



RK SAFETY

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WORKPLACE SAFETY GUIDE SERIES

Five Essential Guides for HSE Managers, Operations Directors, and Business Owners

"The Safe Way Forward"

WHAT'S INSIDE THIS GUIDE

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First Aid in the Workplace

Why Every Employer Must Have Trained First Aiders — And What It Costs When They Don't

1. Why This Matters

Every minute counts. In a cardiac emergency, brain death begins within four minutes without intervention. In a factory, on a construction site, or in a warehouse across South Africa, that ambulance is often more than four minutes away.

South Africa's industrial and construction sectors see thousands of workplace injuries every year. Many deaths and permanent disabilities occur not because the incident was unsurvivable, but because no one nearby knew what to do. A worker who loses a limb to a machine, a colleague who collapses from heat exhaustion on a Durban site in January, or a driver who suffers a severe allergic reaction in a logistics yard — in each case, the minutes between the incident and the arrival of paramedics are the difference between life and death, between recovery and permanent impairment.

The cost of unpreparedness is not just human. It is legal, financial, and reputational. But the human cost must never be reduced to an insurance calculation. These are fathers, mothers, and breadwinners.

2. What the Law Requires

The Occupational Health and Safety Act, No. 85 of 1993 (OHS Act), together with the General Safety Regulations, places clear obligations on employers:

- Regulation 3 of the General Safety Regulations requires employers to provide first aid equipment and facilities appropriate to the nature and size of their operation.
- Section 8 of the OHS Act requires every employer to provide a workplace that is safe and without risk to the health of employees — a workplace without trained first aiders is, in the eyes of the law, an unsafe workplace.
- Regulation 3(4) specifies that a suitably trained first aider must be on duty at all times during working hours. The ratio required is at least one first aider per 50 employees in a low-risk environment, with higher ratios required in higher-risk settings.
- The Construction Regulations, 2014 require principal contractors and contractors to ensure that first aid facilities and trained first aiders are available on every construction site at all times.

Non-compliance exposes employers to prosecution under the OHS Act, with penalties including fines and, in serious cases, imprisonment of responsible persons.

3. Who Needs This in Your Organisation

The law requires designated first aiders across virtually every industry, but the following roles and sectors carry the greatest responsibility:

- Designated First Aid Officers (legally required by employer)
- Supervisors and team leaders in manufacturing, construction, and logistics
- Safety officers and HSE representatives
- Warehouse managers and floor supervisors
- Facilities and maintenance managers
- HR managers responsible for compliance documentation
- Any employee in a remote or isolated working environment

Industries with the highest need: construction, mining services, manufacturing, warehousing and logistics, chemical processing, and agriculture.

4. What You Should Know — 7 Practical Facts

- **Chain of survival:** CPR saves lives.

For every minute that passes without CPR or defibrillation, survival rates from cardiac arrest drop by roughly 10%. Early bystander CPR can double or triple survival rates. This is the most important reason to have trained first aiders close to every workstation.

- **Compliance is not a once-off:** First aid kits must be stocked and checked regularly.

An empty or expired first aid kit is as useless as no kit at all. Assign a responsible person to check and restock kits monthly. Document every check.

- **Visibility matters:** First aiders must be identifiable.

Display first aider names and locations prominently throughout your facility. In an emergency, workers must know exactly who to call and where to go.

- **Primary rule:** Scene safety comes first.

A first aider who becomes a second victim helps no one. Before approaching any incident, ensure the scene is safe. This is one of the most critical — and most neglected — first aid principles.

- **Know your hazards:** Most serious workplace incidents involve bleeding or fractures.

Understand the specific injury patterns on your site. First aiders on a construction site need to be confident managing severe bleeding. Those in a chemical plant need to understand exposure protocols.

- **Simple but life-saving:** Recovery position saves unconscious, breathing casualties.

An unconscious person left on their back can die from airway obstruction within minutes. Placing them in the recovery position is one of the simplest, highest-impact interventions a first aider can perform.

- **Certification validity:** First aid certificates expire.

First Aid Level 1 certificates are valid for three years. An expired certificate is not legally valid and leaves your organisation exposed to liability. Maintain a training register and schedule renewals proactively.

