



West Lothian  
Council

# **Council-wide Occupational Health and Safety Policy**



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## COUNCIL-WIDE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

### 1. POLICY STATEMENT

**West Lothian Council has a responsibility to secure the health, safety and welfare of anyone who may be affected by what it does.**

- West Lothian Council through its Elected Members, Chief Executive and Directors and Heads of Services accepts its responsibility as an employer for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all its employees whilst at work, and any other person who may be affected by its acts or omissions.
- The council recognises that to meet its aims and values a high standard of health and safety performance is essential.

#### 1.1 OBJECTIVES

**The council's objective is to develop a positive health and safety culture.**

The council's objectives in fulfilment of this policy are:

- To develop a positive health and safety culture in all activities that will secure the commitment and participation of all employees and Elected Members in the control of risks.
- To adopt a planned and systematic approach to health and safety that identifies and assesses the risks created by its activities with the aim of eliminating or controlling the risk.
- To develop, maintain and operate within standards that recognise that legal requirements are the minimum to be achieved.
- To monitor and review health and safety performance on a regular basis to ensure standards are maintained.
- To provide adequate resources to implement this Policy.
- To ensure mechanisms are established and are used for joint consultation with trade union health and safety representatives and/or representatives of employees safety. The council will provide them with assistance and facilities to enable them to carry out their functions.
- To ensure all employees are properly informed of their responsibilities for health and safety and discharge them effectively. Employees are encouraged to contribute and participate in the prevention of accidents and the promotion of good health.
- To plan for health and safety, including the setting of a health and safety plan with realistic short and long-term objectives, deciding priorities and establishing adequate performance standards.

## 1.2 INVOLVEMENT OF EMPLOYEES AND ELECTED MEMBERS

The council requires all employees, trainees and Elected Members to take reasonable care of themselves and any other persons who may be affected by their acts or omissions and to co-operate with the council in the achievement of the above objectives.

## 1.3 NON EMPLOYEES

The council recognises its obligation to take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of persons not in their employment e.g. contractors, visitors and members of the public, who could be affected by its acts or omissions.

## 2. ORGANISATION

### 2.1 THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy.**

- The organisational structure for the implementation of the Occupational Health and Safety Policy is detailed below:
- The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all council employees and has overall responsibility for the administration and implementation of the Council's Occupational Health and Safety Policy.
- This will be achieved by:
  - ensuring those persons designated as having responsibility for health and safety matters are trained and competent and are provided with the necessary resources;
  - delegating the responsibility for implementation of the Policy within Service Areas to Directors;
  - ensuring health and safety is an integral part of the overall management culture and of equal importance to other management objectives;
  - ensuring the establishment and maintenance of health and safety systems including effective systems of communication within service areas. This will ensure the assessment of risks and the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of the preventative and protective measures necessary to control risks and prevent accidents;
  - ensuring that a health and safety plan is developed by each service which has realistic short and long term objectives, establishes performance standards and sets priorities
  - ensuring that competent persons are appointed to assist the council in meeting its health and safety requirements.

## 2.2 DIRECTORS AND HEADS OF SERVICE

**Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for anyone affected by the actions of their Service Area.**

- Directors will be responsible and accountable to the Chief Executive for the health, safety and welfare of everyone affected by the work activities in their service areas.
- Heads of Service will be responsible to Directors for:
  - preparing, publicising and revising supplementary occupational health and safety policy statements and safety arrangements booklets for the functions within their services. This will include the organisation and arrangements for implementation and will be consistent with the council-wide Occupational Health and Safety Policy and other occupational health and safety policies, procedures and guidance relevant to their service and contain sufficient detail in respect of the particular nature of the work activities of services provided;
  - ensuring adequate resources are allocated to implement the supplementary Occupational Health and Safety Policies;
  - developing a positive attitude to health and safety by encouraging the participation and involvement of employees in health and safety matters and visibly demonstrating a commitment to the achievement of high standards of health and safety within the service area;
  - implementing health and safety management systems that will ensure the assessment of risk and the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of the preventative and protective measures necessary to eliminate or control risks and prevent accidents and ill health;
  - nominating a competent person to have prime responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the supplementary policies and that arrangements are adequately monitored and reviewed;
  - providing all employees with the necessary information, instruction, training and supervision necessary to enable them to discharge their individual safety responsibilities and to carry out their tasks in a safe and proper manner;
  - detailing arrangements for consultation between management, trade union safety representatives and/or representatives of employees safety;
  - Directors/Heads of Service shall submit to the Chief Executive copies of any prosecutions, prohibition notices, improvement notices and notice to serve improvement notices within 48 hours of their receipt;
  - ensuring that a health and safety plan is developed by each service which has realistic short and long term objectives, establishes performance standards and sets priorities;
  - ensuring that the during the recruitment process any health and safety responsibilities outlined for the post in the Service health and safety arrangements are considered.

