

RURAL HOUSING ASSOCIATION



Health & Safety Policy

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1.0 Overview

Rural Housing Association is committed to managing health and safety in all aspects of its work and to implementing reasonably practicable measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of employees and any other persons that may be affected by its work.

2.0 Scope of Health & Safety Policy

The aim of the Policy is to ensure the safety of employees, tenants, members of the public and contractors.

3.0 Accountability & Responsibility

So far as is reasonably practicable, Rural Housing Association will:

- Provide adequate and maintained welfare facilities and a healthy working environment.
- Ensure a safe place of work, without risks to health, including access and egress;
- Ensure that adequate financial and human resources are available to maintain standards.
- Encourage employees to report incidents to allow greater analysis of risks;
- Ensure incidents are investigated thoroughly and promptly to identify immediate, root and underlying causes and, where possible, to ensure measures are implemented to reduce or eliminate recurrence.
- Ensure new employees are competent to fulfil their role via the recruitment process.
- Ensure employees are trained in general health and safety awareness and receive job specific training, instruction, information and supervision relating to hazards and safe practices.
- Ensure risk assessments are undertaken for hazardous work activities and reviewed regularly;
- Ensure arrangements for the reporting of hazards and for the removal of defective or unsafe equipment
- Ensure that all machinery, plant, and equipment is maintained in a safe condition.
- Ensure that safe systems of work are implemented for hazardous activities.
- Ensure employees use, handle, store and transport goods and materials safely.
- Ensure that contractors (and sub-contractors) and suppliers are committed to achieving and adhering to the standards of health and safety detailed in this Policy.
- Continually improve health and safety performance;
- Ensure that Health and Safety Representatives within the Association reflect all areas of the business and are utilised to consult employees on key matters of operational health and safety on a regular basis.
- Establish and maintain an occupational health and safety register.
- Arrangements for the provision and use of protective equipment / clothing
- Ensure that appropriate safety signs are provided and maintained
- Accident reporting, recording and investigation systems and first aid arrangements.
- Emergency procedures as per Emergency & Business Continuity Plan

All employees have a duty to co-operate in the operation of this Policy by:

- Taking reasonable care of their own safety and that of their colleagues, tenants, employees, members of the public and contractors by complying with this Policy and those policies and procedures relevant to their role.

- Using Personal Protective Equipment in a safe manner and reporting any deficiencies or damage as soon as is practicably possible.
- Not interfering with, misusing, or wilfully damaging anything provided by the Association in the interests of health and safety.
- Reporting incidents that have led, or may lead, to injury/damage to people, property, plant, or equipment.
- Attending training courses appropriate to their role and responsibilities as and when necessary.

To ensure this Policy is effective, the CEO will:

- Review it at regular intervals and when significant changes are made to health and safety legislation, guidance, related policies, and procedures or within the organisation.
- Implement a monitoring, inspection, and auditing procedure to ensure the effective management of health and safety throughout the company.
- Present any changes to Board of Management for approval;
- Make amendments known to employees.
- Communicate and consult employees and contractors by bringing this Policy to their attention through induction, continued training and via display at the Association's workplaces;
- Produce this Policy and related procedures in alternate formats as and when necessary.

Overall Responsibilities

Accountability and Responsibility

Organisational arrangements are in place to ensure the clear allocation of responsibilities within the Association and that the objectives of this Policy are fulfilled.

Board of Management

The Board of Management is responsible for monitoring compliance with the health and safety management system and associated health and safety policies. In order to achieve this, the Board will review and approve this Policy on a three yearly basis, and ensure that any issues of significant risk are actioned appropriately.

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive is ultimately responsible for the control and implementation of this Policy at all levels of the organisation and the provision of adequate resources to meet health and safety requirements. The Chief Executive will:

- Comply with the Associations Health and Safety Policy
- Provide leadership to encourage employees to be always safety conscious.
- Ensure that responsibility for the implementation of, and compliance with, this Policy is properly assigned and accepted by the Senior Management Team and employees under their control.
- Ensure that managers within their departments are suitably trained, competent, and fully understand their health and safety obligations.
- Support managers by providing effective resources and advice to ensure standards of health and safety are achieved.

- Monitor the activities of their departments in relation to the health and safety to ensure compliance with relevant legislation, good practice, policies, and procedures.
- Keep the Senior Management Team informed of health and safety related matters that may affect the area of service under their responsibility.
- Assist in identifying, organising and delivering appropriate health and safety training;
- Maintain an incident log and document recording system of accident and near miss data to allow trends and patterns to be identified and necessary action to be taken to reduce or prevent recurrence.
- Regularly review and develop the Associations health and safety policies and procedures to ensure they are relevant to, and inclusive of, the hazards facing the business.
- Keep up to date with changes to health and safety legislation and ensure employees are aware of any implications, including evaluation options, making recommendations, and generating action plans to ensure compliance.

