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**Governance Code for Sport**

**Health and Safety Statement**

Guidance Notes, including first aid register, incident reporting and safety risk assessment

Disclaimer

Sport Ireland is making available a range of resources including guidance notes, policy documents and templates for selected areas aligned to the Governance Code for Sport which will support sport organisations, boards, management and staff in the development of relevant governance processes and procedures particular to their own organisation.

For the avoidance of doubt, the final decision on the nature, type, extent and format of approved governance policies, procedures and processes for each organisation is a matter for the board / highest governing structure of the organisation and the resources and material provided may assist the approval process.

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**Why an organisation needs a health and safety statement?**

A healthy workforce is important, and especially to organisations with small teams. Absenteeism can cause great difficulties to organisations and it is worth considering the impact that workplace welfare (health and safety) may have on absenteeism. There are over 200 separate Acts and Statutory instruments which regulate how organisations manage health & safety. All employers are legally obliged to have a Health & Safety Statement in place, which includes a detailed risk assessment. Type B and Type C organisations are legally obliged therefore to have a Health & Safety Statement. The recent Covid pandemic has underlined the requirement for organisations to think in greater depth about the health and safety of those in the organisation.

Having a health and safety statement speaks especially to principle 2 of the Code, ‘Exercising Control Over Our Organisation’. Sub-principle 1 states that the organisation should: Identify and comply with all relevant legal and regulatory requirements’ – the health and safety statement is a legal requirement. Furthermore, principle 1, ‘Leading Our Organisation’ has a sub-principle of ‘..supporting…staff’ which is also achieved through having a health and safety statement in place.

There are a number of reasons why a health and safety statement is important:

* Legal reasons: The law requires employers to:
	+ Identify hazards
	+ Carry our risk assessments
	+ Prepare a written safety statement
* Financial reasons: There are many visible consequences and costs associated with workplace accidents, as well as hidden costs. There are obvious costs such as compensation, legal fees, insurance and medical costs, while there are many other costs including lost production, administrative costs associated with accident investigation, replacement of staff costs and sick pay schemes. Having a good plan in place can identify in advance and prevent these risks.
* Moral and ethical reasons: Employers are ethically bound to do all they can to ensure that their employees do not suffer illness, a serious accident or death.
* Reputational reasons: Should a preventable workplace accident happen and an organisation be found not to have a health and safety statement in place.

Whose responsibility is it to develop a health and safety statement?

All employers, those who control workplaces to any extent or provide workplaces for use by others, are required to prepare risk assessments and a safety statement. Consultation should take place with employees and others, as necessary, when preparing the statement to ensure that they understand and take ownership of the safety and health measures proposed. There is a duty on everyone at work to cooperate effectively in developing and promoting safety and health.

It is the responsibility of the Board to ensure that all the principles of the Code are being upheld and delivered, including compliance with legislation. As such it is the responsibility of the Board to ensure a health and safety statement exists. The executive lead / Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is tasked with ensuring that the principles of the Code are being implemented in the organisation and thus will be responsible for ensuring the health and safety statement is in place.

What is a risk assessment?

Risk assessment is the process of identifying the hazards and ranking the risk of their causing harm or injury in terms of its magnitude and deciding whether the risk is acceptable or whether more precautions need to be taken to prevent harm.

Section 19 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 requires that employers and those who control workplaces to any extent must:

* identify the hazards in the workplaces under their control
* assess the risks presented by these hazards
* (in this context a hazard is something with the potential to cause harm, for example, chemical substances, machinery or methods of work)

Measuring the risk depends on:

* the likelihood of that harm occurring in the workplace
* the potential severity of that harm (the degree of injury or ill health following an accident)
* the number of people who might be exposed to the hazard

Employers must write down these workplace risks and what to do about them. This is known as a risk assessment. Assessing risk means employers must examine carefully what, in the workplace, could cause harm to their employees, other employees and other people, including customers, visitors and members of the public. This allows the employer to assess whether they have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm.

Employers are required to implement any improvements considered necessary by the risk assessment. The aim is to make sure that no-one gets hurt or becomes ill. It is important to remember that, in identifying hazards and assessing risks, employers should only consider those which are generated by work activities. The results of any risk assessments should be written into the safety statement.

What is a health and safety statement?

The Health and Safety Statement is a company document, which all organisations are required by law to have. It sets out their safety policy, which must be based on an identification of the hazards and an assessment of the risks. It must detail the control measures put in place to eliminate the risk and if that is not possible reduce it to the lowest practical level possible. The health and safety statement represents a commitment to the safety and health of staff members as well as any visitors to the workplace. Writing down the health and safety statement, as well as putting in place the arrangements needed to implement and monitor it, shows to staff, and anyone else, that hazards have been identified and risks assessed, eliminated or controlled.

A health and safety statement should include:

* a statement as to how the employer will ensure:
	+ the safety and health of employees while at work
	+ the safety and health of other people who might be at the workplace, including customers, visitors and members of the public
* the resources necessary to maintain and review safety and health laws and standards
* reference to all work activities, including:
	+ the selection of competent people, equipment and materials
	+ the way work is done
	+ how goods and services are designed and provided

What is a First Aid Register?

A First Aid Register is used to record minor or non-work-related incidents that require first aid treatment at the workplace. For example, providing a fresh Band-Aid for a cut. (Generally, the Health and Safety Statement will recommend that more serious workplace incidents are recorded on an **Incident/Accident Report Form.)**  A first aid register will often be fixed inside the door/lid of a first aid kit, which all businesses should have on site. A first aid register will record detail such as:

* Name of injured person
* Date
* Time
* Nature of injury e.g., laceration
* Body part treated
* Treatment required
* Person helping the injured person

By having first aid equipment (and potentially a trained first aider in the workplace), minor accidents can be treated immediately. Employers must comply with the Occupational First Aid Regulations, which are part of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Regulations 2007. Those regulations state that a workplace with up to 99 employees should have someone on-site with a first-aid qualification, if the safety statement risk assessment shows it necessary. In other cases a first aid register and first aid kit may be sufficient.

What is Incident/Accident reporting?

An incident report is a form to document all workplace illnesses, injuries, near misses and accidents. An incident report should be completed at the time an incident occurs no matter how minor an injury is. Effective procedures following workplace incidents are key in cultivating a culture of safety within the organisation. Every incident should be the impetus for a risk management review, with the end goal to be avoiding a similar event at any stage in the future. The following elements should be included in an incident report:

* Specific details and description - the more specific the incident report, the more use it will be when making corrective decisions
* Facts only and an objective tone - opinions can cloud accuracy and distract from the details.
* Witness statements – to support the accuracy of the report
* Any photographs or other supplementary information
* Managerial/supervisor sign-off

The health and safety statement should outline how the incident report is treated after completion – e.g. then reviewed by CEO and Board and future mitigating actions implemented, etc.

How should the health and safety statement be implemented?

Employers should ensure that the relevant contents of the safety statement are brought to the attention of employees and others affected at least annually, and whenever it is revised. Employers have an ongoing responsibility to ensure that all relevant persons are aware of the safety statement and understand its terms. Employers could undertake a combination of written and verbal communication, including:

* Distributing the safety statement, specific risk assessments or relevant sections of it to all employees when first prepared and whenever significant changes are made
* Making the safety statement and specific risk assessments available electronically on internal shared folders
* Inclusion of the relevant parts of the safety statement and specific risk assessments in the employee handbooks or on induction
* Through ongoing training

Further links and resources

[Health & Safety Authority Website](https://www.hsa.ie/eng/)