

KNOW YOUR HEALTH & SAFETY RIGHTS AT WORK

We all hear about health and safety whilst at work but do you know what our rights are and what your employer should be doing to protect your well-being.

Your rights are enforced by law and have been for many years. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 was put in place to ensure the health and safety of all workers in the UK. This legislation has to be implemented by the Health & Safety Executive, evaluating your working environment to protect your welfare. To assure this your employer must follow certain criteria. This is true for all businesses no matter if they are a small family business or a multinational.

To guarantee your safety your employer must;

- Check all machinery and equipment is safe, in full working order and regularly maintained
- Provide adequate safety equipment to inform you of any hazards the job may entail and how to protect yourself from -they supply appropriate training for handling of materials and use of machinery have qualified first aiders with -adequate facilities. Supervision should be provided if appropriate. protect employees from substances that -potentially could be flammable, explosive, an irritant to your skin or harmful if inhaled.
- Display warning signs for any potential hazards
- Avoid any tasks that have the potential of injury or damage to your health where possible
- Keep a record of all injuries, accidents and diseases that occur

All these procedures are performed by your employer and they should be provided free of charge, even all safety equipment and clothing needed.

To identify any potential risk to your health and safety a Risk Assessment should be carried out before any work is started. If a possible hazard is discovered, processes should be put in place to protect you from them. This could be protective clothing or scheduled breaks to avoid overexposure. You could be at risk of many different things and they are not always obvious. Even office staff sitting at a computer can be at risk of injuries such as repetitive strain injury. The review is carried out by an appointed health and safety representative who depending on the size of the business could be part or full time.

As part of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, you have rights that you can act on if you have any concerns about your working environment or the work you are being asked to do. If you have any worries, you should be able to report them to your health and safety officer and be able to stop working without any negative action or discipline being taken against you. If your requests are not met you can report them to the HSE or your local council but we recommend this is the last resort. If injury or illness is caused due to your employer not following the law they are liable for an Industrial Disease Claim.

Although your employer does have an obligation for your health and safety, so do you. Protection and procedures can be put in place but you have to follow them and take responsibility for your actions.

KNOW YOUR HEALTH & SAFETY RIGHTS AT WORK

- You will be provided with safety equipment but you have to ensure that you wear it, use it correctly and don't wear other items that put your safety at risk such as jewelry or additional loose clothing. Also, you must make sure that your hair is covered if it could be a hazard.
- Your employer assesses the working environment for you but you should inform them if you know of any additional hazards or reasons why you may be at risk. This could be if you are on medication which may affect your control of machinery or the fact you have become pregnant.
- Fellow workers and the public put trust in you and the fact that you will not put them at any risk. You would expect the same from them.

I hope now it is clearer what your Health & Safety rights are. If you feel that your employer isn't complying with this legislation you should make them aware of it. It is in everyone's best interest as you don't want your health-damaging and your employer doesn't want to be faced with a hefty injury at work claim being made against them.