5. What You Need to Be Trained In

Reading this guide will raise your awareness. But awareness does not save lives — skill does. There is no substitute for hands-on, accredited training when it comes to first aid. The following competencies cannot be adequately developed through self-study:

- Performing CPR correctly under pressure — the technique, depth, rate, and rhythm of chest compressions must be practised on a manikin until they become muscle memory.
- Managing an obstructed airway — both in conscious and unconscious patients — requires physical practice to execute correctly.
- Controlling severe bleeding using direct pressure, wound packing, and tourniquet application is a skill that deteriorates without practice.
- Assessing a casualty systematically using the primary survey (Danger, Response, Airway, Breathing, Circulation) must be drilled until it is automatic.
- Managing shock, fractures, burns, and poisoning requires supervised learning with immediate feedback — not passive reading.

Accredited training also ensures your first aiders receive a certificate that is legally recognised under the OHS Act and accepted by the Department of Labour (DoL) during inspections.

6. Is Your Workplace Compliant? — Self-Audit Checklist

Answer Yes or No to each of the following. Any No is a compliance gap that requires immediate attention.

- Do you have at least one designated, certificated first aider per 50 employees on shift?
- Are all first aid certificates current (not expired beyond the 3-year validity period)?
- Is a first aider present and on duty during all working hours, including night shifts?
- Are first aid kits stocked, sealed, and checked at least monthly with records kept?
- Are first aid kit locations and first aider names prominently displayed throughout your facility?
- Do first aiders know the location of the nearest AED (Automated External Defibrillator) if one is on site?
- Do you maintain a written record of all first aid incidents, treatments administered, and referrals?
- Are first aiders aware of site-specific hazards and the injury types most likely to occur?
- Is there a documented process for calling emergency services and providing location information quickly?
- Are refresher courses scheduled before certificates expire?

7. What Happens If You Get This Wrong

- Criminal prosecution: Section 38 of the OHS Act allows for the prosecution of any employer, manager, or employee who contravenes the Act. Penalties include fines and up to 12 months' imprisonment.
- COIDA implications: Under the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (COIDA), an employer who fails to provide adequate first aid may face challenges in

defending negligence claims. Poor first response documentation also complicates COIDA claims.

- DoL inspections: Department of Labour inspectors can shut down operations that do not have compliant first aid provisions. An inspection finding of non-compliance can result in an improvement notice or prohibition notice, halting production entirely.
- Civil liability: Families of injured workers may pursue civil claims against employers who failed to provide adequate first aid. The costs of such litigation — and the reputational damage — can be devastating.
- The human cost: An employee who dies or suffers permanent disability because no one nearby could perform CPR or stop severe bleeding represents a failure that no fine or settlement can undo.

8. The RK SAFETY Course

THE RK SAFETY COURSE

Course: First Aid Level 1 (Accredited)

Duration: 1 day | Certificate validity: 3 years | Price: R977.50 incl. VAT

Who should attend: All designated first aiders, supervisors, team leaders, safety officers, and any employee responsible for colleague welfare.

RK SAFETY's First Aid Level 1 course is accredited and fully compliant with the OHS Act requirements. Delegates receive hands-on, practical training in a realistic workplace context. Small group sizes ensure every delegate performs every skill under the guidance of an experienced facilitator.

Contact us today — 031 837 3461

Book at rksafety.co.za/training | Call us: 031 837 3461

THE SAFE WAY FORWARD

Every worker who walks through your gate deserves to walk back out again. First aid training is not a compliance tick-box — it is a promise to your people that if something goes wrong, someone nearby will know exactly what to do. At RK SAFETY, we take that promise seriously. Let us help you keep it.

Fire Fighting and Fire Safety

Before the Alarm Sounds: What Your Team Must Know to Save Lives and Your Business

1. Why This Matters

Fire does not announce itself. It starts in a control room, a storeroom, or behind a piece of electrical equipment — and within three minutes, it can fill an industrial building with lethal smoke and engulf an entire floor in flame.

South Africa's industrial sector is no stranger to catastrophic workplace fires. Warehouses, manufacturing plants, chemical facilities, and logistics depots all carry significant fire risk — and when fire breaks out in a workplace where staff are untrained and equipment is unused or poorly maintained, the consequences can be irreversible.

The tragedy in most workplace fires is not that they were uncontrollable — it is that they were allowed to grow. A fire that is identified early and attacked immediately by a trained team with the right extinguisher is often a five-minute incident. Left unchecked for three minutes, that same fire may require an entire fire brigade to contain.

2. What the Law Requires

- Section 8 of the OHS Act requires every employer to provide a safe working environment. Fire risk that has not been identified, controlled, and communicated is a direct violation of this general duty.
- The Environmental Regulations for Workplaces (GNR 2281) require employers to ensure that fire-fighting equipment is provided, maintained, and accessible — and that employees know how to use it.
- National Building Regulations — SANS 10400-T specifies fire protection requirements including portable fire extinguishers, hose reels, emergency lighting, and fire detection systems.
- General Safety Regulations, Regulation 4 requires that emergency evacuation procedures are in place and that all employees are familiar with them.
- SANS 1475 and SANS 10105 govern the servicing and use of portable fire extinguishers — all extinguishers must be serviced annually by a certified service provider.

