

RIDDOR: Making sense of reporting requirements

Best practice guidance to safeguard your business and protect your people



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The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases, and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) set out which work-related accidents must be reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

RIDDOR is a **legal requirement in the UK** that ‘puts duties on employers, the self-employed, and people in control of work premises (the Responsible Person) to report certain serious workplace accidents, occupational diseases, and specified dangerous occurrences (near misses)’. The regulations **outline a precise set of reportable incidents**, spanning severe burns, noise-induced hearing loss, and electrical fires.

On the face of it, this sounds straightforward – but in practice, **many employers are unsure how to apply the rules.**

A significant number of incidents are reported under RIDDOR that **don’t actually meet the reporting criteria**. A mismatch between company policy and RIDDOR requirements is often to blame. While many organisations mandate internal reporting of *all* incidents, near misses, and injuries, RIDDOR only requires reporting of specific, legally defined events. At the same time, **complex terminology and confusing categories** fuel uncertainty around applicable injuries, timeframes, and employer responsibilities.

Although RIDDOR compliance is critical to a safe working environment, **submitting unnecessary reports can trigger costly consequences** – from inflated incident figures and increased regulatory scrutiny to inconsistent safety processes and time-intensive admin.

A detailed understanding of RIDDOR – and a coordinated approach to health and safety – can prevent the fallout of erroneous reports. This white paper concentrates specifically on the ‘injuries’ aspect of the regulations – and **how to remain RIDDOR compliant while avoiding the risks of overreporting.**



To report or not to report?

While excessive reporting doesn't carry legal penalties, each RIDDOR entry can have an impact beyond the immediate incident, affecting your organisation's reputation, finances, and operational efficiency.

Nonessential RIDDOR reporting can influence:

- **Tender submissions** – Many contract tenders ask you to declare RIDDOR events. A higher number of reports could make your bid look less attractive and may tip the balance against you.
- **Insurance charges** – You'll usually have to disclose RIDDOR incidents to your insurers. This can feed into their assessment of risk and may result in higher premiums at renewal.
- **Legal implications** – If the injured person later brings a civil claim, the fact that you submitted a RIDDOR report may also support their case.
- **HSE inspections** – There is also the prospect of a visit from the regulator that might never have taken place had the incident not been reported.

To be clear, **you should always report incidents that genuinely meet RIDDOR criteria**. However, adopting a 'just in case' approach without assessing whether an event truly qualifies can create additional and unnecessary challenges for your business.



What is a work-related injury?

For an injury or incident to fall within RIDDOR, it must arise out of or be in connection with work – in other words, it must be work related. A common mistake, even among safety professionals, is to focus first on the type of injury. For example, they see a specified injury, such as a broken leg, and immediately assume a RIDDOR report is required.

The first question should always be: Did work activity contribute to the incident?

According to RIDDOR, an accident is work related if any of the following played a role:

- How the work was carried out, including how the work was organised, supervised, or performed by an employer or any of their employees, or by a self-employed person.
- Any machinery, plant, substances, or equipment used in connection with the workplace or work processes carried out there.
- The condition of the workplace where the accident happened, including the state of the structure or fabric of the workplace's building or outside area and the state and design of the floors, paving, stairs, and lighting.

What is an accident under RIDDOR?

The HSE's key definitions are crucial here. Under RIDDOR, **an 'accident' is understood to be a separate, identifiable, unintended incident that results in physical injury.** This definition explicitly includes injuries caused by non-consensual violence at work. Simply experiencing pain – for example, 'feeling a sharp twinge' – is not enough on its own. There must be a **clearly identifiable external event that caused the injury**, such as someone being struck by a falling object.

By contrast, harm that develops gradually from ongoing exposure to risks – for example, repetitive lifting or long-term strain – is not classed as an 'accident' for RIDDOR purposes.

The important consequence of this is that **some events you might informally describe as 'accidents' are not RIDDOR accidents at all.** A manual handling injury that keeps someone off their regular duties for more than seven days may still not be reportable under RIDDOR if there is no single identifiable incident that triggered it.

RIDDOR in real-life: When is an injury work related?

Imagine you're walking across a well-maintained yard, with an even surface and no obstructions, and you trip over your own feet and break your leg. In that case, there is no work-related cause; the injury does not arise from a work failing.

Regardless of the seriousness of the injury, it is not RIDDOR-reportable.

