



**SOUTH AFRICAN HERITAGE  
RESOURCES AGENCY**

## **OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY : PART ONE**

**PART ONE DEALS WITH ON SITE HEALTH AND SAFETY**

**THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS POLICY ARE:**

**To provide a brief overview on the requirements of the Occupational Health and Safety Act No 85 of 1993 (OHSA).**

**To make employees fully conversant with this policy and to inculcate an awareness of what constitutes danger, risks or hazards so that this awareness will ensure the prevention of workplace accidents or injury.**

**To further ensure that employees will utilise this awareness to identify and report hazardous situations.**

**This policy will form part of the orientation of new employees, and will be annually reviewed.**

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## **LEGISLATIVE OBLIGATION AND BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT NO 85 of 1993 (OHASA)**

It is incumbent upon SAHRA (THE SOUTH AFRICAN HERITAGE RESOURCES AGENCY), in terms of the above Act:

- to prepare and implement a written policy on health and safety
- to display a copy of this policy, signed by the CEO
- to appoint a health and safety officer

### **1. DUTIES OF EMPLOYER**

- 1.1 To ensure that the requirements of OHASA are complied with.
- 1.2 To provide facilities and training for safety officers and unit heads.
- 1.3 To make every employee aware of the health and safety hazards relating to that employee's work.
- 1.4 To ensure that equipment being installed is done in a manner so as not to pose a risk to the health and safety of the person doing the installation, employees, and to visitors to the building.
- 1.5 To ensure that persons who are not employees, for example, visitors to the building, researchers and students, who may be affected by work related activities, are not exposed to hazards.
- 1.6 To make the policy operate at all levels by having regular reviews, updates and awareness programs.
- 1.7 To guarantee that activities of safety officers, including training, be conducted during working hours.

### **2. DUTIES OF EMPLOYEES**

- 2.1 To familiarise themselves with the contents of this policy.
- 2.2 To co-operate fully in the implementation of this policy.
- 2.3 To report any hazardous situation to the safety officer or employer.
- 2.4 To report any small injury or potential injury.
- 2.5 To prevent wilful or reckless misuse or abuse of anything that might constitute a health and safety hazard.

### **3. HEALTH AND SAFETY OFFICER**

#### **3.1 Criteria for appointment as health and safety officer:**

- 3.1.1 Full-time employees only may be appointed as safety officers
- 3.1.2 These employees must be acquainted with the conditions and activities of the workplace concerned.

#### **3.2 Functions of health and safety officer:**

- 3.2.1 To review the effectiveness of health and safety measures
- 3.2.2 To identify hazardous and dangerous situations
- 3.2.3 To examine the causes of incidents
- 3.2.4 To investigate any employees' complaints

- 3.2.5 To inspect the workplace, at agreed intervals, provided that prior notice is given to the employer of the intention to inspect premises
- 3.2.6 To participate, consult with, and accompany inspectors on inspections of the workplace
- 3.2.7 To visit the site of an incident
- 3.2.8 To attend formal enquiries or investigations of incidents
- 3.2.9 To inspect documents in relation to an incident
- 3.2.10 To be accompanied by a technical advisor on an inspection, with the approval of the employer
- 3.2.11 To participate in any internal health and safety audit.
- 3.2.12 ***Please note that for the purposes of our provincial offices, the provincial manager will act as the safety officer, or delegate someone for this role, but retain accountability.***

#### **4. DUTY TO REPORT TO OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY INSPECTOR**

- 4.1 Any accident or injury in which a person dies, loses a limb or part of a limb, becomes unconscious, or is injured in such a way that he is likely to die or suffer permanent physical defect, is to be reported to an inspector.
- 4.2 For the purposes of investigation, no site where an incident occurred, on the premises, shall be disturbed, unless it is to prevent any further incident, or to rescue persons from danger.

#### **5. DUTIES OF MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS**

A doctor who treats a patient for a disease or injury that he/she believes arose from the person's employment, must report the case to the employer and to the Chief Inspector.

#### **6. PROHIBITED DEDUCTIONS**

- 6.1 The employer shall not make deductions from the salary of an employee who is required to act in the interest of health and safety for the organisation.
- 6.2 If an employee intentionally causes loss or damage to health and safety equipment, the employer may recover such loss, after a proper investigation.