3. Who Needs This in Your Organisation

- Designated fire fighters and fire wardens (legally required in most industrial workplaces)
- Emergency response team (ERT) members
- Supervisors and team leaders across all industrial environments

- Security officers and gatehouse personnel who are often first on scene
- Warehouse managers and storekeepers handling flammable materials
- Maintenance and engineering teams who work with electrical systems and heat sources
- HSE officers and safety representatives

4. What You Should Know — 8 Practical Facts

- **Know the enemy:** The fire triangle is the foundation of all fire prevention.

Fire needs three elements: fuel, heat, and oxygen. Remove any one of these and the fire cannot start or sustain itself. Fire prevention is about controlling fuel sources, managing ignition risks, and understanding how your specific workplace feeds the triangle.

- **Extinguisher selection:** The wrong extinguisher can make a fire worse.

Using a water extinguisher on a flammable liquid fire spreads burning fuel. Using it on an electrical fire can electrocute the operator. Every employee must know which extinguisher is appropriate for which fire class.

- **Smoke kills first:** Most workplace fire deaths are caused by smoke, not flames.

Toxic smoke from burning synthetics, chemicals, and plastics incapacitates within seconds and kills within minutes. Evacuation routes must be kept clear, and no one should re-enter a smoke-filled building for any reason.

- **Time is everything:** Early detection changes everything.

A functioning fire detection system can alert occupants in seconds. Regularly test all smoke and heat detectors, ensure they are not blocked by storage, and replace batteries on schedule.

- **Common but deadly:** Fire doors must never be propped open.

Propped fire doors are one of the most common fire safety violations in South African workplaces. A fire door propped open with a fire extinguisher — an irony that unfortunately occurs regularly — negates fire containment entirely.

- **Fire wardens:** Your fire warden is a critical role, not a token appointment.

Every workplace needs designated, trained fire wardens who know evacuation procedures, assembly points, headcount protocols, and how to liaise with emergency services.

- **Accessibility:** Extinguisher access must never be obstructed.

Extinguishers blocked by stock, equipment, or vehicles are useless in an emergency. Maintain a clear one-metre radius around all fire-fighting equipment at all times.

- **Evacuation drills:** Practice the evacuation — do not just plan it.

A fire evacuation plan that has never been practised is a theoretical document. Regular drills reveal real gaps: locked emergency exits, congested routes, assembly points adjacent to the building. Drill findings must be documented and acted upon.

5. What You Need to Be Trained In

- Correct operation of portable fire extinguishers — the PASS technique (Pull, Aim, Squeeze, Sweep) must be practised with live or simulated extinguishers.

- Fire behaviour and spread — understanding how different materials ignite and burn, and how fire travels through a building.
- Risk assessment and hazard identification specific to your site.
- Fire warden duties — including sweep and search procedures, roll calls at assembly points, and communication with emergency services.
- Evacuation procedures and assembly point management, including accounting for all personnel including contractors and visitors.
- Legal obligations of employers and employees under the OHS Act and local by-laws.

6. Is Your Workplace Compliant? — Self-Audit Checklist

- Are all fire extinguishers within their annual service date and tagged accordingly?
- Are fire extinguishers correctly positioned, clearly marked, and unobstructed?
- Are all smoke and heat detectors functioning and tested within the last three months?
- Are all fire doors operational, self-closing, and free of obstructions?
- Do you have designated, trained fire wardens on duty during all working hours?
- Are fire warden and emergency contact details posted throughout the facility?
- Has a fire evacuation drill been conducted and documented within the last 12 months?
- Are emergency exit routes clearly marked, lit, and free from obstruction at all times?
- Are assembly points identified, marked, and known to all employees including contractors?
- Are staff trained to select and use the correct extinguisher for each fire class in your workplace?

7. What Happens If You Get This Wrong

- **Criminal liability:** An employer found to have failed to comply with fire safety obligations under the OHS Act faces prosecution, fines, and potential imprisonment.
- **Insurance invalidation:** Many commercial and industrial property insurers require specific fire safety standards as a condition of cover. Non-compliance can result in a claim being repudiated.
- **DoL shut-down:** A fire safety violation found during a DoL inspection can result in a prohibition notice halting all operations immediately.
- **COID complications:** Workers injured in a fire incident may have COIDA claims complicated by an employer's demonstrated failure to meet fire safety obligations.
- **Mass casualty events:** An under-trained workforce, faulty equipment, and blocked evacuation routes combine to produce catastrophe.

