exposure to physical agents, noise or vibration;
- > When necessary, provide employees with protective clothing and equipment (PPE);
- > Provide employees with appropriate training and instruction;
- > Appoint a competent person to the role of safety representative and discuss with their employees or their representatives any relevant health and safety issues that arise and the procedures required to deal with them.

## Safety statements and risk assessments

The legislation requires that every employer must carry out a risk assessment of their workplace and then prepare a safety statement which is based on the results of it.

### Risk assessment

A risk assessment should identify all the hazards present in the workplace, assess the level of risk arising from the presence of such hazards and identify the steps required to either eliminate the hazard or minimise the risks associated with it.

A hazard is defined as anything that may cause harm, but as an employer you are expected to consider only those hazards that are generated by your work activities. You do not have to identify every minor hazard or risk that we accept as part and parcel of everyday life.

For convenience, such hazards are usually placed in one of the following four categories:

- > Physical;
- > Chemical;
- > Biological;
- > Human factors.

So, for example, in the horse breeding and horse racing industry, a very common physical hazard is created by the handling and riding of horses. The risk that this hazard creates is the danger of serious injury from such incidents as falling from or being kicked, bitten or butted by a horse. In order to control the risks posed by this hazard, an employer should provide appropriate training for those working with horses, provide appropriate PPE along with training in its use and ensure that it is used, and ensure that employees are competent to perform the tasks with horses assigned to them.

A similar process must be followed when assessing hazards posed by chemical, biological and human factors.

### How to get help and advice on your risk assessment

The HSA and HSENI identify the Irish horse breeding and horse racing sector as a part of the risk assessment and risk management category of Agriculture and Forestry. You can find advice and information on the HSA and HSENI websites. If you are resident in the Republic of Ireland, you should make use of the HSA's BeSmart tool ([www.besmart.ie](http://www.besmart.ie)). Using this tool, you can do a full risk assessment designed for the agribusiness sector online and print it off.

Links to these sites are available on the equip website:  
[www.equip.ie/health-safety-guide/](http://www.equip.ie/health-safety-guide/)

Employers must also make separate risk assessments for workers in special categories, such as 'young persons' (under the age of 18) or the pregnant.

## Safety statements

If you are an employer of three or more employees in the Republic of Ireland or five or more employees in Northern Ireland, you are legally obliged to compile and display a safety statement. If you are an employer of less than three or less than five employees



in the respective jurisdictions, it is still strongly recommended that you compile and display a safety statement.

The employer's safety statement should include the details of employees who are responsible for safety issues; employees must have access to the workplace's safety statement; and the employer should review their safety statement at regular intervals, that is at least annually and whenever significant changes take place or, as a result of risk assessments, improvements are made that have an impact on safety and health.

## Duties of employees

Legislation imposes on employees a general duty to take reasonable care to protect their own health and safety at work and the health and safety of other people in the employee's workplace. In particular, employees must take care to:

- > Avoid improper behaviour that would endanger themselves or others;
- > Avoid being under the influence of alcohol or drugs in the workplace;
- > Undergo any reasonable medical or other assessment, if their employer requests them to do so;
- > Report any defects in their workplace or equipment that might be a danger to health and safety.

### Duties of sub-contractors and the self-employed

Sub-contractors and the self-employed have the same legal obligations as everyone else in the workplace to safeguard their own health and safety and that of anyone affected by their work.



# Risk Assessments, Safety Statements and Safety Policies

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Farming alone, in the Republic of Ireland, there are on average 2,500 serious injuries every year, and between 2011 and 2020, the HSA has reported 208 work-related fatalities in agriculture in the Republic. This constitutes an alarming 42% of all work-related fatalities in this period.

Northern Ireland has had a similar experience of farming accidents in which, despite all best efforts, the number of work-related fatalities has been creeping upwards in recent years (1 in 2019, 4 in 2020, 7 in 2021 (HSENI)) and a 2015 survey of farmers in Northern Ireland suggested that there could be as many as 100 incidents every month requiring hospital treatment for injuries.

It is this background of unacceptably high levels of injury in our industry that gives urgency to the need for everyone to do their utmost to reduce the number of accidents in working environments associated with horse breeding and horse racing. Many individuals, groups and organisations are already doing outstanding work in promoting health and safety in their workplaces, but now is the time for a concerted effort by everyone in our industry to give this agenda the priority it requires.

As trainers, managers and owners, you are already operating management systems to ensure that your business is as efficient as possible; managing health and safety is no different, and the good news is that the tools are already available to help you do this. By using the framework of risk assessment to identify and either eliminate or control risks, and in particular by drafting and implementing safety statements and safety policies, we not only will fulfil our legal obligations but will also begin the task of eliminating or at least reducing the incidence of serious injuries in our industry.

## Risk assessment

Admittedly, horse husbandry and riding are crafts that have been refined over many generations, and safety skills have always been an integral part of that process, but in our contemporary world, the expectations of standards of health and safety have been raised to a new level.

It is now standard practice in high-risk industries like horse breeding and horse riding to risk assess all working practices and to formulate policies (including SOPs) to deal with the hazards these risk assessments identify. You must assess the risks posed by your workplace and the activities in it and decide who among your employees, contractors and visitors are most likely to be exposed to them.

Essentially, risk assessment is the process of thinking about what your business does and how to do it safely.

The person carrying out your risk assessment must be competent to do so. That is, they must have the training, knowledge, skills and experience necessary to perform a suitable and sufficient risk assessment of your workplace.

We start the process of eliminating or reducing/controlling the risks posed by hazards in the workplace by conducting risk assessments. Risk assessment is a three step process:

- Step 1** Identify the Hazard and who might be Harmed
- Step 2** Determine the Level of Risk Posed by the Hazard
- Step 3** Eliminate the Hazard or Introduce Control Measures to Reduce the Risk to the Lowest Practicable Level

So, in your risk assessment, your competent person takes a thorough look at your workplace in order to:

1. Identify things, situations and processes that could cause harm.
2. Assess how likely such hazards are to occur, and if they were to occur, how severe they might be.
3. Decide what measures should be taken to either eliminate or control the hazards they have identified.

## STEP 1

# Identify the hazard

Risk assessment begins with the identification of hazards in the workplace. In the yard and at the racecourse there is a wide range of activities with horses that carry with them the risk of injury. These include the following:

- > Bandaging legs and feet;
- > Breaking to tack;
- > Bringing a horse in or taking it out;
- > Catching a horse;
- > Feeding;
- > Grooming;
- > Holding a horse for treatment;
- > Holding for covering;
- > Leading and showing;
- > Loading/unloading a horse to or from a horsebox etc;
- > Moving a horse to unfamiliar surroundings;
- > Picking out feet;
- > Putting on a bridle or a saddle;
- > Riding out;
- > Rugging up;
- > Schooling.

This is not an exhaustive list, and we could draw up lists for other yard activities (e.g. using heavy machinery or handling chemicals and medicines).

## How to identify a hazard

There is no magic involved! 'Hazard identification' is a technical phrase for a process in which you look around your workplace and watch how people work. At the same time, you (or the competent person you appoint) use your experience and your records (past incidents, accidents, near misses, health problems) to identify the hazards lurking in your everyday practices. You can also make use of the invaluable resource of your



employees' experience: talk to them about their work and its hazards. Consult the experts as well: read manufacturer's instructions, look up industry publications and study HSA and HSENI guides.

You can ignore risks that are part and parcel of everyday life: your aim is to identify specific risks created by your work practices and/or work environment. This is where your experience and your judgment count: when you look carefully, you will recognise the real hazards in your workplace.



## **Who might be harmed? How many?**

Once you have identified the significant hazards in your workplace, reflect on who might be harmed by them. Consider the risks not only to your employees, but also to any contractors in or visitors to your workplace. You should be especially concerned about new or inexperienced employees and special categories of potential victims, such as the pregnant, young workers and children.

The degree of risk involved in a hazard is affected by the number of people who might be exposed to it, so make an estimate of how many people you think might be exposed to a hazard.

## STEP 2

# Determine the level of risk

The risk that accidents involving particular hazards will occur depends on the interaction of many different factors. For instance, when handling horses accidents often occur when the following factors are in play:

- > The horse spooks;
- > The handler or rider lacks the experience necessary to deal with the task;
- > The handler or rider loses concentration;
- > The handler or riders' manager/supervisor has inadequate knowledge of the handler or riders' level of experience.

Your key objective in this second step of your risk assessment is to establish as accurately as possible the likelihood of a hazard causing harm and the severity of that harm if the hazard should occur. The two key terms here, then, are 'likelihood' and 'severity'.

**Likelihood:** the degree of probability that a harmful event will take place (typically expressed on a simple scale such as: low, medium or high risk).

**Severity:** the measure of how much damage the occurrence of a hazard will cause.

When you are assessing the level of risk posed by a hazard, you will need to strike a balance between the likelihood that a hazardous event will occur and the severity of the harm involved should that hazardous event take place.

In practice, if the level of severity is high, then no matter what the degree of likelihood may be, the level of risk will be high. Whereas, if the likelihood is high but the degree of severity is medium or low, then the degree of risk will be medium. And where the degree of severity is medium or low and the likelihood of an occurrence is low, then the degree of risk should also be low.

When determining the level of risk, you need to be thinking about things like, what would be the worst possible consequence of an accident involving this hazard (e.g. what's the worst that can happen if someone falls from a horse)? How will my employees' behaviour affect the level of this risk (e.g. is everyone wearing the correct PPE when riding out)?



## STEP 3

# Eliminate the hazard or introduce controls

Once you have identified the hazards and who may be harmed by them, and estimated the level of risk involved, your next task is to decide how you will control the hazards in your workplace. To do this, you should prioritise the problems you face: tackle the most important hazards first. Think about what must be done, by whom and when. Once you have made your plan, check that it is realistic and achievable.

To help you make your decisions, the legislation and guidance on health and safety have established a hierarchy of types of control. This hierarchy is a way of working out which actions will best control the potential for exposure to a hazard. What this means is that when you are thinking about how to deal with hazards in your workplace, you should think about possible actions in the following order:

### **1. Can the hazard be eliminated?**

The best way to deal with a hazard is to get rid of it. So, see if you can control the hazard by eliminating it (introducing a 'preventative control'). For example, is a hazardous job necessary? If it is, could the method of doing it be changed to make it safer? Do your employees have to use steps to access the muck heap? If yes, can its location be changed, and could wheelbarrows be used instead of sacks to move the muck?

### **2. Can your way of dealing with the hazard be made safer?**

If you can't eliminate the hazard or modify the method of dealing with it, can it be made safer? Can you introduce controls that will reduce the severity of an injury should an accident occur ('responsive controls')? For example, can you improve the level of protection provided on the heavy machinery that your employees must use?

### **3. Can you reduce the risk of the hazard occurring by training or supervision?**

If you can't eliminate, modify or make a hazard safer, can you make administrative changes? For example, can you train your employees to better handle the risks? Do any of them ignore safety rules: do you need better supervision in your workplace? Remember, employers are obliged to ensure that their employees are competent to carry out the tasks assigned to them: you must instruct, train and supervise them.

#### 4. Do you need to provide PPE?

If you can't take steps to eliminate or reduce the risks of a hazard occurring in any other way, your last resort is the use of PPE. For example, if your employees cannot avoid working in a dusty environment, perhaps they should wear masks? And why not provide fluorescent tabards for riding out on dark mornings?

## Recording your findings

If you are an employer in the Republic of Ireland with three or more employees or with five or more in Northern Ireland, you have a legal obligation to record the significant details of your risk assessments as well as the controls you intend to implement (e.g. yard or stud rules, SOPs etc (for the Republic of Ireland, see sections 19(1) and 20(1) of the SHWW and for Northern Ireland, section 6 of The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999)).

Many employers of less than three or less than five employees in the respective jurisdictions still prefer to keep a written record of their risk assessments, and we would recommend any employer in this situation to do so.

You are free to choose the way in which you present your risk assessment, but the important point is that it should clearly state what you mean to do about the hazards you have identified in your workplace.

An inspector (e.g. HSA/HSENI, insurance etc) of your workplace will want to see evidence that you have thought about the hazards and risks of working there, and that you have implemented controls to deal with them. A written record of your risk assessments will not only provide the proof that an inspector is looking for, but also be a valuable resource for instructing your staff about your workplace and your work practices.



