WORKPLACE STANDARDS

The standards that workplaces must meet are laid down in Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992. These regulations lay down standards for maintenance, the workplace environment, the components of the workplace and welfare facilities.

For the purpose of the legislation a workplace is:

Any premises or part of premises, which are made available to any person as a place of work and includes:

Any place within premises to which such persons have access while at work.

Any room, lobby, corridor, staircase, road or other means of access or egress from the workplace.

The regulations are extensive and set standards in the following areas:

MAINTENANCE OF WORKPLACE AND OF EQUIPMENT, DEVICES AND SYSTEMS

The workplace and equipment, devices mentioned in the regulations should be maintained in an efficient working order and in good repair.

The regulations also require a system of maintenance for certain equipment and ventilation systems to be provided.

A suitable system of maintenance involves ensuring that:

1. Regular Maintenance (including inspection, testing, adjustment, lubrication and cleaning) is carried out at suitable intervals.

2. Potentially dangerous defects are remedied and access to defective equipment is prevented.

3. Regular maintenance and remedial work is carried out properly.

4. A suitable record is kept to ensure a system is properly implemented and to assist validating maintenance programmes.

The frequency of maintenance will depend on:

The likelihood of defects developing and the foreseeable consequences.

The age and condition of equipment.

How often and how the equipment is used.

Equipment, which should be included in such a maintenance programme, would include:

Emergency Lighting, fencing, fixed equipment for window cleaning, anchorage points for safety harnesses, devices to limit the opening of windows, powered doors, escalators and moving walkways.

Sources of advice on maintenance programmes include HSE guidance, British and EC standards, manufacturers information and instructions or other authoritative guides.

VENTILATION

Enclosed workplaces should be sufficiently well ventilated so that stale air or hot and humid air because of a process or equipment is removed from the workplace.

In many cases windows or other openings will be sufficient but where necessary mechanical ventilation should be provided as necessary.

Mechanical ventilation systems (including air conditioning) should be regularly and properly cleaned, tested and maintained to ensure they are free from anything that may contaminate the air.

Mechanical ventilation should be equipped with a breakdown warning where its failure would be likely to result in harm to workers. Fresh air supply should not fall below 5-8 litres/second per occupant.

TEMPERATURE IN INDOOR WORKPLACES

The temperature of any workroom should provide reasonable comfort without the need for special clothing.

A temperature of at least 16°c should normally be provided, unless the work requires severe physical effort when a temperature of 13°c is acceptable.

Where it is not possible/impractical to maintain the above temperatures for example where rooms have to be open to the outside or where food or other products must be kept cool, the temperature should be as close to those mentioned above as possible.

The same criteria will apply to workplaces where the temperature would be excessively high due to the process or design of the building.

LIGHTING

Lighting should be sufficient to enable people to work, use facilities and move around the workplace safely and without experiencing eyestrain.

Where necessary additional local lighting should be provided at workstations, and at areas of particular risk ie pedestrian crossings.

Dazzling lights or glare should be avoided, and light fittings should be positioned so that they do not cause a hazard (fire, radiation or collision).

Windows and skylights should be cleaned regularly and kept free from obstruction, and as far as is reasonably practicable, maximum use should be made of natural light. Where this would result in excessive heat or glare the window should be shaded or the workstation repositioned.

Emergency lighting shall be provided where the failure of normal lighting would expose workers to danger.

CLEANLINESS AND WASTE MATERIALS

This regulation requires the workplace; furniture, furnishings and fittings to be kept sufficiently clean.

The surfaces of floors, walls and ceilings shall be capable of being kept sufficiently clean.

Waste materials shall not be allowed to accumulate except in suitable receptacles.
The standard of cleanliness provided will depend on the use to which the workplace is put.

Floors and indoor traffic routes should be cleaned at least once a week.

Apart from regular cleaning, cleaning should carried out where necessary to clean up spillages or unexpected soiling of the workplace.

Cleaning should be carried out by an effective and suitable method without creating, or exposing anyone to a health and safety risk.

ROOM DIMENSIONS AND SPACE

All workrooms should have enough free space to allow people to get to and from workstations and to move within a workroom with ease.

A minimum working space is 11 cubic metres per person with a minimum of 3.7^2 metres provided for floor area. Any ceiling more than 3.0^2 m should be counted as 3.0^2 m for the purpose of calculating the volume of the room.

