

**How often shall we refresh our training?**

**BACK TO THE FUTURE – BY DOUG MELIA**



## Back to the future

Published on September 29, 2015

**When should you repeat something you've already done? Or to rephrase, when should we recommend staff refresh their positive handling, physical intervention or restraint training?**



First Aid at Work has for a while now been **every 3 years**, AED (Automated External Defibrillator) is recommended now **every 6 months** whereas some providers of positive handling have for many years operated a refresher **every 3 years**. I haven't picked up a squash racquet for 3 years I wonder if I had a go this evening, if I'd be any good...

To business managers and those in charge of procuring training and more importantly those accountable for budgets, three year refreshers may seem attractive. I for one have heard of organisations basing their choice of providers on how often they have to refresh training, that isn't something that shows due diligence nor is it best practice across the industry.

### **Law and legislation**

There is already in place a requirement that physical skills are to be periodically refreshed on a regular basis. This is supported in Health and Safety law and the associated guidance documents, one of which is the Management of health and safety at work regulations 1999.

Regulation 13 (2) states that:

*“Every employer shall ensure that his employees are provided with adequate health and safety training*

- a) on their being recruited into the employer’s undertaking; and*
- b) on their being exposed to new or increased risk”*

For example, if new working activities are to be undertaken, a new piece of machinery is installed or, a service user or pupil presents new challenges that staff haven't experienced or, simply aren't prepared for. Sometimes incidents, near misses or accidents can be a reason to look at a risk assessment which could then identify a requirement for a fresh training needs analysis.

*“The training referred to in paragraph (2) shall –*

- a) be **repeated periodically** where appropriate;*
- b) be **adapted** to take account of any new or changed risks to the health and safety of the employees concerned and*



c) take place during working hours

This act of parliament also refers to staff members "*capabilities*";

**“Employers should take account of the employees’ capabilities and the level of their training, knowledge and experience”**

A risk assessment would have been carried out initially to identify which employees require training, this demonstrates compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 which states employers shall provide (in accordance with the associated risks) **information, instruction, training and supervision.**

Any risk assessment should be being reviewed annually as a minimum unless where there is a change identified which could affect the health, safety or well-being of staff prior to that period. So if twelve months ago this training identified staff needed training of a certain level in specific physical tasks, twelve months on can we be certain that the employees “**capabilities**” to perform said skills haven’t deteriorated? Even if they never use them? By that rationale, does this mean, that staff who are intervening *all the time*, get better through having more practice? No, not necessarily.

### **Practice makes permanent**

Now annually, along with other CPD commitments I refresh my own instructor training in the use of force at Lilleshall national sports centre with Mark Dawes and his team at the National Federation for Personal Safety. Why do I refresh? Best practice, consistency of my delivery, to be updated on new developments in the industry and to network with like-minded professionals. In a nutshell it keeps me fresh and current. Mark did a brilliant video on [consolidation and re-consolidation](#) which inspired me to put this post out for my connections and clients explaining why we promote annual refresher training.

If staff are allowed to let their competency and ability slip through there being no positive reinforcement or constructive guidance on honing physical skills, then by repeatedly performing certain skills incorrectly, they will get **very good at performing them incorrectly!**

Let's take into *consideration* the principle of “**recall**”, when someone is **told, shown** and they also **experience** something (the importance of people practising techniques and pressure testing them is of importance here) then after 3 months they are likely to recall **65% of the content**.

If staff aren't using strategies then they are likely to forget techniques far more quickly, this is why an instructional video and an accompanying manual to any physical skills course should be something employers look for when procuring training. This allows staff to re-consolidate and remind themselves of techniques between their refreshers, these are also useful for audits and to assist with debriefs. Often, positive handling or physical intervention providers are not so keen on sharing visuals, perhaps for fear of being copied, potentially held liable for the repercussions of what they have been promoting or, [of being shown up on the premise that what they are teaching](#), which often, to put politely, should be put in a DeLorean, driven to 88mph and banished from history.





**Ask your staff how often *they* wish to retrain**

**“Employers should review their employees’ capabilities to carry out their work, as necessary. If additional training, including refresher training, is needed, it should be provided.”**

Health surveillance is one way of performing a review and can take the form of peer reviews, toolbox talks or questionnaires even. Ask staff members what they would like more of, how they felt previous training sessions benefited them and if there are any newly identified challenges which training could help them overcome or, if the training was even any good at all! This I have witnessed, staff members saying they didn't like the training, didn't feel it was relevant or even if it was legally correct! Yet managers, head teachers and directors continue to throw damp. If training isn't fit for purpose then additional or alternative training should be considered.

**I didn't know that**

Sometimes when I start to quote paragraphs of statute law and refer to sections of approved codes of practice head teachers, managers, care home owners and others in positions of authority can shrug and laugh and explain that's not their job or, they weren't aware of that.

**“Managers should be aware of relevant legislation and should be competent to manage health and safety effectively”**

Ignorance of the law is not a defence. If work schedules or time constraints prohibit you or your team from keeping abreast of current and established health and safety principles then it may be time to consider procuring a professional to assist with this. There are plenty of health and safety consultants out there - competent, qualified and registered professionals who can advise you on such vital issues and make recommendations on how the law works.



This is not 1955, this is 2015 and although Lexus have, as the ultimate *art imitating life gesture* provided us with the hoverboard not much else has matched up to this being the year Doc and Marty were transported to in the film "Back to the future 2". I for one certainly don't have a flux capacitor and we can't yet travel back through the space time continuum to right the wrongs of ineffective physical restraint systems. There are however guidelines for providing staff with easy to remember, effective and appropriate strategies, some of which I hope I have simplified in this post (it isn't rocket science).

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