## Reviewing and revising your risk assessments

Once you have completed your risk assessments, you must review them periodically, and if you find that significant changes have occurred since the last time you looked at a risk assessment, you must revise it and any policies or SOPs associated with it.

You must always conduct such a review and revision when you know that a significant change has taken place: perhaps the nature of the task has changed or a new piece of equipment has been introduced or perhaps the circumstances of the relevant employee/s has changed (e.g. a new employee or a pregnancy etc).

In general, reviewing and revising your risk assessments will test whether they are complete and accurate and confirm whether or not the control measures you are using remain effective.

## Conclusion

When you have completed your risk assessments, you are ready to compile your safety statement and safety policies, your summary of your general policies and ongoing commitment to health and safety in your workplace.

## Safety statements and health and safety policies

In both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, safety legislation imposes a duty on employers and workplace controllers to prepare a safety statement. This is a document which lays out the manner in which the health, safety and welfare of employees will be secured and managed in that workplace. This may include the results of the risk assessments carried out in your workplace.

There are some divergences between recommended best practice in the Republic and in Northern Ireland.

In the Republic the HSA highlights an employer's obligation under Section 20 of SHWW to produce a written programme that lays out how they will protect the health



and safety of their employees and of anyone else in their workplace (including risk assessments). This safety statement must be made available to all employees and to anyone else who needs to see it (contractors, visitors, etc).

Employers must use their safety statement to shape all activities in their workplace, including the selection of competent people and appropriate equipment and material, and the way work is done. Everyone has a responsibility to ensure that work practices in the workplace implement the safety statement and the results of the risk assessments which the safety statement contains. Employers must also make sure that they provide sufficient supervision and checks to ensure that standards are maintained in accordance with the safety statement.

## Consulting your colleagues

If you are based in the Republic of Ireland, under section 20(1)(f) of SHWW your safety statement must specify the arrangements you have made to consult your employees about health and safety matters. Areas on which you should consult your employees include (but are not limited to):

- > Any issue that substantially affects health and safety in your workplace;
- > The appointment of competent persons (e.g. to deal with emergencies);
- > The carrying out of risk assessments;
- > The provision of health and safety information and of health and safety training;
- > Procedures for co-operating on and communicating health and safety matters;
- > Preparation and revision of your safety statement;
- > The introduction of any new equipment or process in your workplace.

## BeSMART tool

To help employers create safety statements for their workplaces, the HSA has created its BeSMART tool ([www.besmart.ie](http://www.besmart.ie)). This is a free, online tool which you can use to generate your own safety statement for your workplace (as well as risk assessments).

The BeSMART template is divided into two parts, PART A and PART B.

### PART A

PART A is subdivided into two sections plus appendices. In Section 1, the template enables you to make a basic statement of your health and safety policy for your workplace, which you, in your role as employer, will sign and date. Then in the second part of this section, you are offered the opportunity to provide relevant details about your business.



In Section 2, in accordance with Section 20 SHWW, you can lay out a summary of the key requirements that you will fulfil when carrying out work in your workplace. This will include:

- > The division of roles and responsibilities in the workplace;
- > How you will fulfil your obligation to ensure that your employees are competent and trained for their roles;
- > The process of appointing a workplace safety representative;
- > Contractor's responsibilities in your workplace, and your obligations towards workplace visitors and what is expected of them;
- > Your procedures for accident reporting and investigation;
- > Your emergency procedures, in particular those for first aid and fire;
- > Your measures for providing welfare facilities and a safe workplace;
- > Your provision of PPE in accordance with the outcome of your risk assessments and the measures you will take to ensure that your employees use it when they are required to;
- > Your policies for the protection of young persons and those who are pregnant in your workplace;
- > Your policies in relation to work-related stress and dignity at work.

PART A is completed by the appendices in which are collected copies of the various forms and records, emergency detail forms, accident and incident investigation forms and safety data sheets and reports for hazardous substances that are necessary to complete this part of your safety statement.

## PART B

In PART B, you will collect together the various risk assessments that have been compiled for your workplace, along with the action lists that you have created following the completion of your risk assessments.

To start with you will lay out your general approach:

**Risk assessment:**

1. Risk assessments which have been carried out in consultation with your employees, in which you review the workplace and work practices, and identify hazards there and assess the risks they pose.
2. Action lists that identify the additional controls required to eliminate a hazard or reduce the risk it poses and who will be responsible for these additional controls.
3. Your recognition of the need to prioritise the implementation of controls for the hazards of most concern.
4. Your undertaking to seek expert advice where you lack the in-house expertise to risk assess a hazard.
5. Your recognition of the need to risk assess every time a work practice is changed or a new work practice is introduced.

**Action list:**

When you create your list of controls required to reduce the risk of accidents or ill health in your workplace you will specify:

1. The competent person assigned the task.
2. The completion date for each action and the resources required to carry it out.
3. Your recognition of the need to follow-up to ensure actions have been completed satisfactorily.

Then in PART B Section 1, you will list the risk assessments you have completed and provide a copy of each of them. As well as risk assessments for standard hazards in workplaces such as chemicals, electricity, fire, manual handling and so on, you will risk assess such workplace hazards in a stable as:

- |                    |                  |
|--------------------|------------------|
| > Handling horses; | > Horse walking; |
| > Horse transport; | > Muck heap.     |

(This list is not exhaustive.)

In PART B Section 2, you will provide a copy of your action list in which you will list all the hazards you have identified along with the controls required to eliminate them or reduce the risks associated with them.



# Conclusion

The template for your BeSMART safety statement ensures that once you have created your safety statement, you will have covered all of the areas required of you by Section 20 of SHWW.

## Requirements for a health and safety policy in northern ireland

HSENI states that anyone employing five or more employees is legally required to have a written health and safety policy (it is also recommended as good practice for those with less than five employees). This document will set out your general approach and commitment to health and safety in your business, as well as arrangements you have put in place for managing health and safety in your business.

Your health and safety policy will have three parts:

**Part 1** Statement of Intent

**Part 2** Responsibilities for Health and Safety

**Part 3** Arrangements for Health and Safety

The statement of intent in Part 1 will lay out in simple language your company's objectives for health and safety in your workplace. It will be signed and dated by the most senior person in the company, contain a next review date and be displayed prominently where it can be seen by all your employees.

In Part 2 you will list the names, positions and responsibilities of anyone in your company who has specific responsibility for health and safety.

In Part 3, you will give details of the specific systems and procedures you have in place, thus explaining how you control the risks associated with your business.

HSENI provides an example of a health and safety policy at: [www.hseni.gov.uk/sites/hseni.gov.uk/files/example-health-and-safety-policy\\_0.pdf](http://www.hseni.gov.uk/sites/hseni.gov.uk/files/example-health-and-safety-policy_0.pdf)

And the same document as a template at:

[www.hseni.gov.uk/sites/hseni.gov.uk/files/health-and-safety-policy-template.pdf](http://www.hseni.gov.uk/sites/hseni.gov.uk/files/health-and-safety-policy-template.pdf)

# Common Health and Safety Hazards in our Industry

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Every industry has common sources of hazards and risks that it is in everyone's interests to either eliminate or control. Here we can give no more than a general outline of the nature of the hazards and risks that workers in our industry encounter every day. As an employer, your starting point for dealing with these kinds of hazards and risks in your workplace will be your own risk assessments, where necessary coupled with professional advice on the hazards and risks you face.

## Safe operating procedures (SOPs)

A very useful tool for you in dealing with these hazards and risks will be your SOPs. These are the operational documents you may create on the basis of your risk assessments; in them, you will describe the safest and most efficient ways to perform work tasks and operations in your workplace.

As well as providing guidance to your employees, these documents can be invaluable in assisting you train your new employees and assess the level of understanding and competency of all your employees.

## The yard

Everyone is responsible for maintaining standards of cleanliness and tidiness in the yard. Maintaining such standards ensures the elimination or reduction of risks from hazards that exist in the everyday working environment.

Slips, trips and falls are a particular hazard in any working environment, so tidiness and cleanliness are particularly important for minimising the risk of these types of accidents occurring.

Both employers and employees have their own responsibilities for maintaining cleanliness and tidiness in the yard, while particular responsibilities for maintaining standards will fall on various employees.

## Slips, trips and falls

Slips, trips and falls are a common source of injury in all types of working environment, and unfortunately workplaces in the horse breeding and horse racing industry are no exception.

These types of incident tend to occur when employees are moving or carrying loads, and more often than not, they are caused by the poor condition of floor surfaces, indifferent lighting, untidiness or a combination of some or all of these factors.

The risk of slips, trips and falls can be eliminated or at least reduced, by taking simple precautions such as those listed below:

- > Clear up spillages as soon as they occur, placing warning signs if necessary;
- > Avoid the creating of tripping hazards by leaving trailing leads or farming equipment lying on floors;
- > Wear correct footwear (anti-slip soles, no runners etc);
- > Report damaged or defective floor surfaces promptly and repair them as soon as possible;
- > In icy weather, treat surfaces with salt, use warning signs, restrict access if necessary;
- > Keep barns and yards tidy by, for example, storing tools and equipment correctly, and keeping passageways and corridors uncluttered and free of obstructions.

## Employer's responsibilities

Employers must ensure that all work in the yard is carried out in accordance with the provisions of the safety statement and safety policy and that it is planned organised and supervised. You must also ensure that regular inspections of the yard and barns are undertaken.

You must ensure that all plant and machinery is safe and functioning correctly (and is taken out of service if found to be defective) and that only properly trained operators use them.





You must also ensure that any hazardous process or substance has been risk assessed and that all the controls required to eliminate or reduce the risks involved have been implemented (training, provision of PPE etc).

You must ensure that all traffic routes are suitable for their users, whether they be people, horses or vehicles. Routes should be clearly signed to ensure safe use, any debris or obstructions should be removed from them and fire escapes and exits must be kept clear. It is your duty to maintain traffic routes in a good state of repair and in particular to treat them appropriately in severe weather conditions.

As an employer, it is your duty to provide adequate toilet and washroom facilities for your employees and to ensure they are kept clean. You must also ensure that drains are kept clean and disinfected regularly.

If you are providing kitchen or canteen facilities, you must ensure that these are kept clean and tidy at all times and you should nominate someone to supervise such facilities for you.

You must ensure that you dispose of waste responsibly and in accordance with accepted standards for recycling and the biodegrading of waste materials. When necessary, you must obtain permits for the disposal of waste and any commercial waste you dispose of must be carried away by a licensed carrier. You must not permit any unauthorised burning of waste.

When carcasses have to be removed, this must be done with qualified veterinary staff in attendance and in accordance with their directions.

## **Employees' general responsibilities**

All employees have an obligation to ensure that their work areas are kept clean and tidy, and it is also their duty to maintain a good standard of personal hygiene while they are working. This extends to lockers and locker room areas (perishables such as food should not be stored in lockers).

You must seek permission from your employer or supervisor if you think it is necessary to light a bonfire and you must supervise a bonfire at all times.

## **Employees' particular responsibilities**

Employees who are responsible for the storage of any materials must ensure that they are stacked and stored safely. Equipment such as ladders, barrows etc must also be stored safely and their use must be supervised to ensure that they are never left as an obstruction to other people's work. Particular care must be taken of the storage and movement of bales, especially when unstacking. Stacks of small bales should not be undermined and machinery should be used to move large bales to a safe position before they are opened.

## **Yard safety inspection checklist**

Employers should ensure that any yards and barns on the work premises are inspected regularly (once a month would be good practice). Below is a sample of a checklist that you might find helpful when you are conducting such a monthly inspection. When filling out this form, simply tick the relevant box and if necessary include comments on any action that is required.



## Monthly yard/barn safety inspection checklist

Area	YES	NO	N/A	Comments
Is there a fully stocked first aid kit available and is a list of first aid and emergency numbers posted?				
Is PPE available and worn as necessary by employees (safety boots/wellingtons, helmets, back protectors, ear muffs etc)?				
Are fire extinguishers available and checked (pressure gauge needle in green area)?				
If present, are fire hydrants or fire hose reels operational and marked for access?				
Are all ladders in good order and used correctly? (Three points of contact and low risk work only.)				
Are hay/straw bales stored safely (no overhanging bales) and is there safe access to stacks of small square bales?				
Are all veterinary products stored securely in a locked cabinet? Have all out of date products been returned?				
Are all electric cables and fittings in good order? All unnecessary electrical items unplugged, RCDs checked?				
Are stables, barns and stocks in good order?				
Are toilet facilities clean and fully stocked?				
Are rubbish and waste materials controlled?				
Are tractors, trailers and other machinery in good order? Are PTO guards in good condition?				
Are all fuels, chemicals and hazardous materials stored securely and safely used?				
Are all paddocks checked and in good order?				
Have all water troughs been checked and drained in the last seven days?				
If present, are electric gates working correctly?				
If present, are contractors working safely in the area?				
If present in the area, is the AED in working order?				
Are rodent control measures in place?				