Line Managers of the Association will:

- Comply with the Associations Health and Safety Policy
- Bring this Policy to the attention of employees under their management and ensure an understanding of its contents.
- Ensure the day-to-day implementation of the Association's health and safety policies and procedures in their areas of control.
- Be aware of the Fire Alarm and Evacuation Procedure
- Ensure health, safety and welfare facilities are provided and maintained.
- Be aware of first aid procedure
- Ensure sufficient Qualified First Aiders are adequately trained to EMAS standard.
- Investigate any reported defects and ensure remedial action is taken, when necessary, in liaison with the Property & Procurement Manager
- Investigate any accidents or dangerous occurrences.
- Undertake hazard identification and related risk assessments for their areas of control and introduce and maintain suitable and sufficient control measures;
- Issue Personal Protective Equipment when identified as a requirement in risk assessments and train employees in its use and maintenance;
- Ensure that all new employees are properly inducted into the organisation, including an awareness of precautions and procedures applicable to their role and workplace.
- Ensure that employees are not permitted to carry out any kind of hazardous task before they have received adequate training and instruction;
- Ensure all accidents, incidents, near misses, dangerous occurrences and hazards are reported to the Chief Executive as soon as is reasonably practicable and investigated where appropriate; Property & Procurement Manager to maintain accident report book.
- Ensure that any legal requirements relating to the operation of their department or team are fully complied with.
- Ensure that any health and safety responsibilities delegated to staff are clearly understood.
- Assist in identifying, organising and delivering appropriate health and safety training.
- Ensure contractors (and sub-contractors) appointed to carry out works on behalf of the Association are made aware of health and safety policies and procedures, are notified of known hazards and carry out their work without risk to others.

Employees at all levels of the organisation

In addition to the duties outlined in the Health and Safety Policy Statement, all employees (including new staff) will:

- Comply with the Associations Health and Safety Policy
- Familiarise themselves with this Policy and all health and safety policies, procedures, risk assessments and method statements relevant to their role and workplace;
- Attend mandatory health and safety training courses as and when necessary;
- Ensure Accident Reporting Procedure is followed - Report all accidents, incidents, near misses, dangerous occurrences and hazards to their manager as soon as is practicably possible.
- Contribute and co-operate with the Association on all matters of health and safety.
- Be aware of the effects of their work on colleagues, tenants, members of the public and contractors and ensure they do not create or compound hazards or endanger others by their actions.
- Carry out their duties using safe working practices, regarding themselves, their colleagues, tenants, members of the public and contractors.
- Report any matters they consider to be a danger to health and safety to the Chief Executive or their line manager as soon as is practicably possible. This includes any deficiencies or shortcomings they have identified within this Policy and the Associations arrangements for the management of health and safety.
- Use Personal Protective Equipment appropriate for the task and maintain the equipment in reasonable repair, including reporting losses or defects to their line manager as soon as is practicably possible.
- Not to interfere, tamper or misuse any item provided for health, safety or welfare purposes.
- Use only the tools, equipment, and plant they are trained to use and that which is appropriate to the task.
- Refrain from using, and report to their line manager, any defective or damaged tools, plant or equipment.
- Report any health condition that affects their ability to work safely to their line manager and the HR Team as soon as is practicably possible.
- Use safe systems of work for tasks relating to electricity, gas installations, the handling of chemicals, the use of dangerous equipment, manual handling and repetitive tasks and any other activities that present a significant risk to health and safety;
- Always drive safely whilst undertaking company business.
- Immediately liaise with their line manager, or senior member of staff if they are faced with a conflict between health and safety and the demands of their job.
- Be aware of fire alarm and evacuation procedures
- Ensure staff and visitors under their control are fully aware of: Evacuation procedures/ Centre rules/codes of conduct
- Be aware of the First Aid Procedure
- Be aware of the Safety Code of Practice

4.0 Control of Hazards

Personal Protective Equipment (P.P.E.)

Where appropriate, the Association will supply certain items of personal protective equipment for employees. This equipment should be worn and maintained in good condition by the employee. Where employees are supplied with appropriate uniforms, these must be worn during working hours. Employees are required to maintain personal protective equipment supplied by the Association in good condition and cleaned regularly. Where an employee is deemed to have damaged personal protective equipment, or any other safety device supplied by the Association due to carelessness or negligence, he/she may render themselves liable to disciplinary action.

