

Barber

Straightforward information and practical tips to help you sort health and safety



nhf
national
hairdressers'
federation

Safe Start Up

Barber

This guide will help you with health and safety. It gives you straightforward information and practical tips. It tells you what you need to do to make sure you don't break the law, and how to protect yourself, anyone who works for you, your clients and your reputation. It also shows you where to go to get more information if you need it.

No one is saying that being a barber or owning a barber's shop is a risky business. But at the end of the day, if things go wrong it's your livelihood or business that will suffer. You'll find that you already do – or plan to do – a

lot of what's covered, and much of it is common sense. Looking after health and safety is just part of managing a business well. Done properly, you could see it save money too.

You'll find this guide helpful if you:

- own a barber's shop
- manage a barber's.

You'll also find the guide useful if you work as a barber. If you're a hair salon owner, or also offer a range of traditional salon services, download our salon guide at www.iosh.co.uk/safestartup.

Did you know...

One person is seriously injured at work every 17 minutes

IOSH and the NHF

The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health has developed this guide in partnership with the National Hairdressers' Federation.

Our thanks to NHF member Panicos Lazarou, of Bentley & Co., for his input to the content of this guide.

About IOSH

IOSH is the Chartered body for health and safety professionals. We were founded in 1945 and are a registered charity. Find out more at www.iosh.co.uk.

About the NHF

The NHF is the UK's largest employer-led trade association for hairdressing, barbers and beauty salon owners. Find out more at www.nhf.info.

Here to help

If you have a question on health and safety, or want information on an issue you're facing, get in touch with IOSH on +44 (0)116 257 3199 or techinfo@iosh.co.uk. Our helpline is completely free.



By law you must...

In the UK, the law applies to all businesses, large or small. If you're self-employed or an employer then **you** are responsible for the health and safety of your business. The law is there to make sure you have a safe working environment and cut down the risk of you, your staff (if you have any) or clients getting ill or injured. So, by law you must...

...get some help with your health and safety duties

As an employer you have to appoint someone who knows about health and safety. This could be:

- yourself, if you have a health and safety qualification, knowledge and experience
- one or more of your staff, if they are qualified or you get them trained
- someone from outside the business.

If you're not confident about managing health and safety in-house then you may need to call in some external help or advice.

Even if you don't employ any staff, don't forget that legally you have what's called a 'duty of care' to anyone who is affected by what you do for a living – from a client to a member of the public.

Did you know...

Good health and safety saves cash: you can save £12 for every £1 you spend

Health and safety law

Your local authority will enforce health and safety law for the sector you work in. The authority will give advice and guidance, as well as making inspections and investigating accidents or complaints. Legal powers include formal enforcement notices to tackle specific risks. Local authorities can also prosecute where they have found a health and safety failure.

You can find out more about local authority enforcement at **www.hse.gov.uk/lau/enforcement.htm** and what powers an inspector has at **www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/section/20**



Find out more

- Find out more at **www.hse.gov.uk/business/competent-advice.htm**
- Download the HSE leaflet 'Getting specialist help with health and safety' at **www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg420.pdf**
- Have a look at the HSE's 'Health and safety made simple' site at **www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety** and its toolbox with advice and guidance for small businesses at **www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox**
- Get guidance on getting professional advice at **www.oshcr.org**
- Find out about our free enquiry service at **www.iosh.co.uk/helpline**
- Download our free guide on getting help with health and safety at **www.iosh.co.uk/techguide**



By law you must...

...write a health and safety policy for your business

If you employ five or more people, part or full time, you have to have a written policy.

The policy should describe how you'll manage health and safety. It lets your staff and others know that you have a serious commitment to keeping on top of risks as part of your business. It should clearly state who does what, when and how.

Your policy doesn't have to take you long to write, or be lengthy or complicated. Download the template listed in 'Find out more' and complete it, or use it as a guide to write your own.

Your policy shouldn't just be a piece of lifeless paperwork – it's designed to help you manage health and safety properly. It will only be effective if you and your staff are aware of it and follow what it says. You'll need to review it every now and then to reflect any changes – just make a note in your calendar, say once a year. You'll also need to see if it needs updating if there's been a major change, for example, to the way you work, or where you work.

Find out more

- Download a policy template at www.hse.gov.uk/risk/risk-assessment-and-policy-template.doc
- Look at an example of a policy at www.hse.gov.uk/risk/health-and-safety-policy-example.doc

...manage the risk in your business

You must consider and manage any risks where you work or connected with what you do.

This is a straightforward process. Known as 'risk assessment', it involves thinking about what you do in your business that could harm people – you, your staff (if you have them) or your clients – and what you're going to do to try to stop it happening.