#### **7. VICTIMISATION**

No employees shall be victimised for trying to carry out the provisions of OHASA and the requirements of this policy.

#### **8. COMPENSATION FOR OCCUPATIONAL INJURIES OR DISEASES**

This is governed by the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act 130 of 1993, and is covered in PART THREE of this policy.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The subject of safety in the workplace is regarded globally as one of the most important aspects of concern to employers, employees and society as a whole. Not only is the safety of employees a legal requirement, but it is also in the interest of the productivity of the organisation, as well as to its financial benefit.

## **POLICY STATEMENTS**

SAHRA is committed to providing a healthy and safe working environment in line with the above legislation, and to eliminating the possibility of injury and illness.

SAHRA acknowledges that the CEO is ultimately *accountable* for the health and safety of its employees, and for the implementation of this policy.

SAHRA will ensure that all employees are made fully conversant with the requirements of the policy.

SAHRA will ensure that training is given to safety officers and unit heads.

SAHRA guarantees full moral support to employees in the event of all physical and mental illness, as well as all life threatening illnesses like HIV/AIDS, cancer, and other debilitating diseases, and will ensure that the necessary counselling is received and administrative processes are expedited.

## **PART ONE: ON SITE HEALTH AND SAFETY**

### **1. REPORTING OF EMERGENCIES**

It is imperative that all emergencies like injuries, illness (see section 3) childbirth, assaults, fire, theft and burglaries are reported immediately. All emergency numbers are to be posted in each office.

### **2. ADMINISTERING FIRST AID**

- 2.1 The safety kit must be equipped with rubber gloves at all times and conform to the list of requirements for a standard safety kit.
- 2.2 When providing first aid, the necessary precautions have to be taken to provide protection against blood-borne infections like Hepatitis B and HIV/AIDS. (See policy on HIV/AIDS)

### **3. SERIOUS INJURIES AND ILLNESS**

- 3.1 In the event of serious injuries like deep wounds, broken limbs, back injuries, and serious illnesses like strokes, heart attacks and epileptic fits, the health and safety officer or unit head is responsible for taking follow-up action, getting medical attention for the injured, completing an investigation report and implementing **corrective action**.
- 3.2 **Corrective action** refers to steps that have to be taken to identify what went wrong in the case of an accident, and how it can be avoided in the future.

### **4. FUMIGATION**

- 4.1 Staff has to be informed well in advance (one week ahead) of the employer's intention to fumigate. Emails as well as prominently displayed notices will be displayed in the foyer and in the tea-room. Fumigation will be done on a Friday evening, so as to allow at least two full days for the fumes to clear.
- 4.2 Fumigation will be done by qualified and recognised fumigation companies, whose procedure and equipment conforms to the standard requirements for fumigation.
- 4.3 It will be done twice a year, when employees are not on the premises.
- 4.4 The safety officer and HR officer will ensure that no fumigation and other poisonous substances, however insubstantial, is used in the building at other times without full prior notification as indicated above.

### **5. STORAGE OF DETERGENTS**

All detergents, chemicals and paints will be clearly labelled and stored in a safe and dry place. These may not be kept in offices.

6. **NOISE** See section 21.3

7. **VARNISH**

Painting and varnishing will take place when staff is not on the premises. 48 hours must lapse before staff may be allowed back on premises after it has been painted.

8. **PLANT SPRAYS**

8.1 Plant sprays or anything that triggers an allergic reaction will not be used indoors.

8.2 The allergies and sensitivities of staff will be determined and documented by the health and safety officer or unit head. Awareness will be instilled and every effort made to avoid the use of substances that may adversely affect persons with allergies.

9. **SLIPPERY FLOORS AND WALKWAYS**

9.1 Any spilled food, drink, or liquid must be cleaned from floors and staircases immediately to prevent slips, falls and the formation of mould. **This is the responsibility of the person who causes the spills/mess.**

9.2 Annual inspections will be done of worn out floor surfaces and staircases and these have to be fixed.

10. **STORAGE**

Equipment or stocks must not be dangerously piled so that they could fall on someone. Cleaning materials must not be stored with paper and pens. Ladders and other equipment must not be stored in offices so as to constitute risk.

11. **CLUTTERED WORK SURFACES**

11.1 Cluttered work surfaces are safety hazards because sharp instruments could be hidden under piles of paper and documents.