Additional Comments or Action Required?

Role:

Name:

Date:

Signature:

Checked by:

Audit Location:

## Tack and riding equipment

If a horse is difficult to tack up, you should consider tying it up in the stable, or, failing that, ask your manager for assistance in tacking up the horse.

Employees must ensure that they always have the appropriate tack and that such tack is comfortable for both the horse and the rider. If you are unsure about any additional tack that a horse may need, always consult with your employer or supervisor.

You should check any tack you are going to use before you use it and replace any tack in which you find defects. You should mark defective tack as such and take it to the person nominated by the employer with responsibility for repairing damaged tack. If tack breaks while you are using it, follow the same procedure. Also, make sure that the tack you want to use has been recently oiled and cleaned with saddle soap.

Loose girths, loose straps and incorrectly fitted bridles are particular hazards when tacking up, so always check that girth straps are secure and recheck them before riding, especially before fast work. Always check that bridles are of good quality and that the stitching and buckles are in good condition. Also check that any bridle you are using has been correctly fitted.

Always check that the stirrup iron you are using is the correct size for the rider: it should slip off the foot easily in an emergency, but it shouldn't be so big that the whole foot can slip through it and become trapped.

Do not use damaged stirrup leathers and do not punch extra holes in them if they are too long for the rider or try to shorten them by winding them around the stirrup iron.

## PPE

As an employer you are obliged, as part of the training that you give any new employee, to inform them of any risk involved in their work that requires the wearing of PPE.

It is then your duty to provide any PPE that your risk assessments indicate your employees need, free of charge, as their own personal equipment, together with training on how and when to use it (any PPE you supply must meet EU standards). In general, any equipment that is necessary for the safe execution of a task is deemed to be PPE.

You or your supervisors must also ensure that PPE is being used in accordance with your directions and you should regard failure to do so as a potential disciplinary issue.

## Employees' duties

As an employee, you have a duty to take reasonable care of your own health and safety, and this includes an obligation to use any PPE with which your employer provides you, in the manner in which you are trained to use it.



## PPE specific to the industry

Employers must ensure that anyone mounted on a horse in the workplace is wearing a skull cap and a safety vest that are compliant with the relevant rules.

You should also carry out risk assessments to ascertain if any of the following PPE is required:

- > **Dust masks:** for tasks such as working with straw or hay;
- > **Ear plugs:** for protection against noise when using machinery (e.g. tractor, fork lift etc);
- > **Goggles:** shatter-proof goggles for eye protection on gallops, especially when riding behind to protect against kickback;
- > **Overalls/protective clothing:** where needed to protect from the effects of dust or chemicals, or risks posed by vermin;
- > **Protective footwear:** when handling horses from the ground;

- > **Protective gloves:** for lunging or leading, or when handling chemicals or dealing with biological agents;
- > **Reflective clothing:** fluorescent tabards for riding out in the dark and light-coloured or fluorescent clothing for riding out in daylight;
- > **Riding boots:** when a rider is mounted, boots with a smooth sole and small heel should be worn at all times (wellington boots or footwear with a ribbed sole are not suitable for riding a horse);
- > **Safety vest:** when engaging in potentially hazardous stable tasks such as clipping, long reining, lunging etc;
- > **Skull cap:** for clipping, leading, loading, long reining, lunging, stalls practice, teasing, working in the covering barn;
- > **Visors:** eye protection for tasks such as strimming and hedge cutting.

Of course, this is not an exhaustive list. For example, at different times of the year and in various types of working conditions, your workers may need waterproof clothing or some form of protection against harmful exposure to the sun. Furthermore, different types of exposure will require that you provide, for example, different types of masks, gloves and eye wear.

### Items that should either not be worn or worn only in modified form

When you are in contact with horses, you should not wear jewellery (e.g. bracelets, earrings, piercings, rings). Although it is permissible to wear a wristwatch, straps should be of leather or synthetic material and metal bracelet straps should be avoided. Long hair is permissible as a style, but such hair should be tied back carefully so as to prevent any impairment of vision or its becoming entangled with a horse, equipment or tack.

## Working with thoroughbreds

In general, the hazards arising from working with thoroughbreds depend on the type of activity in which a horse is engaged. However, there are risks involved with working with stallions, mares, young horses and horses in training that are common to all of them in all situations and others which are distinctive of each type of horse.

## Employer's responsibilities

All of the diverse risks involved in working with horses need to be properly risk assessed and managed through the creation of policies for the various forms of work.

You must ensure that all your employees have been trained in the correct handling of horses and that no one undertakes a task with a horse for which they have not received training. You must supervise the everyday care of your horses, including training and exercise, to ensure that it is carried out in accordance with your instructions and policies. You should also make your employees aware of those tasks which will require assistance, special expertise or training, or permission from you before they are carried out (e.g. teasing or the handling of stallions). This applies particularly to those tasks which may excite or upset a horse.

You must also identify cases in which horses are known to have temperament problems and limit access to such horses to experienced personnel only. A sign or placard prominently displayed near the stable of a temperamental horse can act as a quick and clear means of communicating the particular hazards of dealing with a horse (e.g. it may kick or it may bite etc).

## Employees' responsibilities

You should not wear perfumes or use soaps that might sexually arouse colts.

Before carrying out a task, you should make sure that the area you have chosen to work in is suitable for the task and free from obstruction.

By following the policies created for each task, you can significantly reduce the likelihood of injuries occurring while working with horses and reduce the severity of such injuries should they occur.

The following general considerations will be of particular importance for assessing and either eliminating or reducing the risks involved in working with horses.

### Observing your horse

Always watch the horse you are working with for signs that it is unhappy or that it is becoming agitated. A horse will show signs of general poor temperament, but in particular, any of the following signs may indicate an unhappy or agitated horse:

- > Pinning back its ears;
- > Clenching its lips;
- > Lifting its legs or stomping its feet;
- > Turning its head.
- > Swishing its tail;

Don't forget to monitor environmental conditions such as wind conditions that may impact on a horse's mood.

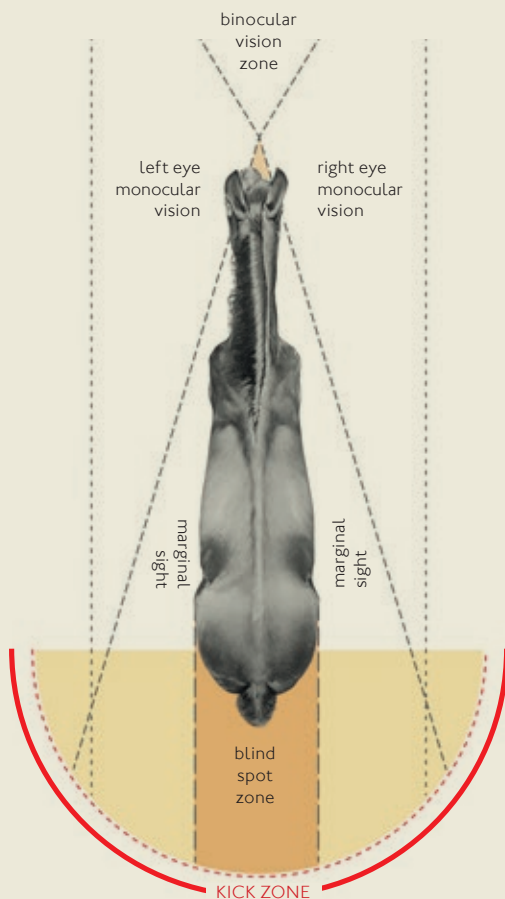
## Handling

Understanding a horse's temperament and thus being able to predict how it may react is crucial to working safely with horses. By engaging in verbal communication with a horse you ensure that it is not taken by surprise, so always tell the horse what you are going to do before you do it.

When working with your horse (e.g. grooming it or tacking up), always make sure you are in a safe position from which you can get out of the way quickly if you need to. If you need to tie up your horse, use a quick release knot through a piece of material that will give way when pressure is applied (but never tie up a horse that tends to pull back). If you are restraining a horse while a colleague works with it (e.g. a farrier or vet), always stand in a safe position from which you can see your co-worker. This will usually be at the horse's shoulder, on the same side of the horse as your co-worker. If the horse plays up or lashes out, pull the horse towards you, so that you pull the rear end of the horse away from your co-worker.

## Kick zone

Do not pass through or work in the kick zone of a horse unless you have no other choice (a horse's rear legs can reach out as far as 3m when kicking out). If your task does require you to do so, you should put safety controls and extra precautions in place in accordance with the relevant SOP.



## Catching and leading horses

Horses have relatively poor sight and a restricted field of vision, so never approach a horse from the front or rear, but always at an angle from the side. When you reach the horse, alert it to your presence by rubbing (but not patting) its shoulder or neck.

When you are leading a horse, you should position yourself between its head and shoulder so that it walks beside you. Do not walk in front of the horse or try to drag it along. Unless there is an emergency, always use a lead rope. Hold the lead in both hands, your right hand closest to the horse's head and your left hand picking up the slack, and do not allow the lead to drag on the ground.

It is customary to lead a horse from its left side, but this may vary, for instance if you must lead two horses out of a paddock. When you are leading a horse be alert for oncoming traffic and machinery. If you are passing another handler leading a horse, you must ensure that your left shoulder passes their left shoulder in order to minimise the risk of the horses lashing out at each other and the risk of injury to yourself. If you are leading a horse in a string, keep at least six feet between horses and be alert for a horse in front stopping suddenly, kicking out or spooking.



## Working in paddocks

Before entering a paddock, make sure you are familiar with the ground and the nature of the general environment and then before entering a paddock with a horse, minimise the risk of a crush injury by making sure the gates are fully open and then use the centre of the gateway, leading the horse slowly and in a straight line.

Once you are in the paddock, watch your footing and remain alert to the behaviour of other horses in the area. In particular, do not allow other horses to interfere with the horse you are leading.



If you are releasing a horse you are leading in a paddock, always turn the horse to face the fence before you release it. When you release the horse, step back immediately as horses will often kick out when they have been released.

Before you exit the paddock with a horse, make sure that the gates are still fully open.

## Working in stables

If you are going to work with a horse in a stable, before you enter the stable observe the horse carefully and enter the stable only when you are convinced that the horse is relaxed and that it is safe for you to enter. As you enter, make sure the horse knows you are coming, go in quietly and approach the horse's shoulder on the side facing you.

Make sure the stable doors are fully open when you are entering or exiting, but then close the stable doors to prevent the horse leaving the stable. At the same time, you need to make sure that you can quickly and safely exit the stable if you need to do so.

Secure the horse with a headcollar and tie it up using the quick release mechanism. When working around the horse, be constantly aware of its position in the stable and move it away from you if you are mucking out. If you have to pass the horse, always do so from the horse's front and if you have to work on the horse's legs do not kneel to do so, but rest on your hunkers so you can move quickly if you have to.

When you release the horse from the quick release mechanism, make sure that the horse will be facing the door as you leave the stable.



# Risk assessment for working with thoroughbreds

Below is a sample risk assessment for working with thoroughbreds.