## 2.3 THE HEAD OF SUPPORT SERVICE

The Head of Support Services has been appointed by the Chief Executive to have responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Occupational Health and Safety Policy and for monitoring its effectiveness.

The Head of Support Services is responsible for actively making certain that the council manages its health and safety risks by ensuring that the Corporate Management Team:

- formally and publicly accepts its collective role in providing health and safety leadership;
- makes decisions that reflect the council's health and safety intentions as articulated in its health and safety policy statement;
- recognises its role in engaging the active participation of workers in improving health and safety;
- is kept informed of, and alerted to, relevant health and safety risk management issues;
- accepts their individual role in providing health and safety leadership for the council.

## 2.4 MANAGERS

**Your line manager is responsible for your safety.**

Line Managers are responsible for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all employees, trainees and workers under their control. They will be the first points of contact for resolving health and safety issues. Line Managers' responsibilities will be detailed in the respective supplementary policies.

## 2.5 EMPLOYEES AND WORKERS

**Employees and Workers must co-operate in the implementation of this policy. You must take care of yourself and anyone else who may be affected by what you do.**

All employees and workers will be expected to co-operate in the implementation of the council's Occupational Health and Safety Policy by:

- acting in the course of their employment with due care for their own safety and that of others, who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work;
- co-operating, so far as is necessary, to enable the council to perform any duty or to comply with any requirements as a result of any Health and Safety legislation which may be in force;
- using correctly all work items provided by the council in accordance with the training and the instructions they receive to enable them to use the items safely.

## 2.6 HEALTH AND SAFETY ASSISTANCE

### **Health and Safety provide advice and guidance.**

The Health and Safety Manager will provide specialist advice and guidance throughout the council on matters relating to corporate health and safety policy, guidance and procedures and will develop corporate occupational health and safety strategies, prepare regular reports for senior management that inform and evaluate the council's health and safety performance.

Competent health and safety personnel which, in some services may be directly engaged by that service, will provide advice, support and guidance to managers;

- advise on the interpretation and application of health and safety legislation and guidance;
- investigate the cause and circumstances of serious accidents and incidents;
- develop health and safety standards;
- develop training programmes;
- advise and support managers in the risk assessment process;
- liaise with Service Areas and external agencies;
- contribute to the development of occupational health and safety strategies and policies;
- In addition, all Health and Safety personnel will monitor health and safety performance and will have the authority to enter council premises and work locations and take such action as may be deemed necessary to ensure compliance with this policy.

NOTE: The appointment of competent safety personnel does not relieve any Director/Head of Service of their responsibilities regarding health and safety.

## 2.7 SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES AND EMPLOYEE CONSULTATION

### **Consultation takes place and is encouraged between managers and employees on matters of health and safety.**

The council fully recognises the legal requirement for consultation between management and employees on health and safety matters, and the advantages that will be gained. The appointment of trade union safety representatives and/or representatives of employees safety will be encouraged. Assistance to these representatives will be provided in the form of facilities and time to enable them to discharge this function effectively. Where it is appropriate to have safety committees, they should meet at intervals relative to the needs of the service area/function.

### 3. ARRANGEMENTS

**Procedures will be detailed in supplementary policies, dealing with emergencies, fire and first aid.**

Notwithstanding the arrangements that will be detailed in the supplementary Occupational Health and Safety Policies, the following basic procedures will require to be adopted by services.

#### 3.1 EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations state that procedures need to be established where there is a possibility of serious or imminent danger to employees or other persons.

