



Safety in DIY/Builders Suppliers

Builders supplies and DIY shops can be hazardous places. The following details highlight some of the hazards and risks that might exist in your premises. They are by no means exhaustive and will vary depending on your own particular business. As a starting point use the blank sheet provided in this pack and carry out your own simple risk assessment.

Main Types of Hazard

Vehicle Movement

The movement of goods into, out of and around DIY and builders suppliers involves the use of a wide range of vehicles including forklift trucks, cars, trailers and delivery lorries and accounts for a large proportion of accidents in such premises.

Managing the Risk

- Devise a safe system of traffic movement to include methods and procedures for arrival, reception, unloading, loading and movement within the curtilage of the premises.
- Display clear information/warning signs setting out these procedures.
- Issue information/instruction cards to visiting drivers and members of the public.
- Devise one-way traffic systems.
- Provide sufficient designated parking areas to allow the segregation of private cars from goods traffic
- Restrict access to dangerous areas such as loading/unloading bays.

Loading/Unloading

Accidents can occur if the vision of the driver is obstructed, or the load shifts or falls from the vehicle, or if the vehicle is unsuitable to carry the load.

- No vehicle should be loaded beyond its rated capacity or beyond the legal limit of gross weight.
- Always check the floor of the trailer or vehicle to ensure that it is safe to load.
- Loads should be properly secured or arranged so that they are safe for both transportation and unloading, e.g. so that they do not slide forward in the event of the driver having to brake suddenly.

Manual Handling

Lifting and moving heavy, bulky items such as worktops or bags of cement can cause back injuries or muscular strains.

- Avoid lifting items which are too heavy or bulky - use a trolley or castors where possible.
- Train staff in proper lifting techniques.

Storage/Racking

Incorrectly stacked goods may fall injuring staff below, or overloading shelves/racks may lead to collapse. Persons climbing on racking may fall and injure themselves.

- Racking should be capable of supporting intended loads and be properly fixed e.g. bolted to the floor. Find out the maximum safe working load of all racking systems and mark it on the racking. Protect the racking from mechanical damage from fork lift trucks etc.
- Goods should be properly stacked with the heaviest at the bottom if possible.
- Proper safety ladders should be used and training on their use provided.

Slips, Trips and Falls

Uneven slippery or obstructed floor surfaces and trailing cables may lead to accidents and injury.

- Keep passageways, delivery areas and stairs clear.
- Clean up spillages immediately and display warning of wet surfaces.
- Fasten cables securely to the floor or re-route overhead if possible.



Fire Safety

Obstructed exit routes, for example by stock and/or accumulations of packaging can prevent escape and provide fuel for fires.

- Clearly mark escape routes e.g. using painted lines and signs.
- Keep all escape routes and fire exits clear, and make regular checks to ensure that this is the case.
- Clear rubbish regularly.

Hazardous Substances

Some items of stock and chemicals used for cleaning can be harmful. Exposure to them through use or through accidental spillages or leaks can cause respiratory problems, dermatitis or chemical burns.

- Store all hazardous chemicals in their original containers.
- Obtain information on all substances stored and used in the premises from manufacturers hazard data sheets.
- Devise a procedure for handling damaged containers and for cleaning up spillages and leaked substances.
- Provide staff with training, gloves etc. to enable cleaning chemicals to be used safely.

Electricity

Accidents are mainly due to misuse of, or badly maintained equipment and an increased risk of electric shock during cleaning operations.

- All electrical equipment used out of doors should be suitably insulated and should be supplied through a circuit protected by a 30 mA Residual Current Device.
- All electrical switchgear controlling machinery should be clearly labelled and readily accessible at all times.

Noise

Lift trucks, woodworking machinery and conveyor systems may give rise to potentially hazardous levels of noise which can cause incurable hearing damage.

- If when people speaking normally have difficulty being heard clearly by someone who is about 2m away then you should arrange for a noise assessment to be carried out.
- Reduce noise levels by changing to a quieter process or devise an alternative way of doing a job.
- Limit the time spent by employees in a noisy environment e.g. by providing an accessible quiet area.

Mechanical Handling

The use of equipment such as fork lift trucks and cranes can be particularly hazardous, causing crushing and amputation injuries.

- Adopt safe systems of work e.g. procedures for training employees, for traffic and pedestrian movement, and for control and maintenance of trucks.
- Keys should be kept in a secure place when the equipment is not in use and should only be issued to authorised operators.
- All equipment should be marked with safe working load (SWL) and the SWL should never be exceeded.

Machinery and Equipment

Persons using circular saws, planing machines and band sawing machines can become seriously injured mainly from coming into contact with moving blades e.g. cuts and amputations. Facial and eye injuries can also be caused by stray pieces of wood.

- Provide adequate space around machines, particularly those with exposed blades.
- Site equipment so that the operator cannot be accidentally bumped/distracted.
- Display warning notices alongside machines to remind operators and others of the dangers they pose.
- Ensure dangerous parts of machinery are adequately guarded.
- Provide training in safe systems of work e.g. use of push sticks for cuts less than 300 mm in length or for the last 300 mm of a large cut.
- Ensure that equipment is fitted with an emergency isolation switch.
- Maintain equipment in good condition.

■ For further information:

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