11.2 Left over food at workstations could decay and be a source of bacteria and a breeding ground for vermin.

11.3 All workstations must be tidy and clean.

12. **SECURITY**

Front and back entrances to offices must be kept closed. Due to the large number of staff and large influx of calls and callers to Head Office, a security officer will be posted at the front door to filter visitors to the building.

It is the responsibility of staff entering and leaving the back premises to ensure that no unauthorised persons enter the security gates while it is being opened or closed.

### **13. SMOKING**

- 13.1 No smoking whatsoever will be allowed in the building, corridors, stairways or toilets, neither near open doors and windows. Smokers may only smoke outside the building.
- 13.2 Smoking in crowds in open areas is to be avoided, especially pertaining to workshops off site, as persons with sensitivity or asthma are adversely affected.
- 13.3 In smoking areas outside, smokers are to ensure that they do not throw cigarette butts into cans or containers that have papers or flammables in them, neither must butts be thrown near parked cars.

### **14. FALLING DEBRIS**

All possible care must be taken when any work or installation is done so as to avoid debris, dust, or stone falling onto employees or visitors to the building.

### **15. TRIPPING HAZARDS**

At no time is any equipment such as ladders, tools or containers with paint or detergents to stand around so as to constitute a risk.

### **16. STAIRCASES AND BANISTERS**

- 16.1 It must be ensured that lighting is adequate on staircases or passages leading to staircases so as to prevent tripping, slipping and falling.
- 16.2 Hand-rails and banisters of staircases are to be regularly inspected, and reinforced if necessary.

### **17. CARRYING OF MONEY AND VALUABLE ITEMS**

If a job requires the carrying or transportation of money or valuable items, all caution must be exercised by the person assigned to the task, so that theft, crime and bodily injury is not invited.

### **18. LIFTING OF HEAVY ITEMS**

Employees must not lift heavy items so as to suffer injury of the back, especially the lower back. See guidelines to safe lifting in section 33.

### **19. WORKING LATE**

Employees who work late must be alert and cautious when leaving the building, and ensure that the premises are armed.



## **20. OCCUPATIONAL HYGIENE**

### **20.1 Dirty toilets**

20.1.1 A clear differentiation has been made between the cleaning of toilets/urinals and the disinfecting thereof.

20.1.2 Over and above the disinfecting of toilets, all communal toilets are to be cleaned three times a week, and this is to be monitored by the relevant unit head or safety officer.

20.1.3 Each individual employee has to take responsibility for cleaning up after using the toilet.

20.1.4 The onus of maintaining clean toilets does not only rest with the cleaning staff, but also with staff who use the facilities.

20.1.5 Toilet paper and towels must be available to staff at all times; these supplies must be checked and replenished daily.

### **20.2 Kitchens**

20.2.1 Kitchen surfaces, kitchen floors, stoves, fridges and microwave ovens must be kept clean.

20.2.2 Food unfit for consumption must be removed from refrigerators by the owners of the decayed food.

20.2.3 When fridges are routinely cleaned by cleaning staff, old food will be discarded.

20.2.3 Garbage bins in kitchens and offices must be emptied daily and disinfected at least once a week.

### **20.3 Garbage removal**

20.3.1 Disorganised removal of garbage can create unsafe conditions, and become a breeding ground for organisms that transmit pathogens and vermin.

20.3.2 Garbage must be removed safely and through the back entrance of buildings/offices.

## **21. ERGONOMICS**

Ergonomics pertains to the efficiency of persons in relation to their work environment. Ergonomic stress is caused by poor work-station design and leads to repetitive strain injuries, muscular stress, fatigue, back problems, carpal tunnel syndrome, tennis elbow, and eye strain.

### **21.1 Posture:**

21.1.1 Comfortable seating needs to be ensured, including heights of desks.

21.1.2 Back injury must be avoided by lifting objects carefully. See section 33.

21.1.3 Negligence on the part of the employee must be avoided.

## **21.2 The hand:**

21.2.1 Inflammation of the joints of the hand can result from excessive time spent typing without breaks.

21.2.2 Hourly breaks of 5 minutes should be taken in order to rest the carpal and meta-carpal (hand and wrist) joints.

## **21.3 Noise:**

21.3.1 Office noise is distracting especially when it is higher than routine background noise.

21.3.2 Unnecessary noise including undue sounding of alarms must be avoided. Staff must be trained on the correct use of remote controls so as to avoid triggering alarms accidentally.

