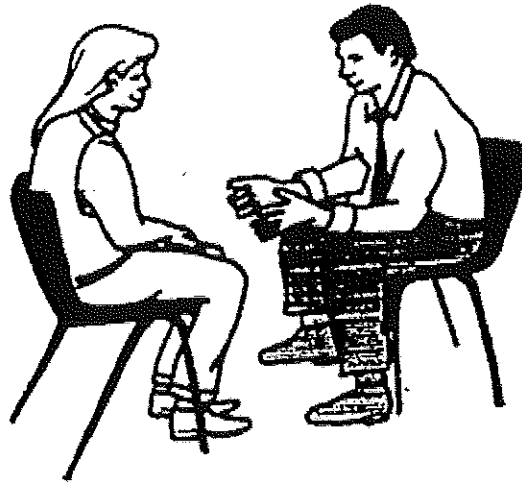




Do you know what you can speak to your Health and Safety Representative about?



Speak up, have your say and make a difference

A Guide for UNISON Members

Do you know?

What can you speak to your Health and Safety Rep about?

- Bully and Harassment
- Stress
- Risk assessment
- The law
- Regulations
- Discrimination
- Employee support

Other issues you can speak to your rep about can include:

- Manual handling
- Welfare issues
- Counselling
- Accidents and near misses
- Lone working
- Visual Display Units
- Working time Directive/ Breaks
- Shift working
- Fire
- Slips trips and falls
- Maternity rights
- Violence at work

What can your safety rep do for you?

- Represent you on any health, safety or welfare matter
- Carry out Inspections
- Investigate incidents and accidents
- Give you advice about your rights
- Provide information on training for UNISON members
- Explain the duties of the employer and employee under The Health and Safety At work Act 1974
- Give advice on regulations, (Acops) Approved code of practice, standards and other legislations.

What does the law say?

Under The Health and Safety at work etc Act 1974

Section (2.1) Of The Health Safety at Work ect. Act 1974 places a general duty on the employer to, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure the health, safety and welfare of all their employees while the are at work.

Section (2.2) expands (2.1) for the employer

- (a) To ensure that there are safe systems of work in place
- (b) To ensure the safe handling, storage and transport of articles and substances
- (c) To ensure that all staff receive training, information, instruction and supervision
- (d) To ensure that all exit and egress points are kept free from any hazards
- (e) To ensure that the working environment is safe and without risks and there is adequate welfare facilities in place. These include somewhere to get changed, toilets, tables and chairs and somewhere to make a drink and have something to eat.

Section 2 also places a duty on all employers to ensure the activities of their employees do not endanger others.

The law also places duties on designers, manufacturers and importers to ensure equipment and substances are safe when used properly.

- The Health and Safety at Work Act also places certain duties on the employee. These include a requirement to comply with any safety measures put in place and to report to the management any defects he or she may find. The employee must also take reasonable care of his/her fellow worker while at work.

Your rep can also give you advice on other regulations these can include:

RIDDOR

The Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (1995) states that employers must report, and keep a record of certain accidents and incidents.

COSHH

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (2002) covers all dangerous substances not just chemicals. It states employers must conduct a risk assessment. Control the hazard and give information and adequate training.

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations

States employers must have safe systems in place and conduct risk assessments. Employers must ensure they involve any named safety reps and employees when completing their assessments.

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations

Says employers must remove the risk from manual handling by avoiding lifting, pushing, pulling and moving activities wherever possible. Employers must complete a risk assessment on the task and put suitable control measures in place.

The Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare Regulations

Lay down General principles of welfare, including ventilation, temperature, washing facilities, cleanliness and rest rooms.

Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations

Employers must provide their employees with suitable personal protective equipment when other safety measures will not remove the risk. Employers must not charge their employees for personal protective equipment.

Bullying at work

Bullying behaviour at work can take many different forms and can occur in a variety of situations. UNISON defines workplace bullying as "persistent, offensive, intimidating, humiliating behaviour, which attempts to undermine an individual or a group of employees. "Bullying at work is unacceptable and should not be tolerated. Workers have the right to come to work and earn a living in a safe environment and not be forced to take time off because bullying by another individual has made them ill. Or have to be forced to leave their job completely as a result of bullying behaviour.

Stress and ill-health are usually the result of those who have been bullied and therefore this can become part of an individual's daily life.

Bullying behaviour can include:

- Excessive monitoring
- Criticism of work
- Exclusion and isolation
- Withholding information necessary for the job
- Giving meaningless tasks
- Being treated in a rude and disrespectful manner
- Passing hurtful and rude comments or jokes
- Preventing people from achieving and developing because of their status
- Stirring up hatred in the workplace.
- Ignoring, hostile, aggressive, cool, behaviours.

If you feel you are experiencing any of the above you can speak to your Health and Safety Rep.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) acknowledged bullying at work as a cause of stress. It argues that stress at work can be triggered or made worse where "there is prolonged conflict between individuals, including bullying or where staff are treated with contempt or indifference."

Stress

One of the biggest health issues at work today is stress. Over half a million people will experience physical and mental ill health as a result of work. Unison has successfully managed to take a number of court cases against their employers who have failed to take action to protect their employees against the affects of stress. Many employers say stress is good for the employee and if individuals can't cope it's their problem.

This is untrue infact The Health and Safety Executive defines stress as a reaction people have to excessive demands or pressures that have arisen when an individual tries to cope with tasks, responsibilities or other types of pressures connected with their job but they find it a strain or worry and difficulty in doing so. In other words work overload.

