

Guide To BS-8599-1 Compliant First Aid Kits

What is BS-8599-1?

BS-8599-1 is the new British Standard that specifies the contents that must be included in workplace first aid kits, and provides guidance as to the size of kit required for a given workplace environment, based on the number of employees and the level of risk present.



Why Has This Been Implemented?

The new list of recommended contents forms part of a modern approach to what is deemed to be a sensible range of products in the workplace of today. Factors such as new technologies in product development, different types of injury & risk, changes to training protocols as well as an increased awareness of infection control have resulted in the current kits no longer being ideal.

The HSE participated in proposing BS-8599-1, and are expected to change its current Code of Practice and Guidance to nominate the BSI standard rather than list suggested first aid products. This approach will bring first aid kits in line with other safety products such as hard hats and fire extinguishers.

When Will This Come Into Effect?

BS-8599-1 is effective from 30th June - first aid kits should be updated thereafter.

What Happens To The Old Standards?

BS-8599-1 specifically relates to adequate contents and provides guidance on the size of kit required. HSE Law still applies in terms of protocol:

"An employer shall provide or ensure that there are provided such equipment and facilities as are adequate and appropriate in the circumstances for enabling first aid to be rendered to their employees if they are injured or become ill at work".

"The contents of first-aid containers should be examined frequently and should be restocked as soon as possible after use. Sufficient stocks should be held in a back-up stock on site."

How Does It Affect Me?

Employers are still ultimately responsible for carrying out a formal assessment of the first aid provision required in the workplace, and that suitable items are available to treat injuries that may arise from any hazards on site.

What Happens If I Don't Comply?

Whilst it is the employers responsibility to ensure their level of First Aid provisions are adequate for their premises, they become liable when correct first aid is not available to treat an injury caused by a hazard which they should have accounted for.

For example, does your workplace have a kettle? If it does, and employee scalds themselves, does your current first aid kit include a burns dressing?

If it doesn't, you could run under cold water but this is not effective at reducing scarring or the potential for infection. As an employer you are therefore responsible for any ramifications arising from injuries which could have been treated had adequate first aid provision been available.

The current kits were introduced in 1997 and were based on legislation from 1981 – the workplace has evolved, ensure your first aid supplies follow suit!

What Are The Specific Changes?

Increased numbers of gloves, which now need to be Nitrile material. The old kits had only one pair of gloves and 29 dressings.

Fewer Triangular Bandages, which are no longer used for the immobilisation of lower limb injuries.

The introduction of a new smaller dressing specifically for finger injuries that are too large for first aid plasters. Previously the smallest dressing was 12cm square, making it impractical for finger injuries.

The introduction of a spool of tape to secure bandages without the use of safety pins.

The introduction of modern wet gel type burns dressings and a conforming bandage to secure it.

The introduction of first aid shears, to cut clothing away from an injury site.

The introduction of an eye wash bottle into the travel kit, recognising that running water or fixed eye wash stations are unlikely to be available to workers travelling away from the workplace.

The introduction of a resuscitation device providing protection for first aiders giving mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

The addition of a foil survival blanket to provide means to keep a casualty warm, particularly in cases of clinical shock.