21.3.3 Ringing of telephones and fax machines must not be too loud.

21.3.4 Voices should be kept to a level that does not disturb meetings, or create a disturbance to callers or clients who call in.

21.3.5 Any maintenance work done on the premises where excessive noise will cause a disturbance or auditory damage, must be done after hours.

## **21.4 Eye strain: Glare:**

21.4.1 Glare and intense lighting causes eyestrain and headaches.

21.4.2 Workstations must be positioned so as to avoid undue glare on work and computer monitors.

## **21.5 Light levels:**

21.5.1 Sufficient light levels need to be ensured at work-stations.

21.5.2 Hourly breaks should be taken by computer users so as to prevent excessive time spent in front of computers.

## **21.6 Ten rules to minimise workstation discomfort**

1. Adjust the workstation in order to sit upright and comfortably, with enough knee, leg, arm and elbow space.
2. Locate the monitor screen about 40 tot 76 cm from the eyes.
3. The top of the screen should be slightly lower than horizontal eye level. Tilt the top of the screen at a 10 to 20 degree angle.
4. Place document holders close to the screen.
5. Keep screen and keyboard in line.
6. Keep screen clean of fingerprints and dust.
7. Screen should not be brighter than surroundings. Overall room light should not be too harsh or too dark.
8. Screen background should not be dull and screen characters bright enough to see with ease.

9. Minimise reflected glare by anti-glare screens or dimmer switches on lights.
10. Screen should not face a window, but away, or at a 90 degree angle. Light bulbs or windows should not be reflected in the screen.

## 22. RECORDING OF INCIDENTS

All injuries and accidents (incidents) must be recorded and investigated so that their recurrence can be prevented.

## 23. VEHICLES

- Only licensed drivers may drive vehicles.
- Seat belts must be worn when driving.
- These drivers are required to go for annual eye tests.
- Disciplinary action will be taken against reckless drivers.
- Drivers who incur speeding fines are accountable for these fines,
- Fines issued for worn tyres, broken wiper blades or similar faults on the car, will be paid by SAHRA. However, such fines must be prevented by checking these parts regularly.
- No persons other than SAHRA staff are authorised to drive the vehicles.
- No pets are allowed in the vehicles.
- No smoking is allowed in cars.
- Cars are to be thoroughly cleaned once a week.
- Vehicles are to go for regular maintenance and servicing after 10 000 or 15 000 kilometres, depending on the requirements.
- All tyres, spare tyres, jumper leads, safety belts, lights and indicators on cars are to be inspected once a week, and defects reported and fixed.
- All cars must be equipped with a medical kit.

## 24. INSURANCE FOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS

24.1 In the event of a motor vehicle accident, the insurance will only provide cover if the vehicle was driven by a SAHRA staff member, with authorisation from management. **Unauthorised use of vehicles will not be covered by the insurance.** Passengers who are not staff of SAHRA, and who are involved in a car accident, will not be covered by the vehicle insurance.

24.2 Any person other than SAHRA staff who drives the vehicles will be fully responsible for all damages incurred, including the medical costs of those persons who might be injured, and funeral costs in the event of death, if the deceased does not have funeral cover.

24.3 A staff member given the use of a vehicle assumes full accountability for the vehicle. Unauthorised use of vehicles will result in disciplinary action being taken.

## **25. INDEMNIFICATION**

SAHRA will not be held liable for passengers other than staff, who are injured while in SAHRA vehicles, even if the car was driven by a staff member. An indemnity form must be filled out by non-staff members **who have been given permission** to be transported in SAHRA vehicles, indemnifying SAHRA against liability.

## **26. FIRE HAZARDS**

- 26.1 The building must be inspected four times a year for fire hazards.
- 26.2 Fire drills must be carried out twice a year.
- 26.3 The fire alarm has to be tested every third month. See rules for fire prevention Section 29.

## **27. EVACUATION**

In the event of a fire or other emergency drill, as well as real emergency situations, ALL employees shall evacuate immediately, by means of the nearest marked exit. Refer to Evacuation Policy and Procedure, Sections 30 and 31.