Causes of stress can include:

- Long hours
- Lack of job satisfaction
- Fear of violence
- Bullying
- Bad relations with other work colleagues
- Shift work
- Lack of control over the your work
- Noise and overcrowding
- Poor welfare facilities
- Low pay
- Isolation and boredom

Stress can cause other health issues which include:

- Anxiety/ panic attacks
- Depression
- Disturbed sleep patterns
- Backache
- Headaches
- Ulcers/stomach problems
- Heart problems
- Employers must assess the risks in the workplace to the health of their employees under the Management of Safety at Work Regulations. Employers must ensure adequate controls measures are put in place to protect their employees.

Manual handling

One in three accidents a year are a direct result of manual handling which is the most common of accidental injury at work. If you work in residential establishments or in hospitals the figures are likely to be one in two. Three hundred thousand people every year experience back pain as a result of a manual handling injury. Injuries can cause the employee to

become incapacitated for weeks or even life. If you have concerns with any of the above speak to your health and safety rep.

RSI/ Repetitive strain injuries

Cover a wide range of injuries to tendons, muscles and nerves. Affected areas are wrists, elbows, hands and or shoulders. Work related upper limb disorders. Lower limbs such as knees and feet can also be affected from using foot pedals and repetitive kneeling.

Other disorders such as WRULDS/Work related upper limb disorders can include:

- Tenosynovitis
- Carpel tunnel syndrome
- Dupuytriens contracture
- Epicondylitis
- Bursitis
- Tennis elbow
- Writers cramp
- Housemaids knee
- Overuse injury
- Repetitive strain injury

People who work on computers experience upper limb strain in their wrists, neck, upper arms. Lower joints can be affected also such as lower back and lower calf if they sit in a chair with little or no support. Individuals who work on computers have the right to have a work station assessment. This is outlined under The Display Screen Equipment Regulations. These state that employers must carry out assessments on work stations, providing breaks, training, eye tests and meet certain standards. There are a variety of jobs that if your work includes repetitive movements particularly if you have to apply pressure and you feel you may be experiencing symptoms of pain, numbness, stiffness, pins and needles in any of your joints you can speak to your Health and Safety Rep. Your Rep will advise you to visit your GP to get a diagnosis. You will then need to inform your employer so he or she can carry out a risk assessment on the work being carried out and put suitable control measures in place.

Risk assessment

It is your employer's job to assess the risks and put suitable and sufficient controls measures in place to ensure your health safety and welfare is protected. Your manager should carry out any risk assessment with you

on the work you do. You will be able to share your ideas with your manager and recommend what the control measures could be to reduce and control the risks. Your health and safety rep will be able to assist you in conducting any risk assessments.

There are five steps to risk assessment these include:

1. What is the hazard?

This could be the machine, the task, the job, the behaviour of the individual, activities or the product in use etc.

2. Who might be harmed and how

This looks at the individuals who maybe carrying out the task/job or activity and how they may be affected.

3. What controls exist to reduce the risks?

This identifies what is in place already to reduce any risks. Example the machine has a guard but dust and debris is building up around the motor which can effect the operation and safety of the machine. Therefore to reduce the risk of the machine overheating or becoming infective regular maintenance by a qualified person would be required.

4. What controls can further reduce the risks?

For example,

Machines should be maintained and kept in a safe condition by a qualified person. Guards should only be able to be removed with a special tool. Individuals should be provided with and wear appropriate (PPE) Personal Protective Equipment. Also training, information, instruction and supervision should be given when any new system or equipment is installed.

5. Record your findings and make it assessable to all those that maybe affected by the work or activities.

Review at regular intervals and or when there is a change in circumstances.

Some history of how the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 evolved.

The Health and Safety at Work Act came about as a result of numerous major accidents. The most infamous and emotive amongst these was the Aberfan disaster.

On Friday 21st October 1966 a total of 144 people were killed 116 of whom were children between the ages of 7 and 10. Five teachers were also killed in the accident. This happened when a waste tip slid down the mountain and destroyed twenty houses, a farm and then went on to demolish all of Pantglas Junior School. Lord Robens who was the Chairman of the National Coal Board at the time did not rush to the scene; he instead went to accept an appointment as chancellor of the University of Surrey. Subsequently, he misrepresented the cause of the slide to the community and falsely claimed that nothing could have been done to prevent it. The people of Aberfan reported on more than one occasion that there would be a disaster if the tipping was to continue. They informed the Coal Board that there was a natural spring up in the mountains. Lord Robens of Woldingham never apologised. Public outcry at the lack of accountability was immense and answers were demanded. At the tribunal of inquiry into the disaster the National Coal Board was found responsible for the disaster, due to "ignorance, ineptitude and a failure of communication".

In 1967 Robens joined the board of Times Newspapers Ltd and in 1969 he was selected by Barbara Castle to chair the committee whose deliberations led to the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

If you would like to find out more about how The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 evolved. Visit wikipedia.org/wiki/Aberfan
You may wish to view the documentary of the Aberfan disaster on the BBC website.

For all Health and Safety Law and regulations visit the (HSE) Health and Executive website.

**You're Health and Safety Representative
Contact details**

Name.....

Work place.....

Branch.....

Telephone number.....

Mobile.....

Questionnaire for Unison members

As part of my stage two training as a Health and Safety Representative, I have to complete a project. I have decided to design a small booklet for members on issues that members can speak to a Health and Safety representative about. Also in the booklet will be information regarding the role and responsibilities of a Health and Safety Rep.

What subjects would you like to see in the booklet?

1. -----
2. -----
3. -----
4. -----
5. -----

All information is strictly confidential and used as collecting data only unless you say otherwise.

I would also like to take some photographs to demonstrate that I have involved my members in the process. If you give permission for this please tick the box below.

I agree to have my photograph taken

I do not agree to have my photograph taken

Thank you for your participation

Karen Noonan Health and Safety Representative