



## Scottish Council on Deafness

### Deaf and Deafblind Employees' Safety at Work Guidelines

Every deaf<sup>1</sup> and deafblind employee has the right to feel safe at work, regardless where they work.

All employers have a duty under HASAWA 1974<sup>2</sup> to ensure that their workplace or work environment is equally safe for deaf, deafblind, deafened and hearing employees.

All employees<sup>3</sup> – deaf, deafblind, deafened, hard of hearing and hearing - have a duty to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of others; and must co-operate with their employer to ensure that the workplace is safe. This also includes volunteers or people on work placement schemes.

Below are the minimum safety guidelines that employers should adhere to: -

1. All employees should receive deaf<sup>4</sup> awareness training to ensure that health and safety procedures are fully complied with.
2. During their induction period, deaf employees should receive health and safety training. Employers must ensure that this training is fully accessible to all employees by either providing communication services (e.g. Sign Language Interpreters, Deafblind Guide/Communicators, Lipspeakers and/or Notetakers) or by providing a signed and subtitled DVD version of their health and safety manual for their deaf employees.
3. Every fire alarm in the work place/environment is equipped with a visual indicator (e.g. flashing beacon or strobe). This includes reception areas, meeting rooms, staff rooms, training rooms, toilets and washrooms.
4. Deaf employees are fully drilled in fire safety & evacuation procedures. Every step must be taken to check that deaf employees are aware about fire alarms going off because sometimes deaf employees do not see the visual indicators flashing.
5. Where it is impractical to equip all fire alarms with visual indicators or where no visual fire alarm indicators are available

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<sup>1</sup> The term "deaf" includes Deaf Sign Language users, Deafened and Hard of Hearing People

<sup>2</sup> HASAWA 1974 – Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

<sup>3</sup> As above

<sup>4</sup> The word "deaf" will be used throughout the rest of the document to mean deaf, deafblind, deafened and hard of hearing employees, unless specified

(e.g. on building sites), vibrating pagers<sup>5</sup> should be supplied to deaf employees so that they can not only be alerted to fire and other dangerous incidents but also to emergency messages from their bosses/line managers/supervisors.

6. There should be a “buddy” scheme in place. The ‘buddy’ should be a hearing colleague who has the responsibility to, make sure that the deaf person is aware that the alarm has gone off and to ensure that they are escorted out of the building if required, particularly as vibrating pagers are not always immediate in alerting a person.
7. Where PA systems are in operation, deaf employees should be issued with pagers, which have the facility to send messages. This will ensure that they receive the same messages as their hearing colleagues. As it is impractical to rely on their hearing colleagues to convey messages all the time, pagers give deaf employees their independence.
8. Whenever an employee (or a H&S rep) arranges a meeting to discuss issues relating to health and safety, communication support must be provided to ensure all employees can fully participate in the meeting.
9. Where deafblind people are employed, it is essential that British Standard 8300:2001 – Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people: Code of Practice<sup>6</sup> – is applied. For example, corridors and stairwells should be well lit and equipped with handrails; steps/stairs should have yellow strips on them; lighting should be evenly distributed to avoid glare and shadow.
10. In lifts, there should be a facility to enable deaf employees to communicate with emergency services when lifts break down.
11. For entry/exit purposes, door entry systems must be accessible to deaf employees; for instance these systems should have a video facility or flashing indicator to alert deaf employees that the door is now open.
12. Employers must ensure that all employees know that they have a duty to ensure the workplace is free from obstacles. For example, floor areas are kept clear of boxes and wires; drawers are not left open.

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<sup>5</sup> Staff who are using pagers to send messages to deaf employees should receive training in their use and provided with a protocol for use.

<sup>6</sup> For more information, go to [http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/Documents/Disability/Employment/Employment\\_code.pdf](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/Documents/Disability/Employment/Employment_code.pdf)

13. When carrying out risk assessments, employers must involve deaf employees, as the employees will know of specific risks relating to their work and work practice.
14. In order to ensure that all employees are aware of the need for a healthy and safe workforce, employers should encourage deaf employees to apply for Access to Work support from the Department for Work and Pensions and be prepared to make a voluntary contribution towards the cost of Access to Work support if necessary.

11<sup>th</sup> August 2008