## **28. BOMB ALERTS**

In the event of bomb alerts, ALL employees are to evacuate immediately. Refer to evacuation procedure below.

## **29. FIRE PREVENTION RULES**

- A fire extinguisher must be outside each office.
- All fire extinguishers must be tagged and serviced annually.
- The 'No smoking' policy must be enforced.
- No cigarette butts may be thrown into bins or near parked cars.
- Flammables must be properly stored.
- Air-conditioning must be checked monthly.
- The fire alarm must be tested every three months.
- Multiple plug outlets and extension-cord usage must be kept to a minimum.
- All heaters, fans and radios must be switched off when staff leave their offices.

## **30. EVACUATION POLICY**

- Evacuation exits must be properly identified and well lit.
- Exit paths must be clear and doors must be operable.
- The alarm must be in working order.
- Alarms must be distinctive and recognised by all employees.
- An auxiliary (back up) power supply must ensure that alarms work in the event of an electrical failure.

- Emergency phone numbers must be posted in each office.
- Staff must be trained to memorise these numbers.
- Staff must be trained in evacuation procedures and emergency drills.
- The safety officer and unit heads must have the cell phone numbers of all staff so that a group emergency message can be sent to those who are unable to respond to an alarm or paged message e.g. someone who is hearing impaired.
- In the event of a fire or other emergency, ALL employees must evacuate immediately.
- All employees must be accounted for by the safety officer, the human resources officer or a unit head, in the parking lot at the back of the building.
- Persons with visual or auditory disabilities must be assisted out of the building.

### **31. EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

- Do not panic.
- Leave your office immediately; calmly call out to staff in other offices as you pass.
- Try to walk instead of run; get to the nearest emergency exit.
- Do not use narrow passages; do not push past those ahead of you.
- Try to help others if you can.
- DO NOT go back into the building until it is proven to be safe to do so.
- Staff are to meet outside in the parking lot so that all can be accounted for.

### **32. GUIDELINES FOR SAFE LIFTING**

- Never pick something up that is too heavy for one person; try to get help.
- Take a balanced stance, feet spaced shoulder width apart.
- When lifting something from the floor, squat down low.
- Keep the back in a straight position.
- Use the whole hand to grasp the object to be lifted, and not the fingertips.
- Lift by straightening legs, letting leg muscles and not back muscles do the work.
- Tighten stomach muscles to help support the back.
- Never twist when lifting something.
- Do not carry an object that blocks your vision when it is carried.
- When setting the object down, use the same principle as for lifting.

### **33. GENERAL SAFETY RULES AND GUIDELINES**

To ensure your safety, and that of your co-workers, please observe and obey the following rules and guidelines:

- Study the safety policy, and observe and practice the safety procedures established for the job.
- In case of sickness or injury, no matter how slight, report it at once to your unit head/safety officer. In no case should an employee treat his own or someone else's injuries or attempt to remove foreign particles from someone else's eye.
- In case of injury resulting in possible fracture to legs, back, or neck, or any accident resulting in an unconscious condition, or a severe head injury, the employee is not to be moved until medical attention has been given by authorised personnel.
- Never distract the attention of another person while they are executing a task that requires balance or full concentration, as you might cause him/her to be injured.
- Where required, you must wear protective equipment, such as goggles, safety glasses, masks, gloves, etc. that is appropriate for the task.
- Store materials, bins, boxes, ladders or other equipment so as not to block aisles, offices, exits, fire fighting equipment, electric lighting or power panel, valves, etc.
- Keep your work area clean.
- Observe "no smoking" regulations.
- Do not exceed speed limits.
- Do not block access to fire extinguishers.
- Do not tamper with electric controls or switches.
- Do not engage in practices that are inconsistent with ordinary and reasonable common sense safety rules.
- Help to **prevent** accidents.
- Use designated passages when moving from one place to another; never take hazardous shortcuts (*i.e.*, climbing over furniture or equipment.)
- Lift properly—use your leg muscles, not your back muscles. For heavier loads, ask for assistance.
- Do not throw objects.
- Clean up spilled liquid, oil, or grease immediately.
- Place trash and paper in proper containers and not in cans provided for cigarette butts.

## CONCLUSION

Although management is accountable for the health and safety of all employees, the success of a health and safety policy and programme will depend on the involvement and teamwork of each and every employee.