#### 3.2 FIRE PRECAUTION AND PREVENTION

- An assessment of the fire precaution provisions will be made by the person in charge of any premises, unit or section to ensure that suitable arrangements are in place.
- Arrangements should include procedures for the safe evacuation of all employees and visitors to the location. Personal Evacuation Plans will be necessary for the evacuation of persons with special needs eg disabled/temporarily incapacitated. If evac chairs are used to effect the evacuation of such persons there must be adequate numbers of persons trained in the use of these chairs and the chairs themselves must be maintained in accordance with manufacturer guidance.
- The audibility of any fire alarm system will be tested weekly using, where appropriate, at a different call point.
- An evacuation drill will be conducted at least twice annually
- Any fitted systems, e.g. fire alarms, emergency lighting, smoke detection and fire extinguishing equipment will be tested and examined by competent persons as per the recommended frequency.
- A regular inspection of fire evacuation signs and notices and the adequacy of means of escape from the premises will be conducted by the person in charge of the building or premises.
- Details of the fire precaution and evacuation arrangements should be brought to the attention of all staff and visitors. Fire action notices should be completed and posted at suitable locations.
- A written record of all of the above must be retained on the premises for inspection by the Fire Brigade.

#### 3.3 FIRST AID ARRANGEMENTS

- Suitable numbers of first aid personnel will be appointed to deal with incidents and emergencies in the workplace. These personnel will have sufficient training and qualifications in accordance with statutory requirements. Identities of first-aiders and locations of facilities will be displayed in each workplace.
- The registered first aider or appointed person will ensure that first aid facilities are readily available and adequately stocked.

### 3.4 INCIDENT REPORTING

**All incidents and near-misses must be reported through your line manager to Health and Safety.**

- It is important that all accidents and near-misses are reported for the following reasons:
  - to prevent reoccurrence of similar incidents;
  - to fulfil legal obligations to report certain incidents;
  - to reduce the costs incurred by the council as a result of incidents.
- It is imperative that even the smallest of incidents, including near misses, are reported as this could prevent a more serious incident.
- Incident reporting procedures will be held at each establishment detailing what actions should be taken following an incident. They are summarised below:
  - all accidents and near-misses must be reported by the end of the working day to the line manager and thereafter to the Support Services Health and Safety Unit.
  - a responsible person must be appointed to inform the Support Services Health and Safety Unit of notifiable injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences. That Team will notify the Health and Safety Executive;
  - additional action is required by the line manager if an employee is absent from work for more than three days as a result of an incident at work.

### 3.5 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH ARRANGEMENTS

**The council wishes to promote good health at work.**

- The aim of the council's Occupational Health Policy is to prevent ill health and to promote good health at work. The broad aims are to:
  - develop employee health services by promoting health screening and surveillance and preventative medical services; and
  - develop health promotion and education initiatives as appropriate.
- The Occupational Health Service provided will depend on the nature of the work activity and design of perceived risk in each function. Detailed arrangements will be given in the individual Supplementary Occupational Health and Safety Policies.
- All Service areas will have access to occupational health services, which will normally be co-ordinated by HR Shared Services.
- Health and Safety will, when necessary, provide advice on matters relating to occupational health hazards. They will also provide information and guidance on other occupational health related subjects e.g. alcohol, smoking, personal safety and stress.

### 3.6 RISK ASSESSMENTS

**All tasks and workplaces will be assessed for risks and suitable preventative measures put in place.**

- The most effective method of achieving high standards of health and safety is to anticipate the effect of work activities and service delivery on people and premises prior to commencement. There is a legal requirement for risk assessments to be conducted and it is the responsibility of each Head of Service to ensure these assessments are carried out. Such assessments will identify significant risks and specify the control measures required. Where the risks have been identified as significant, then the assessment must be made in writing.
- Notwithstanding the need for general risk assessment, specific regulations require assessment to be made. Examples are given below:
  - work environments, activities and equipment;
  - hazardous substances;
  - manual handling;
  - first aid needs
  - vibration
  - display screen equipment;
  - use of personal protective equipment;
  - noise
  - fire.
- All assessments must be of a suitable and sufficient nature and therefore require to be conducted by competent persons, normally from within the workplace, who are aware of the hazards involved in the tasks or workplaces and can call upon specialist advice when faced with unfamiliar risks.
- Assessments will be reviewed annually and, where necessary, modified at planned regular intervals dependent on the nature of risks encountered. The assessments will also be reviewed and modified at other times, e.g.:
  - following changes in legislation;
  - where changes are made to the way the task is done ;
  - following an incident or near miss.

### 3.7 INFORMATION, INSTRUCTION AND TRAINING

**Employees and workers will receive appropriate health and safety information, instruction and training.**

- The council recognises the legal requirement and the importance of having well informed and competent employees if it is to achieve a safe working environment. On commencement of employment all employees will receive health and safety training as part of an induction programme. The safety training needs of all employees will be regularly assessed and where appropriate information, instruction and training will be provided. Ongoing consideration will be given to the requirements of new legislation.
- The dissemination of policies, procedures and codes of safe working practice will assist in achieving high standards of health and safety.
- Information and training will be provided in a format that is understandable and takes into account ethnic background and any disabilities.