Working with thoroughbreds		
Task	Working with and handling stallions, mares, yearlings, weanlings and foals.	Risk Rating
Hazards	Risk of injury or potential fatality of employees, public, visitors, children that come in contact with horses.	High
	Risks arising from the fact that working with horses is hazardous and can result in severe injuries. Injuries can result from kicks, being walked on, squashed, bitten, contact with horse's head etc.	High
	Risk of developing ill health due to contracting animal diseases which are transferrable to humans (Zoonosis).	High
	Risk of new, inexperienced, young or weekend employees being injured due to unfamiliarity with horses, the work environment or the procedures to be followed to ensure their safety.	High
Control Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; All employees working with horses must be suitably competent or under supervision until deemed competent. New employees, young employees, weekenders and inexperienced employees must be instructed on the safe methods for catching, leading, loading, turning out, working with farrier/vet and teasing etc. The SOP relevant to the work they are undertaking should be communicated to them. This training should be signed by the person giving the training and the employee receiving the training;</li><li>&gt; Refer to policies for tasks such as covering mares, foaling, working with horses and breaking yearlings. All employees involved in these tasks must be briefed on the relevant policies;</li><li>&gt; Employees must remain alert at all times as horses can spook or fight;</li><li>&gt; Do not work directly in front of or behind horses;</li><li>&gt; Do not spook horses or mistreat them;</li><li>&gt; Take care when working in confined areas such as stables or stocks etc;</li><li>&gt; Mobile phones should not be used when handling horses;</li><li>&gt; All treatments etc should be completed by two people;</li><li>&gt; Always ask you supervisor if you are unsure about anything;</li><li>&gt; A hazardous mare sign should be placed at the stable entrance of mares which are known to be hazardous or unpredictable;</li><li>&gt; Do not allow mares that are prone to fighting to mix.</li></ul>	

# Manual handling

Manual handling in the workplace involves the manual lifting, carrying, pulling or pushing of objects of any size, weight and shape by employees. As such, it is one of the main causes of injury in the workplace, with back injuries caused by manual handling predominating, but also injuries to the upper and lower limbs being quite common. Clearly then, manual handling is a high-risk practice, with the risk of injury increasing with the size, weight and awkwardness of the object that is being handled, and it is in everyone's interest to avoid such injuries occurring. Thus, all manual handling tasks require careful risk assessment in order to determine whether manual handling can be eliminated or the risk of injury from it reduced.

Risk assessments for manual handling tasks should use the 'TILE' principle to analyse the nature of the tasks involved.

## T I L E

Task Individual Load Environment

(See [www.hse.gov.uk/msd/mac](http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/mac) or [www.hsa.ie/eng/workplace\\_health/manual\\_handling\\_display\\_screen\\_equipment/guidance\\_documents/ergonomic\\_risk\\_assessment\\_tools](http://www.hsa.ie/eng/workplace_health/manual_handling_display_screen_equipment/guidance_documents/ergonomic_risk_assessment_tools) for the MAC tool. This tool is designed to help you assess the most common risk factors in manual handling and is very useful for identifying high-risk manual handling tasks.)

Various online tools (see box above) are available to help you perform generic risk assessments of common risks involved in manual handling tasks in the workplace, but if you use these, you must always be sensitive to the differences and variations introduced by the particular individuals, conditions and circumstances in your workplace. Wherever possible, a manual handling task should be avoided or replaced by a mechanical means of performing it, but if this is not possible the risk of injury must be reduced by the introduction of controls. The principal control for the risks posed by manual handling is to train workers in the correct way to manually handle loads (your employees should also receive refresher training whenever there is a relevant change in the workplace or in their tasks, and in general at intervals of not more than three years). But another simple solution is to seek help if you have to handle an awkward load.

So, for example, the lifting, handling and storing of heavy bales in barns and yards is a manual handling practice which involves the risk of musculoskeletal injury (as well as

related risks of serious injury from falls from height or heavy objects falling on workers (in the period 2011 to 2020 seven fatalities in the Republic of Ireland involved bales falling on workers)). Where possible, manual handling of bales should be replaced by the use of a fork lift, but when this cannot be done, training in manual handling should be provided, and then only those workers who have been trained and judged competent to do so, should be permitted to handle bales.

## Risk assessment for manual handling

Below is a sample risk assessment for manual handling.

Manual handling		
Task	Lifting and moving of materials in and around the workplace. Manual handling is a major part of everyday activities and best practice is to reduce manual handling risks so far as reasonably practicable by the use of mechanical aids, risk assessments and employee training.	Risk Rating
Hazards	Incorrect lifting techniques.	Medium
	Lifting weight beyond person's ability.	Medium
	Repeated twisting and turning of the torso.	Medium
	Over exertion.	Medium
	Damage to muscles, discs etc.	Medium
Control Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Limit the weight of units to be lifted or moved. Plan ahead;</li> <li>&gt; Use mechanical means wherever possible. Farm machinery, wheelbarrows and other equipment can be used as mechanical aids;</li> <li>&gt; Seek assistance from a colleague if the load is too heavy, bulky or unwieldy;</li> <li>&gt; Provide manual handling training for operatives at risk;</li> <li>&gt; Wear the correct clothing and footwear when lifting to avoid slipping.</li> </ul>	
Rules for Safe Lifting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Get as close as possible to the load, bringing the lines of gravity of both the load and body as close together as possible.</li> <li>2. Position your feet shoulder width apart with one foot slightly in front of the other for stability.</li> <li>3. Relax your knees, lower your hands and drop down beside the load, inclining your head.</li> <li>4. Grasp the object with a firm grip, test the weight to make sure it is not excessive and keep the arms as close as possible to the load.</li> <li>5. Raise your head and look straight forward.</li> <li>6. Keep the load as close as possible to the body with the elbows in and lift with strong leg muscles. Avoid twisting as you lift.</li> <li>7. Move forward and about at a comfortable pace and never rush.</li> <li>8. Watch out for sharp edges, hot surfaces, protruding nails/staples or insecure boxes.</li> </ol>	

# Machinery

Machinery (both static and mobile) is the most significant cause of fatalities and serious injuries in the agriculture and forestry sector. In the Republic of Ireland, between 2011 and 2020, there were 110 fatalities in the sector arising from accidents involving machinery, representing 53% of the total fatalities in the period. In Northern Ireland, 3 of the 7 fatalities on farms in 2021 were caused by machinery. The primary causes of these fatalities were crushing, being struck by machinery or becoming entangled with it, and the victims were not only those operating such machinery but others in its vicinity as well.

In the horse breeding and horse racing industry, we use both static and mobile plant and machinery extensively, so the health and safety of operators and other workers is of paramount importance.

Workers using static or mobile plant and machinery must remain aware of health and safety at all times. Always think about what you are doing and if in doubt, don't act until you are certain that it is safe to do so.

## Static plant and machinery

In our industry we use a wide range of static plant and machinery. Here are some examples:

- > Chain saws;
- > Grinders;
- > Pressure washers;
- > Strimmers;
- > Welding plant;
- > Woodworking tools.

But there are many others as well.

As an employer, you must ensure that your workers are correctly trained in the safe operation of plant and machinery. You must also arrange for the supervision of workers with plant and machinery, particularly if they have been recently trained and are inexperienced in its use, to ensure that proper procedures are followed.

Before you use any plant or machinery, check it for any defects, test the emergency stops and check that the safety guards, including PTOs, are in place. Also check coolant levels and whether plant or machinery requires grease or lubricant.

If you do discover any defect in a piece of plant or machinery, **do not use the device**, but mark it as out of service and report the problem immediately to your supervisor or the nominated person.

When you are using plant or machinery always ensure that unauthorised people are kept away from the area of operation and then follow the correct procedure (consult the relevant SOP if you need to).

Once you stop using plant or machinery, make sure that it is disabled so that it cannot be used by any unauthorised person.

## Checklist for static plant and machinery

Below is a sample risk assessment for static plant and machinery.

Machinery checklist	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Are all safety guard/devices fitted, undamaged and in good working order?				
Are O guards present on the machine end of the PTO drive?				
Are the hydraulic systems and hoses in good repair?				
Have you carried out all pre-checks on the machine and identified and rectified any defects?				
Are you trained and competent to operate this machine?				
Is the operator handbook available?				
Is an adequate prop available such as a jack stand should you need to support hydraulic equipment for maintenance or repair?				
If you need to carry out maintenance or free a blockage, have you stopped the machine, along with its PTOs and moving parts?				
Have you applied all the controls needed to protect children and young people?				
Are you wearing appropriate PPE and workwear for operating this machine?				
Have you assessed the suitability of ground conditions for working with this machine (too steep etc)?				

# Mobile plant and machinery

The use of mobile equipment and its associated machinery is very common in our industry, with a variety of tractors, loaders, combines, diggers and ATVs regularly in use. Obviously, these mobile vehicles are an essential and invaluable tool in carrying out tasks in our workplaces, but, unfortunately, they are also the main cause of fatalities in the agricultural and forestry sector.

Between 2011 and 2020 tractors and other farm vehicles were involved in the fatal injuring of 93 people in the agricultural and forestry sector in the Republic of Ireland, thus amounting to 45% of the fatalities in the sector. Causes of fatal injury included crushing, vehicles overturning, people being struck by vehicles and people falling from vehicles.

As well as operators being at risk, people in the vicinity of the operation of mobile plant and machinery are vulnerable as well, particularly when vehicles are being reversed.

In general, then, extreme caution and constant awareness needs to be exercised by operators of mobile plant and machinery.

As an employer, you must ensure that any operator of mobile plant and machinery in your workplace has a valid licence and appropriate training, and that if they are inexperienced, they receive appropriate supervision while gaining the experience that they need. You or your supervisors must prevent any operator from operating mobile plant and machinery if you or they are of the opinion that the operator is not fit to do so, because of illness, the influence of drugs or alcohol etc.

Before using any piece of mobile plant or machinery, the operator must check that all the safety features of the vehicle are working correctly (e.g. brakes), in particular, making sure that roll bars fitted to plant or machinery are properly positioned. Also, you must check that PTOs are undamaged and correctly guarded. If you observe any defect in a vehicle, you must take it out of service and inform your supervisor or the nominated person immediately.

Features of mobile plant or machinery such as oil, water, fuel, tyres and lights should be checked each day before the vehicle is used.

When you are using the vehicle, take note of road and warning signs, and be aware of other road users and on the lookout for pedestrians, particularly children, as well as animals. If you need to reverse your vehicle, get someone to help you do so.





When you are driving adjust your speed and other aspects of your management of the vehicle to the road conditions and the nature of the terrain. Keep away from banks and ditches when you are turning your vehicle and avoid travelling across slopes.

When you stop using your vehicle, make sure that it is locked and that it is not open to unauthorised use. If you are driving a tractor, each time you get off, follow the SAFE STOP procedure:

1. Stop the tractor in a safe location.
2. Make sure the handbrake is fully engaged.
3. Disengage PTO.
4. Lower front and rear implements.
5. Turn off the engine.

## Driving for work

Any employee who drives in the course of his work is exposed to risk. Therefore, as the employer, you will authorise someone to drive for the purposes of the business only after you have satisfied yourself of the following:

- > That there is no alternative to driving;
- > That the person authorised to drive is of a suitable age and in reasonable health, and that they have appropriate experience;
- > That the length of any journey has been ascertained, that it has been clarified whether or not the driver will be accompanied, and that adequate time has been allowed for the journey.

You must ensure that anyone who drives for the business is properly insured, has the use of a roadworthy vehicle and complies with the laws of the road (especially in relation to the use of mobile phones).

Drivers must keep a record of all journeys made by them on behalf of the business.

# Checklist for mobile plant and machinery

Below is a sample risk assessment for mobile plant and machinery.

Tractors, Quads and Other Vehicles Checklist	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Is the cab/roll bar in good condition?				
Is the U guard in place to cover the PTO stub?				
Are all controls clearly marked and in working order?				
Are the brakes working and adequate for the task?				
Is the handbrake fully operational?				
Are mirrors, lights, indicators and wipers functioning and clean?				
Is all hitching equipment free of defects?				
Have you identified all visible defects, rectified them and listed them on the control sheet?				
Have you carried out all vehicle pre-checks?				
Are you trained and competent to operate this vehicle?				
Is the operator handbook available?				
Has lifting equipment (material/people) been subject to the annual/six monthly check?				
Is the vehicle in the correct position for starting and working?				
Does the vehicle have a seat and seat belt provided by the manufacturer for carrying a passenger?				
If you are driving a quad bike, are you wearing a helmet?				
Have you checked for the presence of bystanders before commencing work?				
Are you driving at a safe speed for local conditions?				
Are you using the SAFE STOP procedure?				
Have you assessed the risks to other traffic from your work and implemented any necessary controls?				

# Electricity

If we use electricity (fixed electrical installations such as switches, sockets etc) and electrical equipment correctly, then these will be safe and extremely useful in the execution of our everyday tasks in the workplace. But when electricity is misused or electrical equipment is poorly maintained, they become a hazard with associated risks of fire, explosions or serious injury or death from electrical shocks.

Therefore, we all have an obligation to use electricity responsibly and to maintain and use electrical equipment with care.