If, however, you fall because of a pothole that should have been repaired, the incident is work related. If that fall causes an injury on the designated list, it then becomes reportable under RIDDOR.

What to report

Once you're satisfied that the accident and resulting injury are work related, you can then consider whether it meets the reporting thresholds.

Under RIDDOR, you must report:

- The death of any person arising from a work-related accident.
- Specified injuries to workers, such as fractures (excluding fingers, thumbs, and toes).
- Injuries to workers that prevent them from performing their regular work duties for more than seven days.
- Injuries to non-workers where the injured person is taken directly to hospital from the scene for treatment.

Even when an incident appears clear-cut, **reporting requirements can be nuanced**. It's worth taking a moment to consider critical points before submitting a RIDDOR entry.

Always bear in mind these essential details:

- Specified injuries like fractures must be confirmed by a doctor; a self-diagnosed or suspected fracture is not reportable.
- Where the severity of the injury is unclear – for example, a limb may need to be amputated but no decision has yet been made – you do not have to submit a precautionary report of a particular injury.
- In many such cases, if the injury leads to a long absence, it may become reportable as an over-seven-day injury in any event.

When to report

The duty holder responsible for RIDDOR reporting must **notify the enforcing authority without undue delay**, usually via their online system, and in any event within ten days of the incident. The main exception is accidents that result in an employee being unable to carry out their regular work for more than seven days, which must be reported within 15 days.

The key message is not to file a report too soon. You should aim to have the facts straight first. An employee may initially be certified unfit for more than seven days but then return to work earlier than expected. If you report immediately, you may end up creating an unnecessary RIDDOR submission. Likewise, it may **take some time to establish whether the circumstances truly were work related** or to clarify the actual nature of the injury.

Using the time available within the legal deadlines allows you to **gather information and to prepare a coherent account of the incident**, which will be helpful if the HSE decides to ask further questions or investigate.

The clear exception to this is a work-related fatality. In those circumstances, the report should be made promptly, and in reality, the HSE is likely to hear about the incident quickly from the emergency services.

Workers vs members of the public (non-workers)

RIDDOR requirements differ depending on whether the injured person is a worker or a member of the public. This is a crucial distinction, as the reporting thresholds for non-workers focus specifically on hospital treatment received directly after the incident.

For members of the public or other people who are not at work, the reporting test is slightly different:

- You must report an accident if it results in an injury and the person is taken directly from the scene to hospital for treatment of that injury.
- Simply being taken for examination or diagnostic procedures, such as an X-ray, does not count as treatment for RIDDOR purposes.

In practice, you may need to speak to the injured person to clarify what happened. This serves three purposes:

- First, to check on their wellbeing.
- Second, to find out whether they went directly from the site to hospital, or whether they went somewhere else – for example, home – and only later decided to attend hospital.
- Third, to establish whether they actually received any treatment, or whether they were examined and told that nothing more than a minor bruise was present and no treatment was needed.

If they did not go directly from the scene to hospital, or if no treatment was provided, then the accident is not reportable under RIDDOR.



RIDDOR best practice: Getting the details right

Clear, accurate RIDDOR reporting helps to protect your people, safeguard your reputation, and boost compliance – without increasing your administrative burden.

Remember, **don't submit a RIDDOR report until you're confident that the incident meets the regulations' precise criteria**. Even if you're experienced with RIDDOR, keep pace with the latest HSE guidance before deciding to report. Regulations can be complex, and interpretations can evolve over time.

The underlying principle is simple: **report only where the law requires it**. Avoid submitting reports 'just to be safe' when the incident does not meet the legal thresholds. Excessive RIDDOR entries can drain resources, distort statistics, and attract regulatory attention that might otherwise have been avoidable.

If you're unsure, **get a second opinion from your trusted Opus health and safety advisor**. By shaping a considered, collaborative RIDDOR strategy, you can prevent the consequences of overreporting and remain on the right side of regulations – prioritising precision, efficiency, and due diligence over a 'better safe than sorry' approach.





Consistent, cost-effective compliance

Every workplace incident costs time and money – assets your business can't afford to waste. While correctly navigating RIDDOR requirements is key, solid prevention measures and a safety-first mindset go further to protect your people and profits.

Opus helps you take control of compliance, identifying risks, streamlining processes, and implementing effective, commercially sound safety solutions. To discuss your H&S challenges with an experienced consultant, please get in touch.



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