

Nail Bars & Regulation - What you need to know



Guidance Sheet 2026

BBfA looks to support businesses by making it easier to understand and comply with the law. This guidance sheet covers the key pieces of legislation that apply to nail bars and what you need to do to make sure you have a safe and legal business.

1. Core Health & Safety Legislation

Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

Requires employers and self-employed persons to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety, and welfare of employees and clients.

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

Mandates risk assessments for hazards such as chemical exposure, infection control, and ergonomics.

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002

Applies to chemicals used in nail treatments (e.g., acrylic liquids, solvents). Employers must assess risks and implement controls like ventilation and PPE.

Other relevant regulations include:

- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR)
- Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order
- Manual Handling Operations Regulations
- Electricity at Work Regulations.

Hygiene Tips

To avoid the risk of infections nail technicians and clients should wash their hands before and after treatments to reduce the risk of infection. Proper handwashing facilities and the use of sanitised equipment are essential to prevent the spread of bacteria, viruses, and fungi.

Nail products often contain hazardous chemicals that can cause sensitisation, asthma, and contact dermatitis. Nail bars should implement local exhaust ventilation (LEV) to prevent toxic concentrations and provide appropriate PPE.

Nail bars should maintain a clean and well-ventilated workspace, with hard surfaces and easy-to-clean walls and floors. Ergonomically designed workstations and regular breaks are also recommended to prevent injuries related to posture and repetitive tasks.

Staff should be adequately trained in their duties and supervised to ensure they understand the risks associated with nail treatments and the importance of following safety protocols.

2. Hygiene & Infection Control

Equipment that contacts skin or nails (files, buffers) must be **single-use or sterilised** between clients.

Handwashing for both technicians and clients before and after treatments is essential to prevent bacterial, viral, and fungal infections.

3. Chemical Safety

Avoid methyl methacrylate (MMA) – use safer alternatives like ethyl methacrylate (EMA).

Ensure **adequate ventilation**, ideally with local exhaust systems at workstations, to reduce inhalation of vapours.

4. Licensing Requirements

No national licence is required for nail technicians, but some local authorities (especially London boroughs) require a **Special Treatments Licence** for services like manicures and pedicures. Always check with your local council.

The UK Government has considered introducing **mandatory licensing for nail salons** to tackle labour exploitation and modern slavery risks, so this area is evolving.



5. Employment & Immigration Compliance

Nail bars must comply with UK employment law, including **right-to-work checks**. Failure to do so can result in fines up to £60,000 per illegal worker.



6. Insurance & Training

Public liability insurance is strongly recommended.

Technicians should hold recognised qualifications (e.g., NVQ in Nail Services) and receive training on health and safety protocols.

7. Common issues

7.1 Ethyl Methacrylate (EMA)

Traces of methacrylate monomers remain after artificial nails are formed.

Traces of reactive monomers could result in adverse reaction:

- Skin Redness
- Swelling/pain in the nail bed
- Allergic contact dermatitis
- Respiratory irritation

7.2 Staff safety

Musculoskeletal disorders

Caused due to working practices and posture during treatments.

Install ergonomically designed workstations with adjustable chairs. Where possible tasks should be rotated, with regular breaks.

Harmful chemicals, solvents, vapours and dust

Repeated inhalation, ingestion or skin contact, may lead to work-related illnesses including nasal and respiratory problems, asthma, and dermatitis.

Implement safe conditions and systems of work such as adequate ventilation.

Reduce the amount of chemicals in the air by keeping products in closed, marked containers and using dispenser bottles.

Follow manufacturer's instructions for using protective clothing such as paper masks and vinyl gloves.

Clean up any spills immediately.

Wash hands regularly to remove any chemicals and have employees check skin daily for any signs of soreness or irritation.

References and further reading: An online copy with live links is available from bbfa@hertfordshire.gov.uk.

Health & Safety Executive Guidance for Nail Bars

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20241206190319/https://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrpdf/rr627.pdf>

[COSHH and beauticians - key messages - COSHH](#)

[UK-wide blitz on illegal working to strengthen border security - GOV.UK](#)

National and local authority resources and web pages

[Nail bars | Newark & Sherwood District Council](#)

[Health and Safety in Nail Bars & Beauty Salons | City Of Wolverhampton Council](#)

[Identifying Modern Slavery in Nail Bars | Identifying Modern Slavery | Sandwell Council](#)

[Modern slavery training: resource page - GOV.UK](#) Central Government resources and national referral mechanism (NRM).

[Modern slavery and human trafficking | Hertfordshire Constabulary](#)

Better Business for All works to boost business productivity and growth by making it easier for businesses to access the regulatory support they need from Local Authorities such as Trading Standards, Environmental Health, Licensing, and others. BBfA also works with regulators to help them better understand the challenges faced by businesses.

I hope this guidance has been useful, further business support information can be found here: [Better Business For All | Hertfordshire Futures](#) find us on Instagram: [@betterbusinessforall](#) or email bbfa@hertfordshire.gov.uk.