## Employer's responsibilities

As an employer, you must ensure that your employees are all trained in basic electrical safety so that they can recognise defective equipment. You must also make sure that all sockets used for powering portable tools are protected by residual current devices (RCDs). These should be regularly tested.

Make sure that exterior electrical installations are suitable for the environment in which they are placed (e.g. damp resistant).

You should arrange regular inspections by a competent electrician (best practice is every three to five years, but you should use your risk assessment to determine what is appropriate in your workplace) of fixed electrical installations and you should keep a record of the results of these inspections. Portable electrical equipment will require regular portable appliance testing (PAT) by a competent electrician. The device should be marked as having been tested and you should maintain a register of your portable equipment in which inspection dates are recorded.

## Employee's responsibilities

If you are using electricity or electrical equipment, make sure you do the following:

- > Check that any electrical equipment you use is suitable for the environment in which you are going to work (keep equipment away from water);
- > Check equipment regularly, checking for loose connections and damaged cables and checking that the appropriate fuse rating is used;
- > If possible, do not work on live equipment: isolate the power source by using lock out tag out (LOTO) in accordance with your employer's designated procedure and your training;

- > If you are going to use an extension lead, check it before you use it and then fully extend it before you start working with it;
- > If you are using electrical equipment on a horse, make sure it is suitably restrained and never left alone with the equipment.

Never do any of the following:

- > Allow a horse to walk across an electrical cable;
- > Use electrical installations or equipment that you know is defective;
- > Operate plant or machinery such as MEWPs near live overhead cables.

## Chemical safety management

### Legislation governing the use of chemicals in the workplace

**Northern Ireland:** Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (Northern Ireland) (COSHH) 2003.

**Republic of Ireland:** SHWW, Safety Health and Welfare at Work (Chemical Agents) Regulations 2001, Safety Health and Welfare at Work (Carcinogen) Regulations 2001.

Many potentially hazardous substances are often used in our industry. When they are used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and, if necessary, while wearing the appropriate PPE, they are unlikely to cause harm to people. But if they are used incorrectly, or without the requisite PPE, exposure to them can cause significant damage to the human body. Such damage can be immediate and obvious, as is the case with corrosive substances that burn the skin, or can appear in the long-term, as is the case with substances that cause eczema, or can be the result of repeated exposure, as is the case with asthma caused by repeated exposure to straw dust.

It is the duty of employers to train their employees in the handling of chemicals and to issue clear instructions for all aspects of the handling of chemicals in the workplace. This will cover the following aspects of working with chemicals:

- > Procurement;
- > Movement;
- > Storage;
- > Use;
- > PPE;
- > Spillage procedures;
- > First aid;
- > Disposal.

## Safety data sheets (SDS)

A safety data sheet is a document provided by the manufacturer which gives relevant details about all aspects of the substance that it accompanies and about the safest ways to handle it. As such, it is an essential reference tool for anyone who is using the substance on how to handle it safely, in a manner that protects people's health and the environment in which the substance is used. All SDS should be easily accessible to anyone who needs to consult them.

As an employer, you must also ensure that adequate signage is provided in areas where chemicals are stored, that the safety data sheets (SDS) for chemicals used in the workplace are readily available and that appropriate first aid equipment is easily accessible.

If accidents involving chemicals occur, employers must make sure that they are investigated and, if necessary, that action is taken to prevent a reoccurrence of the incident. Employers must also provide health surveillance where risk assessment indicates that it is necessary to do so.

It is the duty of every employee to ensure that they implement their training and follow instructions on how to deal with hazardous substances in the course of their work (especially the correct use of PPE). They should report immediately any accident involving a chemical, any adverse symptoms that they experience as a consequence of using chemicals at work and any defects that they observe in equipment used to handle chemicals in the workplace.

When a new chemical is introduced into a workplace, it is vital to assess the risks it may pose and the controls that may be required when it is being used. The relevant SDS will be your most important resource for carrying out such an assessment. You must pay particular attention to the provision of appropriate PPE and the storage requirements for the particular substance.

## Chemical Labelling

All chemical containers must be labelled with their chemical hazards so that workers are aware of them when handling the substance or when cleaning up a spillage. The labelling requirements for each chemical can be found in Section 2 of the relevant SDS.



You must keep a record of each risk assessment that you have carried out for chemicals in your workplace and these must be kept up to date and made freely available to anyone who needs to see them.

### **Substances containing chemicals commonly found in our workplaces**

- > Disinfectants, horse care items, veterinary items;
- > Dusts (powdered chemicals, hay/straw);
- > Fertilisers;
- > Fuels and additives (diesel/antifreeze);
- > Weed killers, pesticides and vermin control products.

When you conduct your chemical risk assessment, consider first whether you can eliminate the use of the hazardous substance or replace it with a less hazardous substance. The use of PPE should be your last resort.

# Risk assessment for handling chemicals

Below is a sample risk assessment for handling chemicals.

Chemicals		
Task	Staff using chemicals/chemical cleaning products in the course of their working day.	Risk Rating
Hazards	Risk of toxic effects on the body through inhalation, ingestion or absorption of hazardous chemical substances.	High
	Risk of burns and irritation to the skin and internal organs through skin contact with a harmful product.	High
	Risk of damage to the environment through unsafe disposal of harmful products.	High
	Risk of outbreak of fire from spilled chemicals.	High
	Risk that members of the public, particularly children, could access hazardous substances that are not locked away.	High
	Risk of needle/stick injury from syringes, when injecting animals.	High
Control Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; Ensure the register of hazardous substances is maintained and up to date;</li><li>&gt; Read the labels on the container and in SDS for information on hazards, personal protective equipment, safe handling, transport, storage and disposal for each hazardous chemical and follow the instructions they contain;</li><li>&gt; Wear appropriate PPE and use correct equipment when handling and using chemicals;</li><li>&gt; Use the least hazardous chemical available and use it at the recommended rate;</li><li>&gt; Prepare enough of the chemical for immediate use only;</li><li>&gt; Make sure equipment for applying chemicals works properly and does not leak;</li><li>&gt; Do not eat, drink or smoke while pouring, mixing or spraying chemicals;</li><li>&gt; Avoid working alone if you are using highly toxic chemicals, or make sure you have some form of mobile communication close by and let someone know where you will be working and how long you intend to be gone;</li><li>&gt; Clean all equipment thoroughly in an area where run-off will not create a hazard or contaminate the environment;</li><li>&gt; Wash work clothing separately from domestic clothing or use disposable coveralls;</li><li>&gt; After handling hazardous chemicals wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before eating, drinking, smoking or going to the toilet;</li><li>&gt; Keep first aid equipment including eyewash bottles readily available;</li><li>&gt; Ensure there is an adequate supply of running water, to bathe any chemical splashes sufficiently;</li><li>&gt; Note position of firefighting equipment;</li><li>&gt; Ensure every effort is made to identify any unlabelled or unknown substance or liquid prior to handling;</li><li>&gt; Store chemicals securely so they are not accessible to members of the public or children;</li><li>&gt; Return excess product to secure containers and stores. Never dispose of it in drains or on the ground;</li><li>&gt; Work with chemicals only in well ventilated work areas.</li></ul>	



# Biological safety and pest control

Because workers in our industry regularly work outdoors and with animals, animal products and other biological materials they are often exposed to risks to their health and safety from the activity of biological agents (including Zoonotic diseases in which infection can be transferred from animals to humans).

Work with biological agents is regulated by the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Biological Agents) Regulations 2013 in the Republic of Ireland and by COSHH in Northern Ireland. Under these regulations, employers must identify biological hazards to which workers may be exposed, and they must risk assess the hazards in accordance with the regulations and implement appropriate controls.

## Common biological hazards in the horse breeding and horse racing industry

By exposure to animal waste, workers can be infected by pathogens and bacteria such as tetanus, cryptosporidium, leptospirosis and salmonella.

Workers may also be exposed to Weils disease, Lymes disease and respiratory problems such as occupational asthma.

Basic controls such as hand hygiene and the use of PPE (e.g. gloves) are very important and workers should be encouraged to get vaccinated in cases in which vaccines are available (e.g. tetanus).

Stables and yards should be kept clean: regularly remove horse manure and soiled bedding, and keep horse equipment and tools clean.

Any horse that is showing signs of illness should be isolated from people and from other horses.

As an employer, you should ensure that you have a pest control programme in place and that you keep food bins covered.

In order to control the incidence of asthma, make sure your work practices keep dust creation to the minimum level possible. For instance, increase the ventilation of areas by leaving doors open and groom animals outdoors when conditions permit you to do so. Where exposure to dust is likely to be prolonged consider providing an appropriate dust respirator.

# Offices

When we have to deal with workplaces as complex and as potentially hazardous as those in the horse breeding and horse racing industry, it is easy to overlook the health and safety needs of those who work in the office areas of our businesses. This is understandable, since offices are relatively safe and healthy places in which to work, but nevertheless accidents can happen and people's health can be affected, so offices should be risk assessed and simple controls, such as those listed below, put in place.

- > Keep access routes clear at all times;
- > Prevent computer and phone flexes from trailing and creating tripping hazards;
- > Avoid storing heavy or awkward items too high or too low and thus creating manual handling problems (such items should be stored at waist height);
- > Ensure that any potentially hazardous office tools, such as paper guillotines, are always guarded.

You must pay particular attention to the needs of those who regularly use visual display units (VDUs).

## Addressing the needs of VDU users

Under the relevant legislation, employees who regularly use VDUs as a significant part of their normal work are entitled to eye tests, arranged and paid for by their employer (Northern Ireland: Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992; Republic of Ireland: Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007, Chapter 5 of Part 2).

It is recommended that VDU users take a 5 minute break from VDU use after every 50 minutes of uninterrupted work with a VDU (for instance, perform other office tasks).

Any VDU user who requests a foot or wrist rest should be provided with one, and in general their use is recommended.

If you are a VDU user, it is your duty to inform your employer or supervisor when you are suffering from any physical or mental problem (e.g. fatigue) that you believe has been caused by the use of your VDU.

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# Special Policies



# Alcohol and drugs

Everyone knows that the abuse of alcohol and the use of illegal drugs for recreational purposes affect a worker's capacity to concentrate, to coordinate actions and to perform basic work tasks. It is also the case that the effects of alcohol abuse or drug taking can spill over from a person's private life into their work, leading to absenteeism, inefficiency at work and accidents.

## The legislative context

Under Section 13 of Part 2 of SHWW and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000, all employees must ensure that while they are at work they are not under the influence of any intoxicant to the extent that this could endanger their own health and safety or that of any other person present in the workplace.

As employers, we have a responsibility to provide a working environment that is healthy and safe for all our employees. Therefore, we have an obligation to remove employees from roles in which intoxication poses a risk to themselves or to others.

Employees have a duty to avoid endangering their own health and safety or that of those around them, so any breach of your policy regarding alcohol and drugs should be treated as a potential disciplinary matter, the outcome of which may be dismissal from work.

You should make it clear to your employees that you have a policy that prohibits the consumption of alcohol during working hours and working while under the influence of illegal drugs.

If you are an employee who has been prescribed a course of medication that may affect your ability to carry out your duties or in any other manner affect the health and safety of those around you at work, you must notify your employer or their nominated person of this fact.

# Fatigue management

Fatigue is a major contributory cause of accidents in the agricultural and forestry sector, with a recent study showing that fatigue is four times more likely to be the cause of accidents at work than the influence of alcohol or drugs (Karyn Bennett An Exploratory Study of the effects of Stress and Fatigue on Irish Farm Safety (2016)).

In the busy working environments of our industry, we all face the challenge of extended working hours at peak times of the year and of fatigue induced by the rigours of shift work and of working long hours in poor conditions created by environments affected by noise, vibration or bad weather. The temptation to push too hard to get jobs done is always there. As a consequence, there is a danger that workers will make mistakes, that accidents will happen and that eventually they will burn themselves out.

As employers, we have a duty to help our employees to manage the risks of fatigue in the workplace. First of all, we can set an example of good practice in managing fatigue. Both in our own work and in the setting out of our employees' work schedules, we can bring to bear the virtues of the three Ps:

- > Prioritisation;
- > Planning;
- > Pacing.

Whether you are considering your own work or that of your employees:

1. Prioritise the things that really matter.
2. Plan their execution efficiently and effectively.
3. Learn to recognise the correct pace at which to get things done.

Doing this will give you the best chance of striking the correct balance between health and safety in your workplace and making your business as efficient as it can be.