In your line of work, you will probably look at things like:

- skin problems like dermatitis
- using tools and equipment
- aches and pains.

There may be more, but these are the main areas you're most likely to need to focus on – we look at these three in a bit more detail on page 09.

Risk assessments aren't about piles of paperwork, just sensible actions to control the risks. The law doesn't expect you to remove all risks, but it does expect you to control them. You're probably doing most of this already as part of day-to-day management – but your risk assessment will help you see if what you're doing is enough or if you need to do more.

Find out more

- Look at templates and examples at www.hse.gov.uk/risk/risk-assessment-and-policy-template.doc
- Look at risk assessment case studies at www.hse.gov.uk/risk/casestudies
- Use our free risk assessment tool at www.ioshroutefinder.co.uk

By law you must...

...talk to your employees

If you employ anyone, you need to consult them on health and safety. Again, it's not complicated – you can do this by listening and talking to them about:

- health and safety and the work they do
- how risks are controlled
- the best ways of giving information and training.

This is a two-way thing. Let your staff raise concerns and give their opinions on decisions. After all, they're often the best people to understand the risks involved in their work – and talking to them about it lets them know that you take their health and safety seriously.



Find out more

- Find out more at www.hse.gov.uk/involvement/doyourbit

...give training and information

If you have staff, they need to know how to work safely and without risking their health. You must give clear instructions, information and training. It's a legal requirement to give basic health and safety induction training for all new staff. An induction should cover information about working safely and include first aid and fire and evacuation procedures. Don't forget that you have the same health and safety responsibilities for anyone you employ – including temps, apprentices, trainees or work experience students. Bear in mind that younger people will be inexperienced and less mature, as well as sometimes lacking the confidence to ask questions and raise issues. New, inexperienced or young employees will need to be supervised more closely.

Training could include, for example, basic first aid or how to achieve good posture to help with aches and pains.

Not all training needs to be formal or expensive – at a barber's, some training can be given in-house in informal sessions, based on your own knowledge and experience. Remember that health and safety training must be in working hours and you can't charge employees for it. Keeping training records will help remind you when refreshers are due. If someone has changed jobs or is taking on new responsibilities, you'll need to tell them about any new health and safety implications.

Make sure that everyone has information on:

- hazards and risks they may face – for your business, dermatitis is a typical risk, for example – have a look at page 09 for more details
- what's in place to deal with hazards and risks
- what to do in an emergency.



Find out more

- Download a guide on health and safety training at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg345.pdf
- Find out more about employing young people at www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople/law/index.htm



By law you must...

...have the right facilities

Some of these legal requirements will sound obvious, but it's a good idea to check to make sure that you've covered the staff welfare basics.

You need to provide:

- toilet and washing facilities
- drinking water
- somewhere to store clothing and to change if your staff wear a uniform
- somewhere to rest and eat meals.

You need to make sure that where you work is healthy, and that you have:

- good ventilation – fresh, clean air drawn from outside or a ventilation system
- a comfortable working temperature – usually at least 16°C
- lighting suitable for the work being carried out

- enough space, seating and so on
- a clean environment with bins provided for rubbish.

If you own your barber's shop, you need to keep your workplace safe by:

- maintaining and servicing the premises and work equipment
- having windows that can be opened and cleaned safely
- making sure that any glass, Perspex or plastic panels in doors or walls are protected or made of toughened safety material, if they are in areas where members of the public have access and could be affected if there were an accident – you may need to get advice on this.

If you rent, make sure your landlord provides you with safe premises, for example, checking a gas boiler and letting you have a copy of the safety certificate. You'll need to clarify your role with your landlord, especially what's expected of you in terms of building upkeep. You'll obviously have responsibility for your own equipment.

You also need to keep floors and corridors clear of rubbish or blockages – this makes it easier and safer to work and also cuts down fire risks.



Find out more

- Download a guide on workplace health, safety and welfare at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg244.pdf

Did you know...

One small company was fined £3,500 in court because it didn't have adequate washing facilities for employees who were at risk of getting dermatitis



By law you must...

...plan for first aid, accidents and ill health

You have to organise first aid arrangements where you work. If you employ people, you're responsible for making sure they get attention straightaway if they get ill or injured.

If you're self-employed, with no staff, you need to have a first aid kit.

If you have staff, you must have:

- a stocked first aid box
- an 'appointed person' to take charge – someone who co-ordinates first aid where you work, restocks the box when necessary and calls an ambulance if needed. This person doesn't have to be a trained first aider
- information for employees giving details of what you've organised for first aid.

You may decide that you need someone trained in first aid. Your first aid assessment will highlight this – you just need to consider your situation and write down anything significant, along with what you plan to do to deal with it. For example, think about how far away from your nearest surgery or hospital you are, and whether any of your staff have complex medical conditions.

