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Customer / Visitor Safety

INTRODUCTION

All businesses come into contact with members of the public at some point in their business operation. They may be customers, passers-by, neighbours, delivery drivers, or even trespassers, to name a few.

Every interaction, whether at the business premises or away (for example collection / deliveries), carries a risk of damaging third party property or causing personal injury.

While the law in relation to third parties is not as highly regulated as that for employees, a basic duty of care still exists, (and some businesses do have specific requirements) and by adopting a similar, common sense approach, many of the risks can be minimised.

WHO MIGHT BE AFFECTED AND HOW CAN THEY BE PROTECTED?

This guide will look at some typical areas of concern for many businesses and suggest some practical steps that can be adopted.



WHO

- **Visitors to the premises** – e.g. Customers; clients; delivery drivers; postmen/women; children; passers-by; trespassers; contractors; cleaners; salespeople etc.
- **Customers** - if you are working away at their premises.
- **Trespassers** - while uninvited and unwanted, the law does require steps to be taken to protect this type of visitor.



PREMISES

- Consider the state of repair to the building: look carefully at any areas that could present a hazard, e.g. loose roof tiles; fragile roofs; Are the stairs safe? Is there a handrail? Is the carpet adequately secured?
- Slips and trips are a frequent source of claim and can easily be avoided. Look at the access to / from the building: ensure the footpaths and car parks are in a good state of repair: a pothole could cause an injury and/or damage a vehicle.
- Ensure any steps into the building are safe and if necessary, consider painting them to highlight the potential danger; draw attention to any low ceilings; if mats have been placed inside the door, ensure they are non-slip and make sure there is a system in place to check that they remain safe.
- Hot water should be at a reasonable temperature to avoid scalding (consider the customer toilets or bathrooms in an hotel etc).
- Consider the nature of the business and layout of the premises. Ensure that it is not possible for members of the public to wander inadvertently into any dangerous areas.
- Consider adopting a visitor book so that you can log all visitors in and out.
- If you are moving stock, for example with fork lift trucks, ensure that all FLT drivers are trained and that adequate precautions are in place to ensure that visitors can move around safely.
- Ensure that your premises are suitably organised to allow pedestrians and vehicles to circulate in a safe manner. Consider marking out pedestrian walkways and preferably barrier these off where practical; provide where possible pedestrian doors to separate pedestrians from vehicles; provide well-marked vehicle traffic routes with practical and effective speed limits.

HOUSEKEEPING

- Adopt a policy for cleaning, ideally when there are no members of the public present.
- Even fairly innocuous environments can pose hidden dangers, e.g. trailing cables or stacks of boxes in an office.
- Ensure that all fire exits are freely accessible, unlocked and clearly marked.



WORK AWAY AT CUSTOMER PREMISES

For work away from the business premises, there are a number of considerations, depending on the nature of the work being undertaken.

- Collection / delivery services – ranging from small vehicles to extra long vehicles carrying items of plant, there is a risk of the delivery driver damaging a third party's property or injuring someone. The following should be considered good practice:
- Ensure all personnel are suitably trained in health and safety and can identify risks and act accordingly;
- Do not encourage delivery / collection drivers to enlist the help of a third party to move goods – if items are heavy, provide a mate;
- If delivering to an open cellar, ensure that someone stands guard to prevent anyone falling through the hatch.
- It is possible that anyone working away from the normal business premises could cause damage or injury to a third party. As there is no direct control of an employee working away, it is essential to provide clear training to all employees. Of course, such training will vary according to the nature of the business and the work away.

TRESPASSERS

- In general, if you have reviewed your public areas and made sure your invited guests are safe, this should be enough, however, there may be some situations where you will need to go further. For example, it may be possible for persons to climb up onto your roof so you will need to do what you can to prevent access. The roof maybe of a fragile nature and signs warning of this should be erected in prominent positions.
- When carrying out any assessment of the public areas, therefore, do keep in mind the potential for trespassers to enter the premises and any hazards they might encounter whilst there, both inside and out.

The examples above are a general guide to preventing injury or damage to third parties and / or their property. The list is not exhaustive and much will depend upon the nature of the business but it is hoped that these pointers will provide a helpful starting point when assessing the potential risks that may affect your business.