Be ready to apply the three Ps at those busy times of the year when the threat of fatigue is at its greatest. Plan ahead and make sure you will have enough experienced workers to get you safely and healthily through the busy and most stressful times of the year.

## 10 Ways for everyone to manage fatigue in the workplace

1. Prioritise, plan, pace yourself.
2. Learn how to manage stress.
3. Eat healthily and drink plenty of water (not plenty of coffee!).
4. Take physical exercise every day.
5. Quit smoking, reduce your alcohol intake.
6. Maintain a healthy weight for your age and build.
7. Learn proper manual handling techniques, protect your back!
8. Never skip your sleep: get adequate sleep between shifts.
9. Get a health check: know your blood pressure and your cholesterol levels.
10. Don't get isolated: talk to friends and family, join a group for recreation.

## Employee welfare

Working for a living always involves a certain level of pressure – indeed a certain level of stress can improve performance – but there can come a point at which work pressure becomes intolerably stressful and a point beyond that at which work stress can cause ill health. An added, complicating factor is that different people respond differently to different levels of work pressure.

Nevertheless, as employers, we have a duty to ensure that our employees are not made ill by their work, so if we are aware that work stress is either causing illness in one of our employees or making an existing illness worse, we have a duty to carry out a risk assessment and consider making some, if not all, of the following changes to improve our work culture:

- > Give your employees more control over their work;
- > Improve the physical and/or psychological environment;
- > Improve relationships between managers and employees;
- > Provide training and/or counselling;
- > Reduce role conflicts and ambiguities;
- > Reduce or modify work demands.

## Factors that play a part in workplace stress

Factors that can cause stress at work or worsen an existing condition of stress include:

- > Absenteeism;
- > Bullying or harassment;
- > Ill health;
- > Personal problems outside of work;
- > Poor work performance;
- > Poor work relationships;
- > Work overload, lack of support and/or unrealistic deadlines.



As employers, we must be always prepared to step in and to try and improve personal relationships in the workplace and to defuse the potential for conflict. We should set an example in doing this and demonstrate too our expectation that our managers and supervisors should be prepared to do the same. Having said that, if you perceive that someone has a serious work-related stress problem, you should refer them to an occupational health service.

## Bullying and harassment

As employers we must be committed to promoting dignity at work and to creating a working environment that is free of bullying. We must make sure that all our employees know that we do not tolerate bullying in the workplace (e.g. we treat it as a disciplinary issue) and in particular that our managers and supervisors know what our policy is and understand that they are expected to enforce it (we must also train them in how to prevent bullying).

On the other hand, do not confuse bullying with one-off incidents or the natural tensions and frictions that arise between people under the pressure of work situations.

If you receive a complaint of bullying, first see if you can resolve the problem informally. Get the facts, make sure that you really are dealing with a bullying problem, and then see if you can bring the parties together to resolve the matter.

If the problem cannot be resolved informally or if it persists after an attempt at informal resolution, you must move on to a formal process, with a formal complaint and a formal investigation process with a clear timeframe and a clear set of possible outcomes.

## Definition of bullying in the workplace

Workplace bullying is the occurrence of repeated acts of physical, verbal or psychological violence directed by an individual or a group against a work colleague or group (including by means of electronic media and social media). Common examples in the workplace are:

- > Verbal abuse;
- > Physical violence;
- > Exclusion or discriminatory behaviour;
- > Manipulation of a person's work, or emotional strategies designed to humiliate or undermine the confidence of a colleague.

Harassment can take the form of verbal, visual or physical behaviour. If an employee makes an allegation of sexual harassment, you must fully investigate this as soon as possible and if the allegation is sustained by your investigation, you must initiate a disciplinary process (but take care to make sure that your investigation is fair, objective and systematic). To begin with, listen sympathetically to the complaint and make it clear that you are committed to dealing with it in the utmost confidentiality (have the initial conversation in private and take notes).

## If you believe you are being harassed

If someone is behaving towards you in a way that is unwanted, first ask them to stop.

If this does not work, make a note of the details of the behaviour and factors such as times and dates (and particularly the names of any witnesses) and make a formal complaint to your employer/supervisor.

If you believe you are being harassed or bullied by your employer/supervisor, go to an appropriate third party.



# Lone working

In our industry, it may be necessary for employees to work on their own in isolated barns or yards, or to work on their own at night during the off season. Lone working may also be part of the work pattern of drivers, night watchmen and security personnel (e.g. security personnel will work across all parts of the workplace, checking and clocking gates).

Lone workers are particularly vulnerable to the effects of the following:

- > Slips, trips and falls (particularly when working at night);
- > Minor or serious injuries (including unconsciousness) resulting from their work (e.g. being injured while dealing with an emergency involving a horse in a stable);
- > Risk of an accident while driving on behalf of the business;
- > Assaults.

The absence of proper liaison or coordination of the work of lone workers can lead to situations in which the alarm is not raised when serious accidents or incidents have taken place.

Also, in the long-term, prolonged working of night shifts can aggravate existing medical problems or provoke new ones.

As an employer your policy should be, wherever possible, to avoid having employees working alone or late at night, especially in situations where either the operation or the equipment to be used (or both) are potentially hazardous.



If lone working is unavoidable, you must put controls in place to reduce the risks involved. To begin with, you must ensure that you select an appropriately experienced employee to carry out the work (not too young, in good general health etc).

You must make sure that back up or a point of contact is available for a lone worker. Then you must provide or ensure that there is a means of contact between the lone worker and yourself, their supervisor or their back up/point of contact (radio, mobile phone). A means should always be available to keep the lone worker's device fully charged and you should also make a list of emergency contact numbers available to your lone worker.

Then arrange a schedule with the lone worker of regular contact at regular intervals whilst they are engaged in lone working. If this schedule is interrupted, then the whereabouts of the lone worker must be investigated by the appropriate personnel.

If you have workers who regularly work night shifts for you, you must provide regular health checks for them.

### **If you are a lone worker**

- > Do not enter a stable until you have assessed the situation as low risk;
- > If you must enter a stable in an emergency, first contact your employer/supervisor and give them your location and describe the nature of the situation you are about to deal with;
- > Do not attempt hazardous manoeuvres such as dealing with a cast horse or enter hazardous situations such as that of an agitated mare and foal in a stable;
- > Take regular breaks when you are lone working;
- > If you encounter an intruder in the workplace, do not confront them: flee the area and contact your supervisor or security as soon as possible.

# Working at height

Work at heights may be carried out by your employees or by contractors you have employed in various parts of your workplace and it can occur regularly at any time of the working day.

However, working at height is extremely hazardous (between 2011 and 2020 there were 21 fatalities in the agricultural and forestry sector in the Republic of Ireland resulting from working at height, amounting to 10% of all fatalities in the sector, and in Northern Ireland 3 workers died in 2021 as a consequence of falls from height or being struck by falling objects). With workers working on potentially fragile structures such as roofs and hay barns and in hazardous environments with hazards such as leading edges and the risks of falls and people being struck by falling equipment, materials or workers, working at height remains one of the most risky tasks that we undertake in the industry.



## Employer's responsibilities

You must ensure that all working at height complies with the relevant regulations (see General Application Regulations 2007 to 2016) and you must risk assess any work at height before it is undertaken and implement suitable controls before it begins (e.g. install a suitable fall protection system where there is risk of injury from falling).

In particular, before work at height begins, ensure the following:

- > There is a safe means of access to the work location;
- > Solid edge protection is installed where it is required;
- > Where there is a risk of falling material: the area is fenced off, access is restricted or debris netting etc is installed;
- > All workers are wearing the correct PPE;
- > All equipment being used is safe and in good condition (e.g. ladders).

When the work begins, you must ensure that it is supervised and that the SOP is being followed correctly.

## Employee's responsibilities

When you are working at heights follow the relevant SOP/policy and wear all the PPE issued to you. In particular, make sure that tools and materials are raised and lowered safely for the purposes of working at height (prevent it falling on to work colleagues).

Never do any of the following:

- > Carry out work at height if you have not been trained and adjudged competent to do so;
- > Throw material or debris off a roof;
- > Carry loads while climbing a ladder (unless you have permission to do so);
- > Use equipment if you have reason to believe that it is defective.

# Pregnant workers

We should not equate pregnancy with ill health. Our purpose in dealing with the health and safety of a pregnant mother and her child is to safeguard both of them from work locations and practices that in other circumstances would not usually produce risks to health and safety.

## If you are pregnant

If you are pregnant, if you have given birth to a child in the last six months or if you are currently breastfeeding, you must inform your employer or supervisor of your situation as soon as reasonably possible, so that they can complete a pregnant employee risk assessment and put in place suitable controls to protect the health and safety of you and your baby.

It is also important to inform your employer of any relevant medical advice that you have been given about your pregnancy.

As soon as you are informed by one of your employees that they are pregnant, you should carry out a risk assessment of the hazards in the workplace for pregnant mothers and their child (if you are in the Republic of Ireland, taking into account the provisions of the Pregnancy Regulations 1994 and the General Application Regulations 2007 to 20016; in Northern Ireland, The Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993 and The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000).

You must take the following into consideration in your risk assessment:

- > **The need for rest facilities:** for example, your canteen could be used for this purpose;
- > **Manual handling:** as pregnant and post-natal mothers are at a much higher risk from manual handling, they should be removed from any tasks that involve such work;
- > **Chemical agents:** pregnant and post-natal mothers must be protected from exposure to hazardous substances, particularly those that are a special risk to pregnancy. If you can't prevent exposure, you must provide appropriate PPE;
- > **Riding:** any limits imposed will depend on the outcome of the relevant risk assessment and it may be necessary to seek medical advice;
- > **Livestock:** pregnant mothers must be kept away from pregnant ewes as they are carriers of Ovine Chlamydiosis.

If in your risk assessment, you identify risks to the health and safety of a pregnant mother and her child that cannot be eliminated, reduced or modified you must consider the possibility of granting your pregnant employee health and safety leave.

Once you have completed your initial risk assessment of the health and safety of a pregnant mother in your workplace you must regularly review your risk assessment and monitor the situation of your employee, keeping in mind the evolving risks to mother and child as a pregnancy develops.

When your employee returns to work after maternity leave, you should risk assess her work and if you identify a hazard to her arising from her condition, you should take one of the following actions:

**1. Remove the hazard.**

If this is not possible:

**2. Move your employee to alternative work.**

If this is not possible:

**3. Give your employee health and safety leave.**

## Young workers

If you are considering employing a young worker, you have a responsibility to carry out a risk assessment that includes the particular risks posed to young workers by the following:

- > The layout of the work area in which a young worker will work;
- > The nature of any hazard to which a young worker will be exposed (chemical, biological etc) and the likely duration and extent of any such exposure;
- > The type of task in which a young worker will be engaged and the work equipment that a young worker will use;
- > The failure to provide training, and in particular to provide training in health and safety.

You must also pay attention to the relative physical and psychological maturity of the young worker and their level of inexperience and of training (if any). These will be particularly relevant when you assess the risks posed to a young worker by plant or machinery and by their working with or near horses.



## Difference between a 'child' and a 'young worker'

For the purposes of the workplace A 'child' is any person under 16 years of age and a 'young worker' is anyone who has reached the age of 16 but is still under the age of 18.



If you conclude that risks to young workers are present in your workplace that cannot be eliminated or reduced, and in particular, if you decide that these are risks which a young worker cannot recognise or avoid, then you should not employ such a person.

If you do employ a young worker, you must put the following controls in place:

- > You must induct the young worker and give them safety training before they begin work;
- > You must ensure that young workers are properly trained and instructed in the tasks that they are to undertake and that they receive appropriate supervision while they are working;
- > You must not allow young workers to work with horses that you know are hazardous and they must be supervised while working with any horse until their supervisor deems them competent to do so;
- > You must instruct young workers in all the relevant emergency procedures and show them the location of first aid provisions and emergency contact numbers.
- > You must also ensure that any young worker takes breaks in accordance with the relevant regulations.

# Child safety

The agricultural and forestry sector is a very high risk industry for children. In the Republic of Ireland, between 1996 and 2005, 38 children and young people were killed in farm accidents. Unfortunately, the like period between 20011 and 2020 has seen only a marginal improvement with 21 of the 208 fatalities following accidents on farms involving individuals under the age of 18 (amounting to around 11%). Most of these fatalities were the result of impact or crushing injuries from tractors, tractor-drawn equipment or other agricultural machinery.