8. The RK SAFETY Course

THE RK SAFETY COURSE

Course: Fire Fighting (Accredited)

Duration: 1 day | Certificate validity: 2 years | Price: R862.50 incl. VAT

Who should attend: Designated fire fighters, fire wardens, ERT members, supervisors, security officers, and any employee responsible for fire safety in your workplace.

RK SAFETY's Fire Fighting course combines essential theory with practical, hands-on fire extinguisher training. Delegates leave confident to identify risks, operate the correct extinguisher, and execute an evacuation.

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Book at rksafety.co.za/training | Call us: 031 837 3461

THE SAFE WAY FORWARD

A fire that is contained in its first 60 seconds is a near-miss. A fire that grows unchecked for three minutes can become a catastrophe. The difference, in almost every case, is a trained person with the right equipment and the confidence to act. RK SAFETY exists to create that person — in your team, in your facility, on every shift. That is the safe way forward.

Health, Safety and Environmental (HSE) Representative

The Linchpin of Workplace Safety: What Every HSE Rep Must Know — and Why the Role Can't Afford to Be Filled on Paper Only

1. Why This Matters

The HSE Representative is not a bureaucratic appointment. In a well-run workplace, this person is the eyes, ears, and conscience of workplace safety — the link between the shop floor and senior management, between legal obligation and lived reality.

When the HSE rep role is filled with a reluctant nominee who receives no training and no support, safety compliance becomes theatre. Hazard registers go unchecked. Near-misses go unreported. Workers who raise concerns are quietly discouraged. And then something serious happens — an injury, a fatality, an explosion — and suddenly everyone is asking why nobody saw it coming.

In South Africa's construction, manufacturing, and logistics sectors, the HSE representative is one of the most important roles in an organisation. When properly trained and empowered, this person prevents incidents. When treated as a paperwork exercise, they provide a false sense of security that is, in many ways, more dangerous than having no safety system at all.

2. What the Law Requires

- Section 17 of the OHS Act requires every employer with more than 20 employees to designate health and safety representatives for defined sections of the workplace.
- The ratio of representatives to employees must be appropriate to the size and risk profile of the operation. In high-risk environments, one rep per 50 employees is a common benchmark.
- Section 18 sets out the functions of HSE representatives, including: identifying potential hazards; investigating incidents; inspecting the workplace; and representing employees in consultations with the employer and inspectors.
- Section 19 provides for Health and Safety Committees where two or more representatives are appointed. The committee must meet at least quarterly and keep records of all meetings.
- HSE representatives are entitled to inspect any relevant document held by the employer, and their recommendations must be formally responded to in writing.

3. Who Needs This in Your Organisation

- All formally designated health and safety representatives (legally required)
- Newly appointed HSE reps who have not yet received accredited training

- Supervisors and foremen who act as deputy representatives or lead section safety inspections
- Operations managers who want to understand their legal obligations in relation to safety representation
- Union shop stewards who sit on Health and Safety Committees
- HR managers responsible for documentation and compliance in workplaces with 20+ employees

4. What You Should Know — 7 Practical Facts

- **Role integrity:** The HSE rep must be a worker, not just a title.

The law intends the HSE rep to be someone who works in the section they represent — someone who understands the actual hazards because they face them. An HSE rep who never visits the floor is not fulfilling the function the OHS Act requires.

- **Written records are essential:** Inspections must be documented.

An inspection that is not recorded may as well not have happened. Every inspection must produce a written report with findings, recommended corrective actions, responsible persons, and deadlines.

- **The safety iceberg:** Near-miss reporting is as important as incident reporting.

For every serious injury, there are dozens of near-misses and hundreds of unsafe conditions. The HSE rep's role in capturing and escalating near-misses is one of the most powerful tools in preventing serious incidents.

- **Accountability loop:** The employer must respond to HSE rep reports in writing.

Under the OHS Act, when an HSE rep raises a concern in writing, the employer must respond in writing. HSE reps should insist on written responses — not verbal undertakings.

- **Legal protection:** The HSE rep cannot be penalised for performing their duties.

The OHS Act expressly prohibits employers from dismissing, reducing pay, or otherwise victimising an employee for exercising their rights and functions as an HSE representative.

- **Terminology matters:** Know the difference between a hazard, a risk, and an incident.