Disposable PPE i.e., masks or face shields, aprons, gloves and sanitiser are provided and are to be used in compliance with public health agency and government guidelines during COVID19 pandemic. Staff are referred to COVID19 workplace risk assessment.

Toilet/Washing Facilities

Adequate toilet and washing facilities are provided the Association, both hot and cold water and appropriate soap. Employees are required to observe good standards of personal hygiene.

Smoking/E-Cigarettes

To comply with legislative requirements the Association operates a No Smoking Policy inside and outside its head office and in vehicles being used for company business.

The Association recognises that the vapour from E-cigarettes may bother some employees and could potentially provide a health risk for others through passive consumption (like passive smoking) as the long-term health effects of E- cigarettes are unknown. Therefore, those who choose to use E cigs are also required to apply the same policy above.

Any employee who does not comply with the rules on smoking may be liable for disciplinary action under the Association's disciplinary procedure. (Please see Smoking Policy)

C.O.S.H.H. Regulations

A C.O.S.H.H. Assessment will be carried out before new materials/substances are introduced into the working environment. Such assessments will be undertaken by a competent person appointed by the Association.

The requirements of the regulations will be implemented in all areas of the Association, and the Association will supply such information and training as is required to ensure a safe and healthy environment for its employees.

The Association will familiarise themselves with the information on any safety data sheet for products which they store. The specific conditions for storage or separation of substances will be provided.

Employees are to familiarise themselves with the information on any safety data sheet for products which they handle or process. The precautions contained therein must be observed. Hazardous substances will be stored in suitable racks in a position to minimise the risk of accidental damage or spillage. The safety data sheets are in the office, and in addition all data required is freely available via the internet.

REPORTING OF INJURIES DISEASES & DANGEROUS OCCURRENCES REGULATIONS (RIDDOR)

The Management is responsible for ensuring that the Association complies with The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (NI) 1997.

Where a reportable incident occurs to an employee, a machine, piece of equipment, or appliance in an area under their control, the employee must report the matter to the Management who will have responsibility for implementing the appropriate part of the following procedure:

Report immediately by telephone if because of, or in connection with the organisation's work: -

- a death or major injury to your employee or a self-employed person working on your premises
- a member of the public being taken to hospital from your premises
- or a dangerous event

Send a written report (NI 2508) to:

The Accident Clerk HSENI
83 Ladas Drive Belfast
BT6 9FR

Tel: 0800 032 0121

* Confirm, as soon as possible, or telephone report of a death, major injury, or dangerous occurrence.

* Notify in writing using the RIDDOR form, as soon as possible (but at least within 10 days) any accident or injury, which stops an employee undertaking their normal job for more than 3 days.

* Report certain diseases suffered by any employee who carry out specific types of work.

* Report certain events involving flammable gas on Rural Housing premises.

An Accident Report Form must also be completed.

5.0 Emergencies

Procedures are in place to deal with emergency situations in all workplaces and supplemented by evacuation exercises and notices as appropriate. Competent, nominated employees, for example first aiders and fire marshals, will be trained to implement these procedures where necessary. (Please see Evacuation policy)

6.0 Occupational Health

In order to ensure that risks to the health of employees from work activities are properly controlled, Rural Housing Association will:

- Collect, analyse, and make available essential occupational health information.
- Secure commitment and participation from interested parties.
- Assist employees to return to, and remain in, work following injury or ill health.
- The Association also recognises that the promotion of general good health and well-being is an essential part of its occupational health strategy and will communicate important messages, relating to lifestyle and other non-work related risks, to employees as appropriate.

Coronavirus Pandemic Measures

Following the Coronavirus Pandemic, the Association has taken steps to make the workplace secure for staff. Social distancing where possible staff should keep 2 metres apart and no more than 1 person per office. Promote good hygiene with table cleaning and regular hand washing to keeping your workspace clean which reduces the potential for coronavirus to spread. If staff are working from home, they will be provided with the equipment they need including laptop, phones, and video conferencing facilities. Line Managers will keep in regular contact with them making sure to discuss their well-being.

7.0 Communication/Key Health and Safety Documentation

Rural Housing Association recognises the importance of sharing information, knowledge, and experiences with its employees to ensure that standards of health and safety continue to improve. Employees will be consulted on key matters of health and safety at work as and when necessary, either directly or through their line managers. Rural Housing Association will ensure that the Health and Safety Policy and current topics of interest will be made available on the staff intranet and distributed to new employees during the induction process. The HSE Health and Safety Law poster and any other relevant Health & Safety material will also be displayed on the notice board of each workplace.