By law, you must report and keep a record of certain accidents, incidents and illness.



Find out more

- Get information on first aid and how to stock a first aid box at **www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid** and a leaflet on first aid from **www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg214.pdf**
- Find out what needs reporting and how at **www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/index.htm**
- Buy an accident book from the HSE at **books.hse.gov.uk** or record the details in your own system

...display the health and safety law poster

If you employ anyone, you must either display this poster, or give each member of staff the pocket card version. The poster outlines UK health and safety law and includes a simple list that tells employers what they and their

employees need to do. There is also space on it for you to name your health and safety representatives, if you have any, and health and safety contacts, for example, your local authority adviser.



Find out more

- You can get copies of the poster and pocket cards from **www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/lawposter.htm**

Did you know...

Four people are killed every week at work

By law you must...

...get insurance for your business

If you have employees you'll probably need employers' liability insurance. It protects you against any costs of compensation in claims made against you by an employee if they get injured or ill and it's caused by your business.

There may be other types of insurance you need, such as public liability cover.

Did you know...

One small business owner was fined nearly £4,000 with costs of £3,000 after it was found to have no Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance



Find out more

- Download information on employers' liability insurance at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/hse40.pdf
- Find out more on insurance at www.abi.org.uk/Information/Business/15310.pdf

...keep your business up to date

Keeping up with news and developments in your sector will help you keep your health and safety policy and risk assessments up to date. You'll find help through trade unions, employers' organisations, Business Link and trade associations.



Find out more

- Read IOSH news and sign up to RSS news feeds at www.iosh.co.uk/news
- Subscribe to free ebulletins at www.hse.gov.uk/news/subscribe
- Get podcasts from www.hse.gov.uk/podcasts
- Keep up with news from www.nhf.info/news

Issues to think about

We've covered some of the basic things you need to do to comply with the law. Here, we look at some specific issues and legal duties relevant to your work in the barber business.

Skin problems

Barbers are at high risk when it comes to skin problems. Bear in mind that skin damage is not only painful, it also looks unsightly, especially in your business.

For barbers, the main causes of contact dermatitis are frequent wet work, including shampooing and rinsing. You can help prevent this by:

- wearing disposable non-latex gloves when rinsing and shampooing and when cleaning tools and utensils
- changing gloves between clients
- drying your hands thoroughly with a soft cotton or paper towel

- moisturising after washing your hands, as well as at the start and end of each day – make sure you don't miss fingertips, between the fingers and wrists
- checking regularly for early signs of dermatitis – look out for very dry or chapped skin.

'Barrier' creams aren't recommended – if you use chemicals, many will still get through to your skin.

If you're an employer or manager you should make sure your staff are aware of this issue and give them information on how to prevent dermatitis as well as equipment like gloves to protect themselves.

Did you know...

16,000 people in just one year suffered from skin problems because of their work



Find out more

- Find out more about dermatitis at www.hse.gov.uk/hairstyling/index.htm
- You'll find information and resources from the Bad Hand Day campaign helpful – go to www.hse.gov.uk/hairstyling/bad-hand.htm
- Get advice on selecting the right gloves at www.hse.gov.uk/skin/employ/gloves.htm

Issues to think about

Using tools and equipment

You use sharp tools and equipment day in, day out. Cut down on the risk of injury and contamination by:

- making sure that sharp tools are only used by trained staff
- using a single use, disposable blade when using cut throat or straight-edged razors on your clients
- never re-using the blades
- wearing gloves for open razor work to protect against blood-borne viruses and bacteria
- wearing gloves to change the blades to protect your hands
- taking care when fitting new blades – and making sure only experienced staff carry this out
- disposing of all used razors in a proper sharps box – never throw them in a waste bin or leave them lying around. In some areas, you can get sharps boxes from your local council – otherwise you'll need to use a commercial service to deliver and collect boxes
- having a plan in place if someone is cut – think about contamination risks if someone has hepatitis, for example. Use the links in the 'Find out more' box to help you
- storing new blades securely and safely within your shop
- keeping all your equipment clean. Wash brushes and combs in hot soapy water and put them in

disinfectant between each client – or use a UV cabinet to destroy bacteria, germs and viruses.

Sterilising sprays are good for metal products like scissors, clippers, razor handles or blade-holders.

- using well designed tools and equipment and keeping them in good condition
- swapping equipment if what you're using makes your hand, wrist or arm uncomfortable
- making sure you keep your wrists as straight as possible while you work to prevent painful carpal tunnel syndrome developing.

It's a good idea to check during the client consultation whether your client:

- is taking any medication that could cause a problem if they're cut, for example warfarin
- has any relevant allergies, for example to the latex in some gloves.

