

Your Health, Your Safety:

A Guide for Workers

This information is from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in collaboration with the Trades Union Congress (TUC). HSE is a government organisation that works to protect the health, safety and welfare of workers by enforcing health and safety law and offering advice and support. The TUC represents over 70 trade unions with over 6.5 million members. It campaigns for fairness and decent standards at work.

If you are an employee (full- or part-time, temporary or permanent), this information explains what your rights are, what you should expect from your employer, what responsibilities you have and where to go for help. It also applies to you if you are a young person doing work experience, an apprentice, charity worker, mobile worker or homeworker. If you are a temporary, casual or agency worker, the employment business/agency, gangmaster, contractor or hirer you are working for has a legal duty to ensure you receive the rights set out here.

You have the right:

- To work in places where all the risks to your health and safety are properly controlled.
- To stop working and leave the area if you think you are in danger.
- To inform your employer about health and safety issues or concerns.
- To contact HSE or your local authority if you still have health and safety concerns and not get into trouble
- To join a trade union and be a safety representative.
- To paid time off work for training if you are a safety representative.
- To a rest break of at least 20 minutes if you work more than six hours at a stretch and to an annual period of paid leave.

You must:

- Take care of your own health and safety and that of people who may be affected by what you do (or do not do).
- Co-operate with others on health and safety, and not interfere with, or misuse, anything provided for your health, safety or welfare.

Your employer must tell you:

- About risks to your health and safety from current or proposed working practices.
- About things or changes that may harm or affect your health and safety.
- How to do your job safely.
- What is done to protect your health and safety.
- How to get first-aid treatment.
- What to do in an emergency.

Your employer must provide, free of charge:

- Training to do your job safely.
- Protection for you at work when necessary (such as clothing, shoes or boots, eye and ear protection, gloves, masks etc).
- Health checks if there is a danger of ill health because of your work.
- Regular health checks if you work nights and a check before you start.

(Note: If you are genuinely self-employed you are responsible for providing your own first-aid arrangements, training, protective equipment and health checks, and for organising your own working time.)

In more detail

Employees must take care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their actions. Our [Workers: health and safety](#) website shows how you can meet your responsibility to:

- take reasonable care for your own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by what you do or do not do;
- co-operate with your employer on health and safety;
- correctly use work items provided by your employer, including personal protective equipment, in accordance with training or instructions; and
- not interfere with or misuse anything provided for your health, safety or welfare.

Workers' health and safety

All workers, whether they are permanent staff, agency or contractors, need to be aware of issues that affect their health and safety at work.

- [Your rights and responsibilities](#)
- [Your employer's responsibilities](#)
- [Agency / temporary workers](#)
- [Make a complaint](#)

Did you know...?

- All workers have a right to work in places where risks to their health and safety are properly controlled. The primary responsibility for this is down to the employer.
- Both workers and employers have a legal responsibility to look after health and safety at work together.
- Workers have a right to join and be represented by a trade union.
- Workers who contribute to health and safety at work are safer and healthier than those who do not.




Your rights and responsibilities

All workers are entitled to work in environments where risks to their health and safety are properly controlled. Under health and safety law, the primary responsibility for this is down to employers.

As a worker, you have a duty to take care of your own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by your actions. Health and safety legislation, therefore, requires employers and workers to co-operate.



If you have specific queries on health and safety in your workplace, first ask your manager, or if you prefer, your safety representative or trade union representative.

[Your health and safety: A guide for workers](#) provides further details of your rights and responsibilities.

- [Are you covered by health and safety laws?](#) gives more general information on how the law applies to you.
- Find out how the law applies to [Agency workers](#) and view the [guidance](#)  that tells employment agencies and businesses using agency workers about their responsibilities
- All workers are entitled to [rest breaks and paid holidays](#) .
- If you are off sick from work and worried about your job, you can find out practical advice on what you can do, how your employer can help you and where to get [more advice \[91KB\]](#) .

If you are concerned about your health and safety at work then [find out how we can help you](#). We treat all contacts in strictest confidence.

- If you think someone is breaking the law and you can't get anybody in your organisation to take action, you can tell us and the law will protect you from [victimisation](#).

For more details on your responsibilities and how health and safety law is meant to work, HSE has produced a booklet: [Health and safety regulation: A short guide](#) . You can also read [Health and safety law: What you need to know](#) .

Your employer's responsibilities

Under the law employers are responsible for health and safety management. This page provides a broad outline of how the law applies to employers. Don't forget, [employees and the self employed have important responsibilities too!](#)

It is an employer's duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees, and other people who might be affected by their business. Your employer must do whatever is reasonably practicable to achieve this.

This means making sure that you and others are protected from anything that may cause harm, effectively controlling any risks to injury or health that could arise in the workplace.

Your employer has duties under health and safety law to assess risks in the workplace. Risk assessments should be carried out that address all risks that might cause harm in your workplace.

Your employer must give you information about the risks in your workplace and how you are protected and instruct and train you on how to deal with the risks.

Your employer must consult you on health and safety issues, either directly or through a safety representative that is either elected by the workforce or appointed by a trade union.

For more details on this and how health and safety law works, HSE has produced a booklet [Health and Safety Regulation: A short guide](#). You can also read [Health and safety law: What you need to know](#).

If you have specific queries on health and safety issues in your workplace, first ask your manager. Your safety representative or trade union representative may also be able to help, where they exist.

Are you covered by health and safety laws?

Yes. All work activities are covered by health and safety laws. The Health and Safety Executive enforces a range of legislation, including;

- The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. Regulations made under this act apply to all work situations, for example the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) and the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations.
- Other laws that cover particular hazards, such as parts of the Food and Environmental Protection Act and the Control of Pesticides Regulations, both of which are about pesticides.
- Laws that cover health and safety in specific industries such as mining, nuclear, railway, explosives and offshore oil and gas;
- Older laws that predate the Health and safety at Work Act, and cover a range of industries, but not all workplaces, such as the Factories Act and regulations made under it. Most of these laws are gradually being modernised.

Although all working situations are covered by health and safety regulations, not all workplaces are inspected by HSE. Enforcement of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act and related legislation is shared with Local Authorities who cover certain types of work activities.

For more detail on your responsibilities, and how health and safety law is meant to work, HSE has produced a booklet [Health and Safety Regulation: A short guide](#). You should also read [Health and safety law: what you should know](#).

If you have specific queries on health and safety issues in your workplace, first ask your boss, or - if you have one - your safety representative or trade union representative.

If you think your employer is exposing you to risks or is not carrying out legal duties, and you have pointed this out without getting a satisfactory response, you can [contact us](#).