

Safe and sound at work

Engaging effectively with your employer



By representing your colleagues you're helping make the workplace healthier and safe for yourself and for them.

Worker involvement is fundamental to good health and safety performance. This is because people who do the job can:

- recognise potential risks based on experience;
- put practical controls in place; and
- make a commitment to health and safety in their workplace.

Involving people in health and safety matters is a two-way process between an employer and workers. This leaflet will help you to make improvements to your workplace.

This information, practical advice and guidance will assist you in representing your colleagues in health and safety. The following pages will provide an overview of:

- your role, rights and responsibilities;
- what your employer should consult you about;
- how consultation may be approached; and
- the various types of support available to you.

By undertaking this role you can 'do your bit' to help make your workplace healthier and safer.

What will you be doing?

Your role will be to keep your colleagues involved in health and safety matters and represent them:

- in discussions with managers on a range of health and safety issues;
- on specific matters that may affect health or safety, eg new equipment or ways of working; and
- in dealings with health and safety inspectors.

The functions you undertake will depend on how you are appointed or elected.

If you are elected by colleagues in a non-union workplace as a representative of employee safety, your functions are set out in the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996.

If you are a trade union-appointed safety representative, your functions are set out in the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977. For more information visit www.hse.gov.uk/involvement or contact your union.

By representing your colleagues you will make the consultation process easier – especially in workplaces where it is not always practical for managers to speak directly to everyone individually.

What are the benefits for you?

Your participation will help you:

- increase your skills and value in the workplace; and
- help protect your colleagues from health and safety risks.

What should my employer do to help?

Your employer must provide you with:

- paid time off to attend training, as is reasonable in the circumstances;
- paid time to carry out your functions; and
- access to reasonable facilities and assistance to carry out your role, eg access to a telephone, noticeboard and time with your employer to discuss health and safety issues.

What must employers consult about?

Managers must consult on any new measure that may affect workers' health and safety. On behalf of your colleagues, you should be consulted on issues including:

- new equipment;
- new ways of working;
- new procedures;
- information on risks related to the work;
- measures to reduce or get rid of risks;
- what to do if you are exposed to a risk;
- emergency procedures;
- planning and organising of health and safety training.

What does consultation look like?

Your firm's methods for consultation may vary depending on the size of the workplace and how often changes occur.

First, speak to colleagues to see if they are happy for you to represent them, or if they would prefer to speak directly to managers if this is more practical. In unionised workplaces the arrangements for appointing representatives are different, visit www.hse.gov.uk/involvement for more information. There are various ways of consulting and involving everyone. These include:

- regular scheduled meetings;
- toolbox talks;
- face-to-face discussions;
- walkabouts;
- groups to deal with specific issues.

How do I get started?

You will receive support from your employer to help you:

- recognise risks in your workplace;
- understand how health and safety risks are reduced; and
- make positive changes in the workplace.

Talk to your colleagues and employer about being a representative for health and safety.

What support is available?

There are many types of support available to you, including:

- HSE's website for support materials, eg case studies, guidance, and other tools to help you: www.hse.gov.uk.
- The Trades Union Congress (TUC): Tel: 020 7636 4030
Website: www.tuc.org.uk
- The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA):
Tel: 0121 248 2000 Website: www.rospace.com
- The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas):
Tel: 08457 47 47 47 Website: www.acas.org.uk

Where can I find out more?

More information can be found in the following publications:

- *Your health, your safety: A guide for workers* Leaflet HSE27(rev1) HSE Books 2004 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/hse27.pdf. This provides further details of your rights and responsibilities.
- *Health and safety regulation: A short guide* Leaflet HSC13(rev1) HSE Books 2003 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/hsc13.pdf.
- You can also read *Consulting employees on health and safety: A brief guide to the law* INDG232(rev1) HSE Books 2008 (priced packs available ISBN 978 0 7176 6312 5) www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg232.pdf.
- *Consulting workers on health and safety: Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 (as amended) and Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996 (as amended)* L146 HSE Books 2008 ISBN 978 0 7176 6311 8, which can be viewed online or ordered from www.hse.gov.uk.

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