A hazard is anything with the potential to cause harm. A risk is the likelihood that harm will occur. An incident is an event that results in or has the potential to result in injury or damage.

- **Committee governance:** HSE committee minutes must be circulated and retained.

Health and Safety Committee meetings must produce minutes that are distributed and retained for at least three years, and be available for inspection by DoL officials.

5. What You Need to Be Trained In

- The full provisions of the OHS Act as they apply to the representative's functions, rights, and obligations.
- How to conduct a formal workplace hazard identification and risk assessment (HIRA) — a structured, documented process.
- Systematic workplace inspection methodology — what to look for, how to record it, how to prioritise findings, and how to escalate.

- Incident and near-miss reporting protocols, including the legal obligation to report certain categories of incident to the DoL.
- The operation of the Health and Safety Committee — procedures, quorum, agenda-setting, and minute-keeping.
- The role of the DoL inspector and how to interact professionally and correctly during an inspection.

6. Is Your Workplace Compliant? — Self-Audit Checklist

- Have health and safety representatives been formally designated in writing for every section of the workplace?
- Do all designated representatives hold current, accredited HSE Representative certificates?
- Has a Health and Safety Committee been constituted (if 2 or more reps are appointed)?
- Does the Health and Safety Committee meet at least quarterly, with recorded minutes?
- Are HSE rep inspection records kept, dated, and signed — with employer responses documented?
- Are near-miss reports captured in a formal register and reviewed at committee meetings?
- Are HSE representatives aware of their legal rights — including the right not to be victimised?
- Is the HSE representative register posted in the workplace and accessible to all employees?
- Are HSE reps included in incident investigations for their section?
- Are refresher courses scheduled before the 2-year validity period expires?

7. What Happens If You Get This Wrong

- Prosecution under Section 17: Failure to appoint the required number of HSE representatives is a criminal offence under the OHS Act.
- DoL findings of systemic non-compliance: A DoL inspection that finds no functioning safety committee, no inspection records, and no documented hazard identification is a serious finding that can result in improvement notices or prohibition orders.
- Incident liability: If a serious incident occurs and an investigation reveals that the safety representative role was nominal, the employer's exposure to both criminal and civil liability increases dramatically.
- COID complications: A COID claim by an injured worker that highlights the absence of a functioning safety representation system may be leveraged in civil proceedings.
- Employee relations damage: Workers who discover their 'safety rep' was never trained lose trust in management and the safety system. The resulting disengagement is a safety risk in itself.

8. The RK SAFETY Course

THE RK SAFETY COURSE

Course: HSE Representative (Accredited)

Duration: 1 day | Certificate validity: 2 years | Price: R1,127.00 incl. VAT

Who should attend: Designated health and safety representatives, supervisors, operations managers, HR managers, and anyone involved in workplace safety governance.

RK SAFETY's HSE Representative course is accredited and structured to give delegates not just legal knowledge but practical capability. Participants learn how to conduct real inspections, manage a safety committee, and protect themselves and their employer legally.

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Book at rksafety.co.za/training | Call us: 031 837 3461

THE SAFE WAY FORWARD

A great HSE representative doesn't just keep the paperwork in order — they change the culture of a workplace. They are the person workers trust to speak up, the person management relies on to find the hazards before they become headlines. At RK SAFETY, we train people to be that person. Empowered, informed, legally competent, and genuinely committed to keeping their colleagues safe. That is the safe way forward.

Incident Investigation

Don't Just Report It — Understand It: Why Proper Incident Investigation is the Most Powerful Tool in Your Safety Arsenal

1. Why This Matters

An incident that is not properly investigated is an incident waiting to repeat itself. Every workplace injury, every near-miss, every equipment failure carries within it a set of causes — and understanding those causes is the only way to prevent the next one.

South Africa's Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (COIDA) requires employers to report workplace incidents. But reporting is not investigating. Far too many South African workplaces treat incidents as administrative events — fill in the form, notify the insurer, move on.

Then it happens again. Sometimes to the same person. Sometimes fatally. Incident investigation is not a post-incident paperwork exercise. It is one of the most powerful safety management tools available — and when done correctly, it saves lives.

2. What the Law Requires

- Section 24 of the OHS Act requires employers to report certain categories of workplace incident to the DoL within prescribed timeframes. These include incidents resulting in the death of a person, injuries that incapacitate a worker for more than 14 days, and dangerous occurrences.
- Regulation 8 of the General Safety Regulations requires that incidents be investigated to determine causes and prevent recurrence. Reporting without investigating may still result in non-compliance findings.
- The Construction Regulations, 2014 (Regulation 10) impose specific incident reporting and investigation obligations on principal contractors and contractors on construction sites.
- COIDA requires employers to report all workplace injuries and diseases to the Compensation Fund, with detailed documentation of the incident circumstances.

