



First aid during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

This page covers first aid requirements in non-healthcare settings during the pandemic, as well as first aid cover and qualifications at this time.

[First aid in non-healthcare settings](#)

[First aid cover and qualifications](#)

First aid in non-healthcare settings

This guidance will help employers ensure first aiders are confident that they can help someone injured or ill at work during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Employers and their first aiders should take account of the specific guidance on giving cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) from the [Resuscitation Council UK](#)^[1].

Emergency service professionals, such as NHS ambulance workers, will receive specific advice from their employer.

HSE has guidance on [First aid cover and qualifications](#).

Check your first aid needs assessment

As an employer, when reviewing your risk assessment to include working during the pandemic, consider refreshing your first aid at work [needs assessment](#)^[2].

Ask your first aiders if there are any factors that should be taken into account as part of your [risk assessment](#)^[3], for example vulnerable workers with first aid responsibilities.

You should discuss the risk assessment with your first aiders so they are confident about providing the right assistance. This includes knowing what equipment they can use to minimise risk of infection transmission, as explained below.

Guidance for first aiders

Try to assist at a safe distance from the casualty as much as you can and minimise the time you share a breathing zone.

If they are capable, tell them to do things for you, but treating the casualty properly should be your first concern. Remember the 3P model – preserve life, prevent worsening, promote recovery.

Preserve life: CPR

- Call 999 immediately – tell the call handler if the patient has any COVID-19 symptoms
- Ask for help. If a portable defibrillator is available, ask for it
- Before starting CPR, to minimise transmission risk, use a cloth or towel to cover the patient's mouth and nose, while still permitting breathing to restart following successful resuscitation
- If available, use:
 - a fluid-repellent surgical mask
 - disposable gloves
 - eye protection
 - apron or other suitable covering
- Only deliver CPR by chest compressions and use a defibrillator (if available) – **don't** do rescue breaths

Prevent worsening, promote recovery: all other injuries or illnesses

- If you suspect a serious illness or injury, call 999 immediately – tell the call handler if the patient has any COVID-19 symptoms
- If giving first aid to someone, you should use the recommended equipment listed above if it is available
- You should minimise the time you share a breathing zone with the casualty and direct them to do things for you where possible

After delivering any first aid

- Ensure you safely discard disposable items and clean reusable ones thoroughly
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitiser as soon as possible

First aid cover and qualifications during the pandemic

If first aid cover for your business is reduced because of coronavirus or you can't get the first aid training you need, there are some things you can do so that you still comply with the law.

You should review your first aid needs assessment and decide if you can still provide the cover needed for the workers that are present and the activities that they are doing.

Keep enough first aid cover

If fewer people are coming into your workplace it may still be safe to operate with reduced first aid cover. You could also stop higher-risk activities.

Share first aid cover with another business

You could share the first aiders of another business, but be sure that they have the knowledge, experience and availability to cover the first aid needs of your business.

Shared first aiders must:

- be aware of the type of injuries or illnesses that you identified in your [first aid needs assessment](#)^[4] and have the training and skills to address them
- know enough about your work environment and its first aid facilities
- be able to get to the workplace in good time if needed

Whoever provides the temporary cover must make sure they do not adversely affect their own first aid cover.

First aid certificate extensions

Offshore Medic and Offshore First Aid Certificates

From 31 October 2020 offshore medic (OM), or offshore first aid (OFA) certificates, must be current and in date. The temporary COVID-19 extension arrangements end.

First Aid at Work (FAW) and Emergency First aid at Work (EFAW) certificates requalification

First aid providers have resumed first aid training and assessment. In some cases, there remains a back log or limited availability.

FAW or EFAW certificates that expired after 16 March 2020 can remain valid until 31 October 2020 or 6 months from date of expiry, whichever is later. All requalification training for these certificates should be completed by 31 March 2021.

To qualify for the extension, employers must be able to demonstrate that:

- they have made every effort to arrange requalification training as soon as possible and can explain in detail why they have not been able to do so. For example, they must show evidence that staff with expired certificates are booked on to EFAW or FAW requalification courses, if requested by an inspector
- they have adequate and appropriate equipment and facilities to give first aid to any employee who is injured or becomes ill at work
- the level of first aid cover provided remains appropriate for their particular work environment
- the level of first aid provision necessary in high risk settings is fully maintained, eg in construction, agriculture, engineering and chemicals

This guidance now applies to employers in England, Scotland and Wales.

Annual refresher training

If first aiders are unable to access annual refresher training face to face during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, HSE supports the use of online refresher training to keep their skills up to date.

HSE still strongly recommends that the practical elements of actual FAW, EFAW and requalification courses are delivered face to face, so that competency of the student can be properly assessed.

Interrupted first aid training

If because of coronavirus you cannot complete training for your first aid qualification within the usual timeframe, training can restart at a later date as long as:

- a full recap of training delivered before the interruption is done before moving onto undelivered modules
- the awarding body is content that you can show:
 - a full understanding of all aspects of the course content
 - the knowledge required and competencies at the end of the training

Related content

- [General guidance on first aid at work](#)^[5]
- [Working safely during the coronavirus pandemic](#)^[6]

Link URLs in this page

1. Resuscitation Council UK
<https://www.resus.org.uk/media/statements/resuscitation-council-uk-statements-on-covid-19-coronavirus-cpr-and-resuscitation/covid-community/>
2. needs assessment
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid/needs-assessment.htm>
3. risk assessment
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/risk-assessment.htm>
4. first aid needs assessment
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid/needs-assessment.htm>
5. General guidance on first aid at work
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid/index.htm>
6. Working safely during the coronavirus pandemic
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/index.htm>

Is this page useful? Yes No