### 3.8 PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH HEALTH AND SAFETY PROBLEMS

**Report any health and safety problems to your manager.**

An employee with a complaint about a safety problem should initially refer the matter to his or her immediate supervisor, line manager or head of establishment. If satisfaction is not reached at this level, the matter should be raised with the Head of Service then the Support Services Health and Safety Unit. However, the employee also has the right to consult their trade union safety representative and/or representative of employees' safety.

### 3.9 CONTRACTORS

**Contractors will be monitored to ensure they meet the necessary health and safety standards.**

- The council will set standards and monitor the activities of contractors to minimise the risk presented to employees and other persons on site and to the public.
- The Head of Service of each Service Area will ensure all contractors are properly vetted with regard to health and safety competence. Only contractors who can demonstrate their ability to discharge their primary responsibility to safeguard all who may be affected by their activities or omissions will be used. In accordance with Standing Orders – Building and Civil Engineering Works contracts over £50,000 and below the EU procurement threshold must be CHAS (Construction Health and Safety Scheme) registered and Constructionline approved. Other construction contracts below this threshold should be assessed for their competency in health and safety management either by using CHAS or a equivalent standard. In addition all contractors should also be assessed for their
  - Competency for the area of work they are tendering for and
  - Monitored during the construction/work phase for health and safety performance

- If contractors have a poor health and safety performance they should not be used for future work.
- Contractors are required to work in accordance with relevant legislation and policies and procedures laid down by the council. Contractors will be required to provide detailed risk assessments and health and safety method statements and furnish all relevant health and safety information appertaining to specified contracts.
- The council will provide adequate health and safety information to contractors to ensure the safety of those undertaking the work and those who may be affected by the work.

### 3.10 WORK RELATED ROAD SAFETY

**All reasonable steps will be taken to reduce work related road safety risks to as low a level as is reasonably possible.**

- The council will take all reasonable steps to manage work related road safety risks to as low a level as is reasonably possible. This includes when employees drive or ride at work whether it is a council or hired vehicle or the employee's own vehicle.
- The Head of Service of each Service Areas will ensure that:

Drivers are:

- competent and capable of doing their work in a way that is safe for them and others;
- properly trained;
- sufficiently fit and healthy to drive safely and not put themselves and others at risk;
- provided with information that will help them reduce risk (eg recommended tyre pressures);
- provided with appropriate advice on driving posture.

Vehicles (council owned vehicles and employee vehicles used for business purposes) are:

- fit for the purpose for which they are used;
- maintained in a safe and fit condition.
- appropriately insured (eg use of personal car for business, insurance required is "for business use")

Journey planning:

- takes account of appropriate routes;
- incorporates realistic work schedules;
- does not put drivers at risk from fatigue;
- takes sufficient account of adverse weather conditions.

#### 4. MONITORING

**Monitoring will take place to ensure the effectiveness of the Policy by incident analysis, inspections, audits and reviews.**

The effectiveness of the council's Occupational Health and Safety Policy will be monitored in the following ways:

##### 4.1 INCIDENT ANALYSIS

Reported incidents will be analysed by the council's Support Services Health and Safety Unit with a view to determining and eliminating their causes.

##### 4.2 PRPD PROCESS

The employee's health and safety performance will be discussed during the PRPD process and consideration given to the individual's development by reviewing their health and safety training needs

##### 4.3 LEGAL COMPLIANCE

- Regular and systematic inspections will be carried out by the manager or head of establishment to ensure that the requirements of the council's Occupational Health and Safety Policy are being met.
- Formal audits will be carried out by the council's Support Services Health and Safety Unit. The results of these audits will be conveyed to the appropriate Head of Service and their Director.

#### 5 REVIEW OF POLICY

**Any revisions of this Policy will be brought to your attention.**

- This Policy will be reviewed, added to or modified as required. The review shall consider the findings of audits, the individual performance of each Service and the council as a whole and identify any action necessary to remedy any deficiencies.
- This Policy and any revision of it will be drawn to the attention of every employee of the council. Any documents produced under this Policy will be brought to the attention of those employees to which the contents are relevant. These documents will be listed in Service area Supplementary Policies.

**Signed:**

**For and on behalf of the Chief Executive**

**Date: March 2009**