

Safety Management Standard

Thermal Comfort

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Document Control

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1.0. Introduction

University Hospitals of Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust recognises its duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act, (1974), the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations (1992), and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, (1999), to provide a “reasonable” temperature in the workplace for both its employees and patients.

This SMS works in conjunction with UHDB Trust’s Health and Safety Policy.

2.0. Purpose and Outcome

This Safety Management Standard (SMS) supplements the Health and Safety Policy and aims to improve awareness of the risks associated with unreasonable temperatures in the workplace, and what actions can be taken to mitigate those risks.

3.0. Definitions Used

Natural Ventilation

Naturally ventilated areas depend on opening windows to reduce the space temperature and ensure adequate fresh air.

It should be noted that majority of patient areas in wards and departments are reliant upon natural ventilation for temperature control in accordance with NHS design directives and the Design brief.

Air Management System

Significant areas of the hospital, such as the Emergency Department have air managed systems which are able to regulate the temperatures within a certain temperature range such as cooling the air to a more comfortable temperature during hot weather.

Air Conditioning

A system used to cool down the temperature in an inside space by taking warm air into a system and dispersing cold air. Some clinical areas such as Theatres and ICU have air conditioning built into the fabric of the building. These areas are able to control heat and humidity to a high degree.

Portable air conditioning units do not require permanent installation.

Thermal Comfort

The term 'thermal comfort' describes a person's state of mind in terms of whether they feel too hot or too cold.

The best that we can realistically hope to achieve is a thermal environment that satisfies the majority of people in the workplace. Thermal comfort is not measured by room temperature, but by the number of employees complaining of thermal discomfort.

4.0. Law

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASAWA) places a duty on employers to ensure the health and safety of employees and others who may be affected by their work activities.

Employers are responsible by law for the health, safety and welfare at work of all their workers and any contractors or self-employed people doing work for them.

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992

Regulation 7 places a legal obligation on employers to provide a reasonable temperature in the workplace.

Approved Code of Practice and guidance

The temperature inside the workplace should provide reasonable comfort without the need for special clothing.

The temperature guidelines do not apply where it would be impractical to maintain those temperatures, for example in rooms which have to be open to the outside, or where food or other products have to be kept cold. If reasonable comfort cannot be achieved because of hot or cold processes, all reasonable steps should be taken to achieve a temperature which is as close as possible to comfortable.

Temperatures in a workplace should normally be at least 16 degrees Celsius. If work involves rigorous physical effort, the temperature should be at least 13 degrees Celsius. There is no statutory upper figure.

5.0. Key Responsibilities / Duties

Employers Responsibilities

UHDB has a responsibility for ensuring procedures are in place for managing reasonable temperatures in indoor workplaces.

UHDB must ensure the risks associated with thermal comfort are appropriately addressed and ensure effective management of thermal comfort through the risk assessment process and appropriate control measures.

As part of that process, UHDB should consider all employees, including bank, locum, agency and contractors.

Managers Responsibilities

- Ensure that risk assessments are carried out for work activities and reviewed on a regular basis
- Identify any member of staff, whose health is at particular risk e.g., staff with existing health conditions
- Ensure that the areas under their control are managed effectively to prevent or adequately control exposure to unreasonable temperature conditions such as job rotation, suitable protective clothing and appropriate rest breaks
- Communicate the findings of risks assessment to staff and others under their management
- Ensure information and training is provided to staff
- Report any work situations that present a risk and record on Datix. Ensure appropriate actions are taken to make the situation safe
- Ensure that following incidents related to temperature, appropriate actions are taken to reduce the likelihood of recurrence

Employees Duties

- Take care of their own health and safety and that of others
- Co-operate to help comply with health and safety legislation
- Follow any instructions and health and safety training provided
- Inform the supervisor/manager about any work situations that present a risk

6.0. Standards

The following standards must be adhered to:

- Enclosed workplaces should be sufficiently well ventilated so that stale air, and air which is hot or humid because of the processes or equipment in the workplace, is replaced at a reasonable rate.
- In most rooms/office areas of the Trust there will be windows which are a basic source of ventilation. The windows should be fitted with a device to limit the opening to 100mm.
- The temperature in workplaces should provide reasonable comfort without the need for special clothing.
- Where possible, the temperature in workplaces should normally be at least 16 degrees Celsius – or 13 degrees Celsius if much of the work indoors involves severe physical effort.
- A sufficient number of thermometers should be provided to enable staff to determine the temperature in any work area inside a building.
- All mechanical ventilation systems must be tested/maintained in line with the pre-planned maintenance routines recommended by the statutory bodies and comply with legislative requirements.
- Appropriate work schedules with adequate rest periods should be provided.

6.1. Risk Assessment

A simple way of estimating the level of thermal comfort in the workplace is to ask staff or their safety representatives if they are satisfied with the temperature at work.

If there are concerns about thermal comfort, there is a checklist, which can be used to identify the factors which could be influencing the level of thermal comfort at work.

Thermal comfort checklist: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/assets/docs/thermal-comfort-checklist.pdf>

If the checklist identifies concerns regarding thermal comfort, the manager should seek to mitigate these by considering the control measures recommended below:

- Remove layers of clothing depending on how hot you are
- Use a desk or pedestal fan provided by Estates to increase air movement (non-clinical areas)
- Close window blinds (if available) to cut down on the heating effects of the sun
- Drink plenty of water (avoid caffeinated or carbonated drinks)
- If possible, work away from direct sunlight or sources of heat
- Take regular breaks to cool down
- Raise the issue with your manager or, if you can, with your union or other workplace representatives
- If staff members are concerned about the effectiveness of the ventilation system in their area, they should contact the Estates department

If concerns remain, a detailed risk assessment should be carried out of the work environment to ensure that all possible control measures have been implemented to reduce risks to workers due to uncomfortable and possibly dangerous working conditions.

A Datix incident report form should be completed which will alert the Health and Safety Team of the issue.

The risk assessment shall be reviewed regularly, and forthwith if:

- There is reason to suspect that the risk assessment is no longer valid.
- There has been a significant change in the work to which the assessment relates.

Further guidance on the general risk assessment procedure is available in the Risk Assessment Safety Management Standard.

6.2. Heatwave and Winter Weather

Evidence suggests our comfort level is directly related to our focus level and productivity. Changes in body temperature can cause problems with concentration and tiredness and increase a risk of accidents.

Most of us welcome hot weather, but when it's too hot for too long, there are health risks. Equally, working in cold temperatures can lead to being uncomfortable when we're at work.

If hot/cold weather is forecast, preparations should be in place to manage this.

For the heatwave action plan and heatwave action card can be found on Net-i: <https://neti.uhdb.nhs.uk/emergency-and-seasonal-plans?smbfolder=1062>

7.0. Monitoring & Review

This Safety Management Standard will be regularly monitored and reviewed by the Health and Safety Team to:

- Ensure it continues to comply with legislation.
- Ensure that it is reasonably practicable to implement to all those concerned within the Trust.

8.0. Further information

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has a range of information on thermal comfort. Information is available at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/thermal/>

For information on specific risks consult one of our other health & safety management standards or use the search function at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/>

For further advice, please contact the Health and Safety Team.

We hope you find this SMS useful; if you require further information, please contact one of the Health and Safety Team:



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