Other hazards to children in agricultural workplaces include:

- > **Drowning:** in slurry pits, drains and tanks;
- > **Animals:** bulls, horses and rams are particular hazards;
- > **Disease:** transmitted by animals, vermin, animal housing and feedstuffs;
- > **Harmful substances:** pesticides and weedkillers, veterinary medicines.

If children are present in your workplace, you need to be particularly vigilant around busy periods of the year when hazardous machinery may be at work or complex and potentially hazardous operations are being undertaken.

## Do's and don'ts of child safety in the workplace

### Do:

- > Talk to children about safety on the farm, point out danger signs to them and explain what they mean;
- > Risk assess for hazards and risks to children;
- > Provide safe play areas for young children and supervise children whenever they are in the workplace;
- > Keep children away from work areas and particularly from hazardous machinery;
- > Keep children a safe distance from horses and any other livestock you have;
- > Cover and protect water hazards.

### Don't:

- > Allow children to play unsupervised in the workplace;
- > Allow children on tractors unless they are suitably fitted with safety features;
- > Allow children near potentially hazardous animals;
- > Allow children to play in or near water hazards;
- > Allow children to handle harmful substances.



The bottom line is that all adults in our industry, whether employers or employees, have a responsibility to secure the safety and health of children and young people when they are in our workplaces.

## Industry assistance programme (IAP)

Everyone experiences the ups and downs of life, while as employers and colleagues we may become aware that a co-worker is struggling. To help workers in the industry in this situation, HRI has engaged the services of Health Assured to provide an industry assistance programme (IAP).

If you see someone at work struggling to cope, don't hesitate, encourage them to pick up the phone or contact the IAP: it's free, it's confidential and it's there to help anyone in the industry who needs it.

If you're an employer, please advertise this service prominently in your workplace. Go to [www.equip.ie/industry-assistance-programme/industry-assistance-programme](http://www.equip.ie/industry-assistance-programme/industry-assistance-programme) to get the dedicated phone, number and website log-on and App details.

### Worried about a problem?

### Pick up the phone and talk to the IAP 1800 313 661

Whatever your personal issue – money, relationships, bereavement – HRI is here to help you with its industry assistance programme, provided by Health Assured.

This service is free, it is confidential and it is for you and every worker in our industry. So, whatever your problem, don't bottle it up: pick up the phone and talk to a sympathetic professional who can set you on the right path. No problem is too big or too small, and we can provide you with face to face counselling if you really need it.





# Induction and Training

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By providing your employees with training in and information about health and safety, you enable them to acquire a competency in health and safety practice that will reduce the risk while they are at work of their being injured or of their damaging their health and you will embed a positive health and safety culture in your workplace.

In both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, employers have a legal obligation to train all of their employees so that they can carry out their work in a reasonably safe manner (SHWW and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000 and the Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978). The relevant legislation also strongly emphasises the need to instruct, inform and train employees in health and safety practice in the workplace.

Employers must provide three distinct types of training:

**1. New employee training:** this will be a minimum standard of health and safety training that should include the following:

- > Health and safety in the specific workplace;
- > Awareness of the business' safety statement and safety policy;
- > Training in the application of the principles of manual handling to manual handling tasks in the specific workplace.

(A record should be kept of each employee's induction training.)

**2. Task specific training:** this will cover:

- > Any specific task that a new employee will undertake (e.g. training in basic horse handling skills for a new employee who will be working with horses), whether that be the risks of working with certain types of machinery or the risks associated with working in certain areas of the workplace;
- > Any new task that an employee is asked to undertake;
- > Training in the use of any new equipment or machinery that is introduced into the workplace or training when existing equipment is significantly modified;
- > Training in the risks and controls for any new hazard identified in the workplace or for any new system of work that is associated with a specific task.

**3. Continuing training:** this will be the regular and ongoing training for all employees such as annual refresher training on the safety statement.

# New employee training

Employers have a particular obligation to provide health and safety training for their new employees ('induction training'). You should provide this no matter what level of experience a new employee has in the horse breeding and horse racing industry. Induction training is something that should begin on the very first day that a new employee begins work in your workplace.

Any new worker that you employ must receive health and safety training from you which will include as a minimum the following topics:

- > The lines of authority for health and safety in your workplace;
- > An explanation of the workplace safety statement and safety policy (either give a new employee a copy of this or tell them where they can find it);
- > The hazards and risks identified in your workplace (especially those associated with tasks that your new employee will undertake);
- > The control measures which you have put in place to minimise the risk of exposure to these hazards (especially PPE);
- > Your policies for the various procedures in your workplace;
- > An explanation of the employee's duties and responsibilities;
- > The specific hazards of manual handling in your workplace and the principles of correct manual handling for minimising the risks associated with these tasks;
- > Your procedures for reporting accidents and incidents and absence due to sickness;
- > The location of the workplace first-aid equipment and emergency contact list, and the identity of the workplace first aider/s;
- > Your emergency procedures, including your fire procedure and the location and use of your firefighting equipment.

## PPE training

As part of induction training, employers must inform new employees about any hazards in the workplace that require the wearing of PPE. Employers must provide this PPE and train the employee in how and when it is to be used.

The nature and extent of the health and safety training you give a new employee will depend in part on the amount of experience and the level of competence they may already have in the industry. But you should never take this for granted: an assessment of your new employee's level of knowledge, experience and competence (e.g. riding ability) should always be an important part of a new employee's induction training.

# Sample new employee training record

Below is a sample of a form to use to record induction training for each new employee that you take on.

New employee health and safety induction record			TICK✓
ALL new employees to be briefed on the topics listed and sign off below			
Safety statement and health and safety policy (where it can be viewed).			
Employer and employee health and safety responsibilities in accordance with (enter title of relevant legislation/regulations).			
Main workplace hazards (risk assessments) and associated controls.			
PPE policy (including mandatory PPE (e.g. skull caps/safety vests)).			
General rules for safe work (policies), including principles of manual handling and safe use of machinery/equipment.			
Location of prohibited areas (chemical storage etc) and identification of machinery with restricted use and specialist operations (e.g. covering).			
Accident and incident reporting procedures.			
Procedure for communicating/reporting health and safety concerns (e.g. faulty equipment).			
Training requirements.			
Disciplinary process, policy on use of phones and social media and policy on bullying and harassment.			
Prohibition of drugs and alcohol at work (prescribed medication procedure).			
First aid, fire and emergency procedures.			
Welfare arrangements.			
Next of kin	Name:	Relationship with Person:	Contact Number:
Medical assessment (yes/no)	Have you any medical condition that may affect your ability to carry out the work you have been employed to do?		
	Are you taking any medication that may affect your ability to drive machinery or undertake certain tasks?		
	Have you any phobias or are you allergic to anything that may affect your well-being?		
	Have you any recent injuries or any ongoing medical problems (e.g. back pain, dizziness etc.)		
I confirm that I have received and have understood (enter name of business) health and safety induction and have been shown/given a copy of the safety statement and health and safety policy			
Name (print):		Signature:	Contact number:
Induction Instructor Signature:		Work Location and Activity:	Date:



## Inducting second language english speakers

Because many of the new workers in our workplaces do not speak English as a first language, there is an obligation on employers to provide their instruction and training in a language that they can understand. We also must keep in mind that such workers may need greater instruction, training and supervision.

## Inducting young workers

If you are going to employ a young worker (over the age of 16 but under the age of 18), you must keep in mind the additional regulations that apply to young workers and their special training needs.

Thus, when you are training a young worker, you should keep in mind their relative immaturity and inexperience and consequently the likelihood that they will not have the same level of awareness of hazards and risks as you can expect from an older and more experienced worker.

When inducting a young worker, you must ask them if they have received any training previously, and if they have, you must ascertain the extent of it. You should also assess a young worker's physical strength and explain the results to them of any risk assessment you have done that excludes young workers from certain tasks. Make a particular point of instructing them about any biological, chemical or physical hazards that are found in your workplace.





# Emergency Planning and Procedures

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The purpose of all our planning, of our training programmes, of our policies and SOPs and of the culture of health and safety that we create in our workplaces is precisely to avoid the occurrence of accidents, incidents and emergencies. Nevertheless, in spite of our best efforts and the efforts of our employees and co-workers, emergencies can happen. So, we need to plan for the worst and have procedures in place to deal with emergencies if they arise.

## How to avoid emergencies: basic safety practice

If you always follow a handful of common-sense rules for health and safety, you will help your workplace avoid accidents and emergencies. Always keep these simple questions in mind:

- > Am I trained to do this task safely?
- > Am I fit to do this task?
- > Is this environment safe to work in (any unauthorised people present etc)?
- > What SOP should I be following here?

And always:

- > Take notice of safety signs;
- > Don't smoke near flammable materials;
- > Stop work if you feel there is a health and safety problem;
- > Report your safety concerns and accidents or near misses to your employer or supervisor.

## Emergency planning

It is best practice to have an emergency response plan for your workplace and this should form a core part of induction training for your new employees and of refresher courses as well. This plan should include the following:

- > The location of firefighting and first-aid equipment;
- > The location of emergency assembly point/s;
- > The name and contact details of first aider/s;
- > The location of AED/s;
- > Emergency numbers and contact details;
- > Details of specific plans and procedures in place to deal with emergencies.

Make sure that your employees follow these basic guidelines in an emergency situation:

- > Raise the alarm immediately: ring 999 or 112;
- > Act responsibly, do not put themselves or others at risk and do not offer assistance unless it is safe to do so;
- > The most senior employee present takes responsibility for ensuring the evacuation of everyone (including animals if present).

## When calling emergency services

Tell the operator:

1. Who you are.
2. What the problem is.
3. What service you require and the location where it is needed (give your Eircode).

Then make sure someone is present to meet the emergency services when they arrive.

# Dealing with specific emergencies

## Fire

The risk of fire is a very significant hazard in workplaces in our industry as they are complex environments in which we have to store hazardous machinery and equipment, flammable substances and large amounts of hay and straw. And if a fire does occur, we must undertake complex procedures to evacuate those under threat including large and potentially hazardous animals who may be extremely agitated.

To prepare for the eventuality of a fire, risk assess your workplace, taking particular note of its size and layout, its work activities and equipment, the machinery and substances it contains and the number and types of people likely to be present in it (workers, visitors etc).



Make sure firefighting equipment is easily accessible and properly labelled and that emergency routes and exits are clearly signed, are unobstructed, are well lit and will lead people to safety. Post fire instruction notices in places where they are obvious and can easily be seen.

Make sure that all your employees are trained to execute the following procedure in the event of a fire (fire drills should be held at least once a year and ideally every six months):

1. If it hasn't been done already, activate the fire alarm and notify the emergency services.
2. Immediately evacuate the workplace (yard, barn etc) – turning off any machinery and closing doors behind you – and don't delay for any reason (e.g. to collect personal belongings).
3. Report to the nearest assembly point and don't leave it until directed to do so.

Employees should follow any instructions they are given and not take risks (so they shouldn't tackle a fire with an extinguisher unless they are trained to use it and it is safe to do so). Under no circumstances should they re-enter a blazing building.

## Accidents and incidents requiring first aid

As employers, we have an obligation to provide first aid equipment and trained first aiders. As part of their training, other employees should be made aware where first aid equipment can be found and who are the first aiders and how they can be contacted.

First aiders will be the first point of contact in the event of an injury or a sudden illness; if it is appropriate and safe to do so, they will administer first aid treatment or, if it is necessary, arrange for someone to be taken to hospital or contact the emergency services.

If anyone (whether an employee or a visitor to the workplace) is involved in an accident, they must immediately report the matter and fill out an accident form. Employers in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland have a legal duty to report workplace accidents that result in the victim being unable to return to their normal duties at work within three days of the accident (not including the day of the accident or a weekend).



# Pandemic Response Plans

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COVID-19 is a new coronavirus infection in humans first identified in December 2019. It is a viral illness that can cause many different types of symptom, but the principal symptoms recognised by health experts are fever, cough, loss of sense of taste/smell and respiratory difficulties. Most people infected with the virus will experience no or only very mild symptoms but in a significant number of cases more serious symptoms are experienced, and in a small percentage of cases COVID-19 can be a life threatening illness (especially vulnerable are the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions).