8.0 TOOLS PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

The tools, plant and equipment supplied by the Association for work activities will meet the requirements of relevant legislation and guidance. The association will ensure that employees are competent to use tools, plant and equipment through the provision of information, instruction, training and supervision on correct operating procedures and potential risks. Under no circumstances will employees who have not received the relevant training use tools, plant and equipment.

Risk Assessment

Risk assessment cycle

Guidance to the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 indicates five steps of the risk assessment process:

- Step 1- Identify the hazards
- Step 2 – Decide who might be harmed and how
- Step 3 – Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions
- Step 4 – Record your findings and implement them
- Step 5 – Review your assessment and update if necessary

Managers are advised to consult the CCG Risk Management Strategy or the 'Five Steps to Risk Assessment' published by the Health & Safety Executive for more details. The frequency with which risk assessments need to be reviewed will vary depending on the level of risk identified. However, as a rule, risk assessments should be reviewed at least annually. Risk assessments should be reviewed whenever there is a significant change in the environment, staffing or working practices.

The following occurrences should result in a risk assessment being reviewed:

- New member of staff joining the Rural Housing.
- Member of staff changing location or base.
- Notification of a staff member becoming pregnant.
- Any change in workstation, e.g., change of seat, lighting, or desk configuration.
- Following the investigation of an adverse incident
- A permanent or temporary move to working from home for an employee

9.0 Training

- a) All new employees will receive training in Health and Safety matters as part of their induction programme.
Training will also be provided in the following areas:
- b) Fire Prevention and Evacuation Procedures - annually for all staff
- c) Qualified First Aiders - refresher training as and when required.
- d) Emergency First Aid training for Appointed Persons - annually

10.0 Monitoring

In order to ensure that health and safety performance continually improves, active and reactive monitoring of the control of hazards forms a significant part of the management process. Active monitoring typically includes audits, inspections and assessments, statutory testing of equipment and preventative maintenance programs. Reactive monitoring includes evaluation of data relating to accidents and near miss incidents and the appropriate consideration of complaints.

11.0 Legal Compliance

Rural Housing Association and all associated policies aim to comply with the legislation relevant to the business, as detailed in Appendix 1.

- COSHH.
- Fire Safety.
- Risk Assessments; Separate Policy
- Accident Logging and Reporting (including coverage of RIDDOR); and
- H&S relating to External Contractors.
- Legislation

Appendix 1

Relevant Legislation

Title	Observations	Reference
Health and Safety at Work (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1998	Established the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland	S.I. 1998/2795 (N.I. 18)
Gas (Northern Ireland) Order 1996	Part III and Schedule 5	S.I. 1996/275 (N.I. 2)
Environment and Safety Information (Northern Ireland) Order 1993	Applies to prohibition and improvement notices	S.I. 1993/3159 (N.I. 14)

Title	Observations	Reference
Petroleum Act 1987	Sections 21 to 24 are existing statutory provisions so far as they apply to Northern Ireland	1987 c. 12
Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978	The most important primary legislation applying to health and safety	S.I. 1978/1039 (N.I. 9)
Employer's Liability (Defective Equipment and Compulsory Insurance) (Northern Ireland) Order 1972	Employers liable for injuries to employees by defective equipment and employers to insure against liabilities to employees	S.I. 1972/963 (N.I. 6)
Transport Act (Northern Ireland) 1967	Section 66 is an existing statutory provision	1967 c. 37 (N.I.)
Office and Shop Premises Act (Northern Ireland) 1966	All provisions are existing statutory provisions	1966 c. 26 (N.I.)

Title	Observations	Reference
Factories Act (Northern Ireland) 1965	All provisions are existing statutory provisions except section 135	1965 c. 20 (N.I.)
Petroleum (Consolidation) Act (Northern Ireland) 1929	All provisions are existing statutory provisions	1929 c. 13 (N.I.)

Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 1920	All provisions are existing statutory provisions	1920 c. 65
Anthrax Prevention Act 1919	Sections 2 and 3 are existing statutory provisions	1919 c.23

Policy Review Data

Policy Title	HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY
Date Created	05/01/10
Review Period	Every Three Years
Previous Reviews	
Version	
Date Last Amended	June 2021
Authorised By	
Date Last Reviewed	September 2021
Amendments	
Date of Next Review	September 2024