If you use hot towels as part of your service put them in a towel steamer or cabinet to make sure they get to the right temperature – your trade supplier should be able to advise you. Train your staff in how to use the cabinet properly.

Did you know...

A cut from a contaminated sharp can mean someone being infected with HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C and other blood-borne pathogens



Find out more

- Find out more about dealing with exposures at www.hse.gov.uk/biosafety/blood-borne-viruses/how-deal-exposure-incident.htm
- Get guidance on putting together a plan to deal with exposures at www.hse.gov.uk/biosafety/diseases/bbv.pdf



Issues to think about

Aches and pains

Many barbers report musculoskeletal problems. It's not surprising that with all the repetitive tasks you do, and a lot of standing, you or your team may get a few aches and pains from time to time. Don't ignore them – take action.

Remember good product designers will usually have the worker in mind and aim to reduce problems. For example, you can get chairs that are height-adjustable, and scissors, dryers and combs that are ergonomically designed to be more comfortable to use.

If you have staff, training and information will also help. You should give advice on posture and using tools. Often, simple things like making sure your staff take regular breaks can be effective at reducing aches and pains.

Don't forget that your staff can get injuries outside work, and it can affect how they do their job. In these cases, you need to adjust how they work while they're recovering.

Did you know...

Musculoskeletal disorders – from back pain to sore wrists – affect one million people every year



Find out more

- If you don't already use one, think about getting a 'saddle' chair. These stools will decrease stress on your legs and back, but still allow you to move about quickly and easily. You're more balanced, and it's also easier to stand frequently from a saddle seat compared to a standard stool. Find out more at www.ergonomicssimplified.com/professions/hairstylist



Issues to think about

You also need to consider...

- **Slips, trips and falls** – if you own or manage a barber shop, keep the floors clean and clear.
- **Electricity** – make sure fixed and handheld equipment works properly and that your electrics are serviced and tested by someone with the right skills and qualifications.
- **Chemicals** – if you work with chemicals then you need to make sure you store and use them properly. Remember that cleaning products will commonly include chemicals. Most of the products you use are completely safe, but some can be hazardous under certain conditions or if used in the wrong way. For example, if a product is left in direct sunlight or near a radiator it can activate the ingredients before you use it. You should also think about what to do if a product gets into your client's mouth or eyes – the safety data sheet you get with each product will give you advice on this.
- **Working temperature** – it can get hot and humid in a barber shop, so make sure yours can be easily ventilated.
- **Fire precautions** – if you have a barber's, you have to have a fire risk assessment. You have the same responsibility whether you rent or own the property. Think about how a fire could start (the top two reasons are arson and electrical faults) and how you and your staff and clients would escape if there were a fire. Your assessment, which should be written up, should cover what action you've taken to minimise the risks – for example, making sure you use up-to-date electrical kit and getting hard-wired electrics (inside the walls) checked by qualified electricians. You will also need to decide on the right types of fire extinguisher, think about signage and make sure exit routes are kept clear. Don't forget to include a fire management plan, which covers how often your alarms and emergency lighting should be tested, and who will do it, and your fire evacuation plan details. If you rent your property, your landlord may cover some of these duties – check your contract or ask if you're not sure. Talk to your local authority adviser or a health and safety consultant if you need more help.

Did you know...

Injuries caused by slips or trips cost employers more than £500 million a year

Did you know...

In just one year, there were 31,000 fires in buildings used for business – 36 people died

Got a question?

Look at our FAQs at www.iosh.co.uk/safestartup.



Find out more

- Look for more information on getting your electrics tested at www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/faq.htm#maintaining-it-safely
- Find out more about managing chemicals at www.hse.gov.uk/cosHH/basics.htm
- Get more information about fire precautions at www.communities.gov.uk/fire/firesafety/firesafetylaw

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This IOSH guide is designed as an introduction to health and safety basics for low risk businesses, and is not intended to give exhaustive coverage of the subject. We encourage all employers and business owners to find out more about the detailed legal requirements affecting your business at www.hse.gov.uk.

IOSH

The Grange
Highfield Drive
Wigston
Leicestershire
LE18 1NN
UK

t +44 (0)116 257 3100

www.iosh.co.uk

 twitter.com/IOSH_tweets

 facebook.com/IOSHUK

 tinyurl.com/IOSH-linkedin

IOSH is the Chartered body for health and safety professionals. With more than 44,000 members in over 120 countries, we're the world's largest professional health and safety organisation.

We set standards, and support, develop and connect our members with resources, guidance, events and training. We're the voice of the profession, and campaign on issues that affect millions of working people.

IOSH was founded in 1945 and is a registered charity with international NGO status.

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