WORKSTATIONS AND SEATING

Workstations should be arranged so that each task can be carried out safely.

Suitable seating should be provided.

All workstations should:

Afford protection from adverse weather.

Enable the employee to leave it swiftly or as necessary be assisted from the workplace in the event of an emergency.

Ensure that any person at the workstation is not likely to slip or fall.

CONDITION OF FLOORS AND TRAFFIC ROUTES

All floors and traffic routes should be of sound construction. Surfaces should be free from any hole, slope or uneven or slippery surface, which is likely to:

Cause any person to slip or fall.

Cause any person to drop or loose control of anything being lifted or carried.

Cause instability or loss of control of any vehicle and/or their loads.

Holes, bumps and uneven surfaces should be made good, until they can they should be adequately guarded or otherwise protected.

Slopes should be no steeper than necessary and provided with secure handrails as necessary. Where spillages or leaks occur they should be immediately fenced off, mopped up or covered with appropriate absorbent granules.

Arrangements should be made to minimise risks presented by snow and ice by gritting or snow clearance.

All floors and traffic routes should be kept free from obstruction, especially near stairs, steps, escalators and emergency routes. Where obstruction is unavoidable and is likely to be a hazard adequate measures should be taken to warn people or drivers of vehicles.

Every staircase should be securely fenced and provided with a handrail on at least one side, wider staircases may require handrails on both sides.

FALLS OR FALLING OBJECTS

Practical and suitable measures must be taken, so far as is reasonably practical, to prevent:

Any person falling a distance likely to cause personal injury.

Any person being struck by a falling object likely to cause personal injury.

This will involve measures other than the provision of personal protective equipment, information, instruction, supervision and training.

Secure fencing or covers should be provided to prevent people falling from edges and objects falling onto people.

Wherever a person may fall two metres or more secure fencing must be provided, levels lower than this may need to be considered if there is an increased risk of injury, ie a fall to a sharp or dangerous surface.

Covers for pits and tanks should be sufficiently strong to support loads imposed on them and should not be easily detached or removed.

The above do not apply to edges or roofs where there is no general access.

LADDERS

Fixed ladders should not be provided where it would be practical to install a staircase.

Fixed ladders must be of sound construction properly maintained and securely fixed. They should extend 1.1m above any landing, any opening should be as small as possible and gates provided to prevent falls.

Ladders fixed at an angle of less than 15 degrees and more than 2.5m high should be provided with suitable safety hoops.

ROOFS

Where regular access to roofs is required for cleaning and maintenance suitable permanent access should be provided together with fixed physical safeguards to prevent falls from edges or through fragile roofs. All fragile roofs should be clearly identified.

STACKING AND RACKING

Materials and objects should be stored in such a way as to avoid injury through falling. Racking must be of adequate strength and stability having regard to the loads placed on it and its vulnerability to damage.

LOADING/UNLOADING VEHICLES

The need for people to climb on top of vehicles or their loads should be avoided. Where it is unavoidable effective measures should be taken to prevent falls.

Where fencing/covers or other measures are provided measures should be taken to prevent falls, such as limiting access to specified people, or introducing a permit to work system. Safe systems of work such as the provision of safety lines, harnesses and secure anchorage points should be operated.

WINDOWS AND TRANSPARENT OR TRANSLUCENT DOORS, GATES AND WALLS

Windows, transparent or translucent surfaces in doors, gates and partitions should be constructed of a safety material or be adequately protected against breakage in the following cases:

In doors and gates and gate side panels where any part of the transparent or translucent material is of shoulder height or below

In windows, walls and partitions where any part of the transparent or translucent surface is waist level or below, except in greenhouses where the presence of glazing is obvious.

This does not apply to narrow panes up to 250 mm wide.

Safety materials are:

Inherently robust materials such as glass blocks or polycarbonates.

Glass which if it breaks, breaks safely.

Annealed glass, which meets the thickness criteria in the table below.

Normal Thickness	Maximum Size
8mm	1.1 m x 1.1 m
10 mm	2.25 m x 2.25 m
12 mm	3.0 m x 4.5 m
15 mm	Any size

All transparent/translucent surfaces should be marked where necessary to make them apparent.