The DoL's Inspection and Enforcement Services (IES) may conduct their own investigation following a serious incident — and will expect to see the employer's investigation report as part of their review.

3. Who Needs This in Your Organisation

- HSE officers and safety managers (primary responsibility for leading investigations)
- Line managers and supervisors (first on scene and responsible for initial preservation of evidence)

- Operations directors and site managers (accountable for receiving findings and implementing corrective actions)
- HSE representatives (legal right to participate in investigations under the OHS Act)
- Human resources professionals responsible for COIDA reporting and documentation
- Any member of an incident investigation team or emergency response structure

4. What You Should Know — 7 Practical Facts

- **Root cause reality:** Most incidents are caused by systems, not individuals.

Research in safety management consistently shows that the majority of workplace incidents are rooted in organisational failures — poor procedures, inadequate supervision, missing safeguards, or normalised risk-taking. An investigation that concludes 'worker was careless' and goes no deeper has found nothing useful.

- **Scene preservation:** Preserve the scene before you preserve the paperwork.

The first critical step following a serious incident is to secure and preserve the scene. Evidence disappears rapidly — through cleanup, continuing operations, and well-meaning colleagues. Do not touch, move, or clean anything in the incident area until a qualified investigator has documented and photographed it.

- **Witness management:** Witness interviews must happen quickly and independently.

Witnesses' memories decay and are influenced by post-incident conversations with colleagues. Interview each witness separately, as soon as possible, and record their statements verbatim.

- **Causal chains:** There is no single cause — there is a chain of causes.

Every incident has immediate causes, underlying causes, and root causes. A thorough investigation works backwards through this chain until it reaches the organisational deficiencies that allowed the chain to remain intact.

- **High-potential events:** Near-misses deserve full investigations.

A near-miss that had the potential to cause a fatality should be investigated with the same rigour as an actual fatality. The outcome was different; the causes were the same. This is your warning. Take it seriously.

- **Action closure:** Corrective actions must be tracked, not just assigned.

Every corrective action must be assigned to a specific individual, given a deadline, and tracked to closure. Unimplemented corrective actions from past incidents are a major predictor of future incidents.

- **Legal awareness:** Legal privilege may be applicable in certain circumstances.

In some circumstances, investigation reports prepared under legal advice may attract legal privilege. Consult your legal counsel regarding when to invoke this protection.

5. What You Need to Be Trained In

- Root cause analysis methodology — including techniques such as the 5 Whys, fishbone (Ishikawa) analysis, and fault tree analysis.

- Evidence collection and preservation — including photography, measurement, and documentation protocols.
- Witness interview techniques that are systematic, unbiased, and legally defensible.
- The legal framework governing incident reporting and investigation in South Africa — OHS Act provisions, COIDA obligations, and DoL notification requirements.
- Investigation report writing — how to structure findings, assign causation, and recommend corrective actions in a clear, legally defensible format.
- Human factors in incident causation — understanding how fatigue, stress, training gaps, and communication failures contribute to incidents.

6. Is Your Workplace Compliant? — Self-Audit Checklist

- Do you have a formal, written incident investigation procedure that applies to all incidents, near-misses, and dangerous occurrences?
- Are personnel responsible for leading investigations formally trained and certified in incident investigation?
- Are serious incidents reported to the DoL within the timeframes required under Section 24 of the OHS Act?
- Are all workplace injuries reported to the Compensation Fund under COIDA within 7 days?
- Is scene preservation addressed in your emergency response procedure?
- Are witness statements taken and recorded for all incidents above a defined severity threshold?
- Do your investigation reports identify root causes — not just immediate causes?
- Are corrective actions from investigations formally tracked with owners, due dates, and closure records?
- Are investigation findings shared with the Health and Safety Committee for broader learning?
- Is an incident register maintained and reviewed regularly to identify trends?

7. What Happens If You Get This Wrong

- Regulatory non-compliance: Failure to report a reportable incident to the DoL within the required period is a criminal offence under the OHS Act.
- COIDA exposure: Incomplete or inaccurate incident reporting to the Compensation Fund can result in claims being disputed, delayed, or rejected — leaving injured workers without compensation.
- Repeat incidents: The most direct consequence of a poor investigation is a repeat incident — often more severe than the first.
- DoL prosecution: An employer found to have conducted no meaningful investigation, failed to implement corrective actions, or attempted to conceal incident circumstances faces serious prosecution risk.
- Civil liability: Expert witnesses in civil cases will scrutinise your investigation records. Evidence that a hazard was known but never addressed significantly strengthens a plaintiff's case.

