Hazards

GREATER MANCHESTER HAZARDS CENTRE

HEALTH & SAFETY 40 YEARS 2021

FACT SHEET

Act Now

on your rights as a safety rep

What a union safety rep can do, what the employer must provide, and how to use those rights well.

A union safety rep is a workplace colleague, appointed by a recognised trade union, who speaks up for staff on health and safety. The Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 give reps real legal rights.

3 months
is the usual gap between workplace inspections. Reps can inspect in work time, giving the employer written notice.

2 reps
is all it takes to ask for a safety committee. The employer must then set one up.

1 in 4
reps did no inspection in the last year, in the TUC survey of safety reps for 2024 to 2025.

What a safety rep can do

Inspect
Walk round the workplace, in work time, and also after an accident or a serious change in working conditions.

Investigate
Look into hazards, near misses and complaints from staff, and look at the accident book.

Be consulted
Be asked in good time about new equipment, new ways of working and changes to the building.

Get information
Receive risk assessments, inspectors' reports and accident figures from the employer.

Take paid time off
Time off with pay to carry out the role and to go on union-approved training.

Sit on the committee
Meet the employer on the safety committee and speak on behalf of staff.

Who appoints safety reps

Safety reps are appointed by a recognised trade union, which tells the employer in writing. The employer does not choose them.

The role belongs to the union, so the union can support the rep, offer training and take up cases that go further.

Your protection

A rep must not be treated badly for doing the job. Time off can be claimed through an employment tribunal if it is refused.

A safety rep does not take on the employer's legal duties. The employer stays responsible for keeping staff safe.

Six ways to make full use of your rights

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THE KEY POINT

Your rights are strong on paper. They only protect staff when reps use them.

1. **Are you registered?**
   Your union has told the employer in writing that you are a safety rep.
2. **Are you trained?**
   Union-approved training, with paid time off and no loss of pay.
3. **Are you inspecting?**
   A diary of regular inspections, at least every three months, with written notice.
4. **Are you getting information?**
   Risk assessments, inspectors' reports, accident figures and the accident book.
5. **Are you consulted early?**
   Before new equipment, building work or changes to timetables and workloads.
6. **Is there a working committee?**
   Regular meetings with agendas and minutes, and every action given a name and a date.

Making the case at work

Keep it simple: describe the hazard, say who is at risk, say what you want done and ask for a date. Put it in writing and keep a copy.

If nothing happens, go back to the committee, then to your union. HSE or the local council can be asked to step in where the risk is serious.

Legal and other standards

- Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977
- HSE Approved Code of Practice and guidance L146
- Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996
- Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

FREE FOR EVERY WORKER

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TUC: rights of safety reps
tuc.org.uk/guidance/what-rights-do-safety-reps-have

HSE: consulting workers
hse.gov.uk

Hazards Magazine
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