

New legislation and guidance for first-aid at work in Belgium

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Introduction:

The Belgian first-aid at work (FAW) legislation dated back from 1965 and needed revision. In 2010 and 2011 a new legislation and guidance was written.

Methods:

First recommendations for a basic FAW training programme were elaborated based on an analysis of statistics of accidents at work, morbidity data, regulations in neighbouring countries and literature. Secondly a new FAW legislation, only giving general principles was published by the government. Finally guidance documents for implementation of the legislation were written in collaboration with different key actors.

Results:

Recommendations for the content and duration of a basic first-aid at work training programme were published by experts of the Ghent University in 2009. These recommendations were implemented in the new FAW legislation of 2010 which gives the employer a framework for the organisation of the FAW. The main principle is that the employer should provide adequate and appropriate equipment, facilities, training, and procedures based on prior risk assessment and the advice of the occupational physician and the worker's representatives.

In addition, the Flemish Red Cross wrote a guidance on the FAW box content and other equipment.

Co-Prev, the organisation of the Belgian External Services for Prevention and Protection at Work (where the majority of Belgian occupational physicians are working) wrote a guidance covering details for practical implementation (e.g. first-aid needs assessment, the number of appointed persons and first-aiders needed, FAW for specific risks as intoxications, the registration of first-aid interventions, the organisation of first aid in very small companies).

Discussion:

The combination of a legislation with only basic principles and guidance from professional organisations gives the employers the opportunity to maximally adapt their first aid organisation to the needs of the company.