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Course: Incident Investigation (Accredited)

Duration: 1 day | Certificate validity: 2 years | Price: R1,127.00 incl. VAT

Who should attend: HSE officers, safety managers, line managers, supervisors, HSE representatives, operations directors, and HR professionals responsible for COIDA reporting.

RK SAFETY's Incident Investigation course is accredited and highly practical. Delegates apply structured root cause analysis to realistic workplace scenarios, conduct proper interviews, and compile legally sound investigation reports.

Contact us today — 031 837 3461

Book at rksafety.co.za/training | Call us: 031 837 3461

THE SAFE WAY FORWARD

An incident that is properly investigated and whose root causes are genuinely eliminated is a warning heeded — a future tragedy prevented. At RK SAFETY, we believe that every investigation should make the next incident less likely. That is not just best practice. It is the only way to genuinely honour those who have been hurt. That is the safe way forward.

Confined Space Entry

What Every Supervisor Must Know Before Anyone Goes In — Because Confined Space Deaths Are Preventable, Every Single One

1. Why This Matters

More workers die attempting to rescue colleagues from confined spaces than die in the initial incident. This single fact captures everything that is wrong with how most South African workplaces approach confined space entry.

Confined space fatalities follow a devastating and tragically predictable pattern: a worker enters a tank, silo, pit, or vessel. They are overcome by atmospheric hazard — oxygen deficiency, toxic gas, or flammable vapour — and collapse. A colleague, seeing their crewmate fall, rushes in without equipment. They too are overcome. The first emergency responders may enter without the right equipment, and a situation involving one victim becomes a multi-fatality event.

South Africa's industrial sector relies heavily on confined space work. Tanks must be cleaned. Pipelines must be maintained. Vessels must be inspected. When the people doing this work are untrained, unequipped, and unsupervised, the results are preventable tragedies. Every confined space death is preventable. Every one.

2. What the Law Requires

- The General Safety Regulations, Regulation 5 requires employers to identify all confined spaces, assess the hazards, implement control measures, and ensure that no person enters a confined space until it has been declared safe and a permit has been issued.
- A written confined space entry permit is legally required for every entry. The permit must document atmospheric testing results, isolation procedures completed, emergency rescue arrangements, and the names of the entrant(s) and standby person.
- Atmospheric testing must be performed before and during confined space entry using calibrated gas detection equipment. Results must be recorded on the permit.
- The Construction Regulations, 2014 impose additional requirements for confined space work on construction sites, including the appointment of a competent person and the immediate availability of rescue equipment.
- Section 8 of the OHS Act's general duty of care applies absolutely — an employer who allows workers to enter a confined space without required procedures and training has failed in their most fundamental legal obligation.

3. Who Needs This in Your Organisation

- All workers designated as confined space entrants

- Standby persons (attendants) who monitor entry operations from outside
- Supervisors and safety officers responsible for authorising confined space entry
- Permit issuers and competent persons responsible for completing entry permits
- Maintenance engineers and artisans who perform work inside vessels, tanks, and pipelines
- Emergency response team members who may need to conduct confined space rescue
- HSE officers and managers responsible for confined space procedures

4. What You Should Know — 8 Practical Facts

- **Know what qualifies:** 'Confined space' is a legal definition, not a visual description.

A confined space is any enclosed or partially enclosed area that is not designed for continuous human occupancy, has restricted means of entry or exit, and may have an atmosphere that is or could become hazardous. This includes large tanks and vessels, storage silos, pits, vaults, tunnels, and large open-topped vessels.

- **The invisible killer:** Oxygen deficiency kills silently and quickly.

Normal atmosphere contains approximately 20.9% oxygen. An atmosphere below 19.5% is oxygen-deficient and dangerous. Below 16%, impaired judgement occurs. Below 6%, immediate loss of consciousness and death can follow. Only calibrated instrumentation can detect oxygen deficiency before it is too late.

- **Permit-to-work:** The permit is not a formality.

A confined space entry permit is a step-by-step safety verification document. A permit completed retrospectively — after entry — is worse than useless. It is falsification of a safety record.

- **Standby discipline:** The standby person must never enter the confined space.

The standby person's sole responsibility is to monitor the entrant, maintain communication, and initiate rescue — from outside. The moment the standby person enters the space without proper equipment, they become a second victim. This is an absolute, non-negotiable rule.