## Protocols for any future pandemic

Should there be any future outbreak of a pandemic disease of the type and scale of COVID-19, you will be able to find the most up to date protocols for dealing with it on the equip website: [www.equip.ie/health-safety-guide/](http://www.equip.ie/health-safety-guide/)

In line with provisional classifications made in other EU countries, Ireland categorises COVID-19 as a risk group 3 biological agent. For workplaces such as those in the horse breeding and horse racing industry where there is no occupational exposure health risk to COVID-19, employers are required to take into account the most up to date official public health advice and guidance from the Department of Health and the Health Protection Surveillance Centre on how to mitigate the health risks posed by COVID-19.

# COVID-19 risk assessment

Below you will find a sample risk assessment for COVID-19 in your workplace. Using this in conjunction with the latest advice from medical authorities can be a very useful tool for creating a pandemic response plan for your workplace.


COVID-19 risk assessment		
Task	Everyday work activities during a COVID 19 pandemic (sub-contractors to be assisted in implementing protocols when they are in the workplace).	Risk Rating
Hazards	Risk of staff contracting Covid 19 and passing it to other persons at work.	High
	Potential for groups of workers to be put at risk by the spread of the virus in a workplace.	High
	Close contact working.	High
	Sub-contractors or third parties spreading COVID 19 while in the workplace.	High
Possible Control Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Employees working from home;</li> <li>&gt; Meetings online rather than face to face;</li> <li>&gt; Prohibiting visitors and non-essential contractors from the workplace;</li> <li>&gt; Creating employee work groups that do not mix;</li> <li>&gt; Employing an occupational health nurse;</li> <li>&gt; Purchasing thermal temperature scanners;</li> <li>&gt; Appointing a Covid 19 representative (complying with government guidelines);</li> <li>&gt; Ensuring anyone with symptoms doesn't attend work for at least 14 days. Employees returning to work must have had consulted their GP and confirm that they are symptom free;</li> <li>&gt; Members of at-risk groups discuss their work situation with their employer/supervisor;</li> <li>&gt; Regulating travel for work purposes in accordance with national advice;</li> <li>&gt; Promoting social distancing, hand hygiene and cough etiquette in accordance with guidelines;</li> <li>&gt; Continuous cleaning of regularly touched surfaces;</li> <li>&gt; Avoiding close contact: this to be permitted only when absolutely necessary and only after:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Risk assessment of the task;</li> <li>&gt; Close contact workers confirm immediately before work that: they are COVID-19 free; no immediate contact of theirs is showing COVID-19 symptoms; and they have not been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 within the past 14 days;</li> <li>&gt; Work area is as ventilated as possible;</li> <li>&gt; Specific hygiene steps are taken before work commences and appropriate PPE is provided, is worn correctly and is safely removed and disposed of;</li> <li>&gt; Appropriate washing and hygiene precautions are undertaken immediately after work is completed;</li> <li>&gt; Then onwards, contact tracing records are kept for each individual.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

# Incident and Accident Reporting

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All accidents, incidents and near misses in the workplace should be reported to your employer or supervisor.

As an employer, you should keep a record of all such incidents and if the circumstances are serious enough you should make a full investigation of the incident (and you should always report such incidents to your insurance company immediately). In the Republic of Ireland, as an employer, you are obliged to report any accident in your workplace that results in one of your employees missing more than three consecutive days at work (not including the day of the accident and weekends) to the HSA (see The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2016 for the full set of your responsibilities for reporting accidents and hazardous occurrences in the workplace).

In Northern Ireland, the law requires the same obligations of the employer under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997 ('RIDDOR').

It is best practice to keep a formal record of all incidents in the workplace. Below is an example of a very useful format for laying out the details of an incident or accident report in your workplace.

Description of Incident/Accident	<input type="checkbox"/> Accidental Injury	<input type="checkbox"/> Ill Health	<input type="checkbox"/> Near Miss (Potential for Serious Consequences)	<input type="checkbox"/> Theft
	<input type="checkbox"/> Violent Incident	<input type="checkbox"/> Fire	<input type="checkbox"/> Accidental Property Loss or Damage	<input type="checkbox"/> Vandalism
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Incident <input type="text"/>			
Personal Details	Name of Injured Person: <input type="text"/>			
	Telephone Number: <input type="text"/>		E-mail Address: <input type="text"/>	
	Address: <input type="text"/>			
	Age: <input type="text"/>		Nationality: <input type="text"/>	
			Occupation: <input type="text"/>	
	Status: <input type="checkbox"/> Employee <input type="checkbox"/> Visitor <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="text"/>			
	Employed Since: <input type="text"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Permanent <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary <input type="checkbox"/> Full Time <input type="checkbox"/> Part Time			
	Has Employee Returned to Work? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
	No. of Days Lost: <input type="text"/>		Date: <input type="text"/>	
Cause of Injury/Ill Health	Accident/Incident Date: <input type="text"/>		Time: <input type="text"/> AM/PM	
	Location: <input type="text"/>			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Working with horses (kick, knock or fall etc)		<input type="checkbox"/> Exposure to fire/explosion	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Slip/trip/fall from same level/fall from height <input type="text"/> meters		<input type="checkbox"/> Contact with electricity	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical assault by another person		<input type="checkbox"/> Equipment/defective machinery	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Struck against something (e.g. fixtures, fittings)		<input type="checkbox"/> Cut from sharp object	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Struck by moving (including flying or falling) object		<input type="checkbox"/> Struck by a moving vehicle/machine	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Exposure to or contact with a biological agent		<input type="checkbox"/> Manual handling	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Exposure to or contact with a harmful substance		<input type="checkbox"/> Road traffic accident	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Contact with hot or very cold surface or object		<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify and give full details below)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Contact with moving machinery/equipment		<input type="text"/>		
Anticipated duration of absence from work (if known): <input type="text"/>				
Work being done at time: <input type="text"/>		Is this work part of normal duties? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Give a detailed description of the incident/accident: use additional page if necessary: <input type="text"/>				

## Accident, Incident and Near Miss Report Form

## Further Accident Details

Name and address of any witnesses to the accident/incident

☐ Yes      ☐ No


☐ Yes      ☐ No

☐ Yes☐ No

# Health and Safety Record Keeping

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As an employer it is very important for you to keep your health and safety records up to date. First of all, keeping good records makes it easy to retrieve crucial health and safety information when you need it. It is also a way of ensuring consistency and continuity as information can be passed on from one person to another. Then if you need to, you can easily demonstrate compliance with your legal health and safety duties. An accurate record of the health and safety performance in your workplace will allow you to monitor the level of that performance and to quickly identify gaps or omissions in your compliance with your legal duties.

Aside from all these reasons for careful record keeping, there is the simple fact that as an employer you have a legal obligation to keep certain types of health and safety records available for inspection.

Among your health and safety records, you should keep copies of the following:

- > Your safety statement (with review dates prominently displayed);
- > Your risk assessments;
- > Your employee training records (names, dates, training content, copy of certificates, etc);
- > Your internal and external audits/reports (with actions, comments and persons designated to follow-up);
- > Your accident/incident and investigation forms (in conformity with GDPR);
- > Minutes of your safety meetings (including attendance list, actions and persons designated to carry them out);
- > Your policies (including any SOPs);
- > Your emergency evacuation plan;
- > Chemical and medications information (particularly SDS);
- > Fire drill records.



# Your Health and Safety Roadmap





So, now that you've read our guide, are you wondering: what on earth do I do next? Well, you can put your concerns to rest! In this section, we're going to give you a quick and easy thumbnail guide. This is your roadmap to a health and safety plan for your business that will protect your people and your business and will fulfil your legal obligations.

Your first step is a mental one: accept the challenge of creating a health and safety plan for your business; you can't just ease your way into the task, but if you break it down in the way that is suggested below you can manage it.

## Getting started

Your starting point is your risk assessments; if you're in the Republic of Ireland, have a look at the online assessment tool (**BeSMART.ie** (see 'Your Health and Safety Toolkit' below)); if you're in Northern Ireland, follow the link in Your Health and Safety Toolkit below, and decide:

- > What you need to assess?
- > Who will do the assessment?
- > When must it be done by?

As soon as you have your first risk assessment completed, start your system of record keeping for everything to do with health and safety in your workplace (including training records) and get into the habit of keeping a record of everything you do about health and safety there (and encourage your colleagues to do the same).

Obviously, the important point about a risk assessment is its outcomes – the controls you may decide you need to eliminate or reduce the risks posed by a hazard. One of your most important controls will be your policies, often in the form of SOPs. Take the time to research and discuss the safest operating procedures for accomplishing the standard tasks in your workplace and then write them down and add them to your records.



## First milestone

Once you have accumulated your set of risk assessments and policies, you can complete your first important legal task, the creation of your businesses' safety statement, your manifesto of what your business stands for when it comes to health and safety.

When you've completed your safety statement, display it prominently in your workplace where all your colleagues can see it and put another copy away in your records (if you're based in Northern Ireland, make sure you're also displaying the required health and safety poster).

Now's the time to create your timetable for reviewing your risk assessments, policies, SOPs and safety statement. Get your colleagues used to the idea that as your business doesn't stand still, neither does your health and safety plan: it evolves as your business evolves and changes as your business changes.

## Second milestone

By now, then, you will have your risk assessments, policies, SOPs and safety statement, supported by your system of recording all of these, and by the systematic manner in which you ensure that they keep pace with your business by regular reviewing and updating. Now you're ready to move on to the next stage, training your colleagues so that risk assessing and following your business' policies, SOPs become second nature to them. The beauty of the system you have created is that it is the same risk assessments, policies, SOPs and safety statement that will be your training tools.

Obviously, your priority is to train those who are new to the business, but because your business does not stand still, neither can your health and safety practices, and so there will be a constant need to refresh and renew your colleagues' training.





## Third milestone

By now, you will have created a health and safety system for yourself, and a culture in your business, that will not only fulfil your legal obligations (and thus remove all those nagging fears about health and safety in your business), but also give everyone in the business the best opportunity to avoid the hazards to their health and safety that are always a risk in any work environment.

But even the best run business can be ambushed by events, so now, though you're hoping for the best you must prepare for the worst. You must prepare your plans for dealing with emergencies in your workplace and you must make sure that everyone knows that every incident in the workplace (even the near misses) must be reported and recorded.

## Destination

If you have passed each of the milestones mentioned above, then you are already well on the way to your destination: yours is a business that demonstrates its commitment to the health and safety of anyone associated with it and to fulfilling its legal and moral obligations. You have proved that you realise your business objectives in ways that demonstrate true efficiency, not just the illusion of it.

Of course, this destination is not really a destination at all, because your business never stands still: it is really a state of being in which you do what is reasonably practicable in your circumstances to ensure health and safety in your workplace. You will never be complacent, but now that your health and safety plan has been implemented, it will have become what we predicted in the Introduction to this guide, the means of negating all the fears and doubts expressed in HRI's survey of the industry, and a part of the fabric of your everyday workplace life, so seamless as to be barely noticeable, yet bringing about an unprecedented improvement in the quality of people's working lives and in the flourishing of your business.





## Your health and safety toolkit

There are lots of really useful and helpful materials and aids available online to help you start your health and safety plan for your business.

At [www.equip.ie/health-safety-guide/](http://www.equip.ie/health-safety-guide/) you can find downloadable versions of templates for risk assessments, SOPs, accident report forms and so on.

If you're in the Republic of Ireland, why not try one of the HSA's online small business courses? (They cover employer duties, employee duties and business start-up.) <https://hsalearning.ie/mod/page/view.php?id145>

You can also access the HSA's invaluable BeSMART tool on this page, which you can use to do your risk assessments and then to construct your safety statement. The link below leads to a handy short video introduction to safety statements.

[www.hsa.ie/eng/supports\\_for\\_business/Getting\\_Started/Safety\\_Statements\\_Made\\_Simple/](http://www.hsa.ie/eng/supports_for_business/Getting_Started/Safety_Statements_Made_Simple/)

To be assured of fulfilling your duties in relation to accidents and emergencies, sign up now to the HSA's online reporting system.

<https://webapps.hsa.ie/Account/Login?ReturnUrl%2f>

If you're in Northern Ireland, why not visit the HSENI at [www.hseni.gov.uk/articles/getting-started](http://www.hseni.gov.uk/articles/getting-started)

And have a look at the various resources and supports that the Executive can offer.









Horse Racing Ireland  
Ballymany, The Curragh  
County Kildare  
R56 XE37  
Ireland

E: [equip@hri.ie](mailto:equip@hri.ie)  
P: +353 (0) 45 455 455  
W: [www.equip.ie](http://www.equip.ie)