WINDOWS, SKYLIGHTS AND VENTILATORS

It should be possible to operate/open all windows, skylights etc in a safe manner.

Where there is a danger of falling through or out of windows height devices should be provided to prevent windows opening too far. Open windows, skylights should not project into any area where a person is likely to collide with them.

ABILITY TO CLEAN WINDOWS ETC SAFELY

Adequate provision should be taken so that windows can be cleaned safely if they cannot be cleaned from the ground. Adequate provision includes:

Fitting windows that can be cleaned from the inside.

Fitting access equipment such as suspended cradles.

Providing suitable conditions for the future use of mobile access equipment (ladders).

Providing suitable numbers of adequate anchorage points for safety harnesses.

ORGANISATION ETC OF TRAFFIC ROUTES

Every workplace shall be organised in such a way that pedestrians and vehicles can circulate in a safe manner. This will mean ensuring traffic routes are suitable in number, size and in suitable positions. Items, which should be considered, include:

Removing obstructions or clearly marking them.

Ensuring adequate space is provided and having consideration for disabled persons.

Setting sensible speed limits.

Planning traffic systems to allow vehicles to pass or park and to leave adequate space to allow pedestrians and vehicles to pass safely.

Introducing reversing spaces for large vehicles from which people on foot should be kept away.

Providing crossing points for pedestrians, and preventing people crossing by means of barriers at dangerous points.

Clearing indicating traffic hazards by means of suitable signs.

DOORS AND GATES

All doors and gates should be suitably constructed and where necessary fitted with suitable safety devices.

Doors and gates, which swing in both directions, should be fitted with a transparent panel. Conventionally hinged doors which open onto main traffic routes should also be fitted with such panels.

Sliding doors should have effective stops to prevent them coming off their track.

Powered doors and gates should have features to prevent injury such as, sensitive edges or detectors, devices to limit closing forces. Powered doors should be openable where power fails.

ESCALATORS AND MOVING WALKWAYS

All escalators and moving walkways shall function safely, equipped with safety devices and fitted with one or more emergency stop controls.

SANITARY CONVENIENCES

Suitable and sufficient sanitary conveniences shall be provided at readily accessible places. It will be adequate if sanitary conveniences comply with the provisions of the Factories Act 1961, if that legislation applied to the workplace in question.

WASHING FACILITIES

Washing facilities should be provided for each sanitary convenience and in addition enable workers to achieve levels of hygiene as befits their work. Showers and baths should be provided where the work is particularly strenuous, dirty or results in contamination of the skin by harmful or offensive material.

Minimum numbers of facilities, which should be provided, are:

No of People at Work	No of WC's	No of Washstations
1 to 5	1	1
6 to 25	2	2
26 to 50	3	3
51 to 75	4	4
76 to 100	5	5

No of Men at Work	No of WC's	No of Urinals
1 to 15	1	1
16 to 30	2	1
31 to 45	2	2
46 to 60	3	2
61 to 75	3	3
76 to 90	4	3
91 to 100	4	4

Any room containing a sanitary convenience shall be sufficiently ventilated and well lit. Sanitary conveniences should be kept clean and normally provided with walls and floors which enable wet cleaning to take place.

DRINKING WATER

An adequate supply of wholesome drinking water shall be provided for all persons at work in a workplace. Drinking water should normally be provided directly from the rising main, where it is provided via cisterns they should comply with relevant Water Bye-laws.

ACCOMMODATION FOR CLOTHING

Suitable and sufficient accommodation shall be provided for any persons clothing which is not worn at work and for special clothing which is worn at work and not taken home eg overalls, uniforms etc. Where facilities are required to change clothing effective measures should be taken to ensure security eg by providing a lockable locker.

FACILITIES FOR CHANGING CLOTHING

A changing room or rooms should be provided for workers who change into special clothing for work, separate provision must be made for men and women.

Where necessary they should communicate directly with clothing accommodation, baths or showers and readily accessible to eating facilities.

FACILITIES FOR REST AND TO EAT MEALS

Adequate, sufficient rest facilities shall be provided in readily accessible places. The facilities will be of adequate size and kept in a hygienic condition.

Rest rooms and rest areas should be arranged to protect non-smokers from tobacco smoke. Separate provision should also be made for pregnant women and nursing mothers.