- **Energy isolation:** Isolation is not the same as switching off.

Before entry, all sources of energy must be isolated using lockout/tagout (LOTO) procedures. Switching off a pump or valve is not isolation. LOTO ensures equipment cannot be energised while a worker is inside.

- **Don't test once and enter:** Continuous atmospheric monitoring may be required.

Atmospheric conditions inside a confined space can change — a sealed vessel can release gas when disturbed, temperature changes can release vapours. For entries of any duration, continuous gas monitoring with an alarm-equipped instrument is often required.

- **Pre-planned rescue:** Rescue planning must happen before entry, not during the emergency.

Before anyone enters, the rescue plan must be in place, rescue equipment must be immediately available, and the standby person must know exactly what to do. 'We'll call 10111 if something goes wrong' is not a rescue plan.

- **Combined hazards:** Hot work inside confined spaces is exponentially more dangerous.

Welding, grinding, or cutting inside a confined space introduces ignition sources into a potentially flammable atmosphere and generates toxic fumes in restricted ventilation. Additional permits, continuous monitoring, and enhanced rescue provisions are required.

5. What You Need to Be Trained In

- Identifying and classifying confined spaces on your specific site.
- Understanding atmospheric hazards — oxygen deficiency, toxic gases, and flammable atmospheres — and the instruments used to detect them.
- The confined space entry permit system — how to complete it correctly, how to read it critically, and what to do if conditions change.
- Lockout/tagout and isolation procedures as they apply to confined space entry.
- Standby person responsibilities and communication protocols.
- Confined space rescue principles — including non-entry rescue techniques (tripod and harness systems), and why untrained entry rescue must never be attempted.
- Legal requirements under the OHS Act and General Safety Regulations.

6. Is Your Workplace Compliant? — Self-Audit Checklist

- Have all confined spaces on your site been identified, documented, and marked with appropriate warning signs?
- Is a written confined space entry permit required and completed for every entry?
- Is atmospheric testing performed with a calibrated gas detector before every entry, with results recorded on the permit?
- Are all entrants and standby persons formally trained and certified in confined space entry?
- Is a trained standby person present outside the space during every entry, with no other duties?
- Is rescue equipment (tripod, harness, retrieval line) immediately available at the point of entry?
- Are lockout/tagout procedures completed for all energy sources before entry is authorised?
- Is a confined space rescue plan documented, communicated, and rehearsed?
- Are confined space entry permits retained for audit and reviewed as part of incident trend analysis?
- Are certificates current and within the 2-year validity period?

7. What Happens If You Get This Wrong

- **Fatalities:** Confined space incidents are consistently among the highest-fatality categories of workplace incidents. The DoL will investigate, and the employer bears full responsibility for demonstrating legal compliance.
- **Criminal prosecution:** Employers and managers responsible for authorising non-compliant confined space entry face criminal prosecution under Section 38 of the OHS Act, including imprisonment.
- **DoL inquiry and prohibition:** Confined space work may be prohibited immediately and indefinitely following a fatality pending the outcome of a formal DoL inquiry.
- **COID and civil liability:** Evidence of non-compliant entry procedures, missing permits, and untrained personnel significantly strengthens a plaintiff's case in civil litigation.

- Multi-fatality events: Rescue attempts by untrained colleagues have transformed single-victim incidents into multi-fatality events. An employer without a non-entry rescue plan is creating the conditions for exactly this scenario.

8. The RK SAFETY Course

THE RK SAFETY COURSE

Course: Confined Space Entry (Accredited)

Duration: 1 day | Certificate validity: 2 years | Price: R862.50 incl. VAT

Who should attend: All workers designated as confined space entrants, standby persons, supervisors authorising confined space entry, permit issuers, maintenance engineers, and HSE officers.

RK SAFETY's Confined Space Entry course is accredited and highly practical. Delegates learn to identify confined spaces, assess atmospheric hazards, complete legal entry permits, apply lockout/tagout procedures, manage standby operations, and implement rescue protocols — with real equipment, in realistic scenarios.

Contact us today — 031 837 3461

Book at rksafety.co.za/training | Call us: 031 837 3461

THE SAFE WAY FORWARD

A worker who descends into a confined space is placing their life in the hands of the system their employer has built around them — the training, the permit, the standby person, the rescue plan. When that system is built correctly, they come back out. At RK SAFETY, we exist to make sure that system is built correctly, every time, in every workplace we serve. No exceptions. That is the safe way forward.