

HEALTH & SAFETY BULLETIN

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Accident reporting in schools and educational settings

Circulation - This bulletin provides information and answers to common questions about accident reporting and why we do it. Please pass copies to all welfare and first aid staff, and to trade union health and safety representatives.

An accident can be very simply defined as an unwanted event that has caused, or may have caused damage or injury. The purpose of this bulletin is to explain some of the issues around recording and reporting of accidents, and we have produced it in the form of a list of 'frequently asked questions' and answers. The purpose of accident reporting and investigation is **not** to apportion blame or to punish people.

1. Why do I need to record and report accidents?

Accidents give us an opportunity to look at what went wrong and how. The reason we ask you to report them is so that we can be aware of what kind of health and safety problems are being experienced in our educational establishments. This allows us to spot any common problems or trends, and provide guidance or support to avoid future problems. Also, accidents are an important tool in carrying out risk assessments. The question of whether an activity, place or equipment has caused accidents in the past helps to guide the risk assessment process. The information provided by accident reports can be helpful in any future legal action or insurance claims.

2. What kind of accidents should I record and report?

The Local Code of Practice on accident reporting asks that all accidents are reported to the health and safety unit. For very minor accidents, such as two children running into each other in the playground, where there is no injury and no apparent contributing factor, it is reasonable to keep a written record of the event, but not necessary to submit a full accident report form. Trends in these minor accidents can still be monitored locally by these means.

3. Which forms do I use, and where do I get them?

Accidents should be reported on the form AI 1, which is available on the council's intranet and on the Barnet Grid for Learning.

4. What about RIDDOR? What is it, what do I need to report, and why?

RIDDOR is a set of regulations requiring reports to the Health and Safety Executive for certain more serious accidents and dangerous occurrences. Details of what needs a RIDDOR report can be found in Local Code of Practice (LCOP 4). The reason for this set of regulations is to allow the HSE to investigate more serious events. It also serves as a tool for central government in monitoring the kind of accidents that occur in the workplace.

5. Is an accident still RIDDOR reportable if the parent took the child to hospital?

Yes. If the child went straight to hospital from the scene of an accident, it is reportable, no matter how the child got there. RIDDOR reporting is schools' responsibility.

6. Do I need to send 3 copies of the forms to the Health and Safety Unit?

No. this is no longer necessary.

7. What about accident books?

The BI 510 book (accident book) serves as a record of accidents to employees only. If you use AI 1 forms for employee accidents and keep records for at least 5 years, there is no need to fill in the information in the book as well.

8. Does the injured person or parent need to sign accident form?

No. the important thing is that the information is accurately recorded, including the section at the end of the form, showing action taken to prevent recurrence. The headteacher or manager responsible for the site or activity should sign the form, though.

9. When do I need to report?

As soon as possible after the accident or incident. Please do not 'save up' the forms, then send them to us, it is important that we see them straight away, in case an investigation is needed.

10. What about 'near miss' incidents?

'Near misses', or dangerous occurrences are accidents that have not caused an injury. They are still significant, because very often the only difference between a near miss and an injury is luck. Please record and report them.

11. What about accidents to contractors?

Accidents to contractors should be recorded and reported by the contractor (and any RIDDOR report if necessary), but also reported to the HSU by the school, as a local investigation may be necessary to stop similar accidents from happening in the future.

12. Where can I get more information?

Information about accident recording and reporting is contained in the council's Health, Safety and Welfare Policy and the Children's Service's Local Codes of Practice. Information about RIDDOR can be found on the HSE's website (www.hse.gov.uk) and on the website for the Accident Reporting Centre (www.riddor.gov.uk). For further information, call the Health and Safety Unit on 020 8359 7960 or 7450.