

Temperature in indoor workplaces

(1) *During working hours, the temperature in all workplaces inside buildings shall be reasonable.*

(2) *A method of heating or cooling shall not be used which results in the escape into a workplace of fumes, gas or vapour of such character and to such extent that they are likely to be injurious or offensive to any person.*

(3) *A sufficient number of thermometers shall be provided to enable persons at work to determine the temperature in any workplace inside a building.*

42 The temperature in workrooms should provide reasonable comfort without the need for special clothing. Where such a temperature is impractical because of hot or cold processes, all reasonable steps should be taken to achieve a temperature which is as close as possible to comfortable. 'Workroom' in paragraphs 43 to 49 means a room where people normally work for more than short periods.

43 The temperature in workrooms should normally be at least 16 degrees Celsius unless much of the work involves severe physical effort in which case the temperature should be at least 13 degrees Celsius. These temperatures may not, however, ensure reasonable comfort, depending on other factors such as air movement and relative humidity. These temperatures refer to readings taken using an ordinary dry bulb thermometer, close to workstations, at working height and away from windows.

44 Paragraph 43 does not apply to rooms or parts of rooms 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. In such cases the temperature should be as close to those mentioned in paragraph 43 as is practical. In rooms where food or other products have to be kept at low temperatures this will involve such measures as:

- (a) enclosing or insulating the product;
- (b) pre-chilling the product;
- (c) keeping chilled areas as small as possible;
- (d) exposing the product to workroom temperatures as briefly as possible.

45 Paragraphs 43 and 44 do not apply to rooms where lower maximum room temperatures are required in other laws. It should be noted that general Food Hygiene Regulations do not specify maximum room temperatures.

46 Where the temperature in a workroom would otherwise be uncomfortably high, for example because of hot processes or the design of the building, all reasonable steps should be taken to achieve a reasonably comfortable temperature, for example by:

- (a) insulating hot plants or pipes;
- (b) providing air-cooling plant;
- (c) shading windows;
- (d) siting workstations away from places subject to radiant heat.

47 Where a reasonably comfortable temperature cannot be achieved throughout a workroom, local heating or cooling (as appropriate) should be provided. In extremely hot weather fans and increased ventilation may be used instead of local cooling. Insulated duckboards or other floor coverings should be provided where workers have to stand for long periods on cold floors unless special footwear is provided which prevents discomfort. Draughts should be excluded and self-closing doors installed where such measures are practical and would reduce discomfort.

48 Where, despite the provision of local heating or cooling, workers are exposed to temperatures which do not give reasonable comfort, suitable protective clothing and rest facilities should be provided. Where practical there should be systems of work (for example, task rotation) to ensure that the length of time for which individual workers are exposed to uncomfortable temperatures is limited.

49 In parts of the workplace other than workrooms, such as sanitary facilities or rest facilities, the temperature should be reasonable in all the circumstances including the length of time people are likely to be there. Changing rooms and shower rooms should not be cold.

50 Where persons are required to work in normally unoccupied rooms such as storerooms, other than for short periods, temporary heating should be provided if necessary to avoid discomfort.

51 Detailed guidance on thermal comfort is expected to be published by HSE shortly.

52 The Regulations do not prevent the use of proprietary unflued heating systems designed and installed to be used without a conventional flue. Care needs to be taken when siting temporary heaters so as to prevent burns from contact with hot surfaces. The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations¹¹⁻¹² require protection from hot surfaces.

53 The Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992¹³⁻¹⁴ apply to the protective clothing provided for workers' use.

54 Information about Food Hygiene Regulations can be obtained from the Environmental Health Departments of local authorities.

55 Design data relevant to workplace temperatures are published by the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers²⁵.

Injurious or offensive fumes

56 Fixed heating systems should be installed and maintained in such a way that the products of combustion do not enter the workplace. Any heater which produces heat by combustion should have a sufficient air supply to ensure complete combustion. Care should be taken that portable paraffin and liquefied petroleum gas heaters do not produce fumes which will be harmful or offensive (see paragraph 52).

Thermometers

57 Thermometers should be available at a convenient distance from every part of the workplace to persons at work to enable temperatures to be measured throughout the workplace, but need not be provided in each workroom.