

## **Information About Health And Safety Legislation**

Health, they say is wealth and paramount. Knowing this two facts, there must then be rules and regulations in place to guarantee safe health in our environments and at our workplace. This where Health and Safety law in the UK comes in.

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 is the main legislation covering occupational health, welfare, and safety in the United Kingdom. It is also known as the HSW Act, HASAWA, or the 1974 Act.

The Act places general duties on employers to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of their employees as well as non-employees like contractors, suppliers of goods, visitors, substance for use at work, and visitors.

Employers are expected to produce a written policy explaining how they intend to manage health and safety around their workplace. They are also expected to consult with union representatives or staff on this process.

This Act is enhanced by various regulations which sit beneath it, and imposes more explicit duties around processes, specific hazards, or workers. These regulations are supplemented by Approved Codes of Practice also known as ACOPs. ACOPs give practical advice on how to comply with these laws.

These regulations cover a wide range of issues, some of them include working with chemicals; the use of computers; lifting operations; work equipment; radiation; manual handling; personal protective equipment (PPE); and the working environment.

A breach of any of the regulations by an individual or a corporation is a crime in the UK and contravention is usually punishable on summary conviction or indictment with unlimited fine.

Everyone has rights and responsibilities where health and safety is concerned. We will highlight some of those rights and responsibilities as regards to this Act.

### **Rights and Responsibilities**

As an employee, you have a right to:

1. Stop working and leave if you believe you are in danger in your work environment.
2. Be a prospective health and safety representative.
3. Work only in places with controlled risks to your health and safety.
4. Raise concerns about health and safety issues to your employer.
5. Be consulted on matters regarding your health and safety.

As an employee, you also have obligations. You must:

- Never put yourself and others at risk. Care is to be taken in places of work.
- Always co-operate with the arrangements put in place for ensuring health and safety by your employer.

As an employer, you also have obligations to your employees. You must:

1. Tell your employees about risks to their health and safety from proposed or current working equipment and practices.
2. Inform your employee about how to get first aid treatment and what to do in cases of emergency.
3. Provide your employees with protective equipment, such as boots or eye protective materials, whenever necessary.
4. Train your employees on how to work safely without risks to health.
5. Inform your employees about what is done to protect their health and safety.
6. Provide regular health checks especially if there is a danger of your employees falling ill because of your work.

### **Risk Assessment**

Risk assessment is an essential part of ensuring health and safety around the workplace. Under the management of Health and Safety Work Regulations 1999, employers are tasked with making suitable and sufficient assessment of risks to health and safety.

You must follow these five steps to carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment:

- Work out those who might be potentially harmed by the hazards.
- If you have five or more workers, you are required to record the significant findings of the risk assessment in writing.
- Consider how likely someone will be harmed, the potential seriousness of such harms and introduce measures to control the risk.
- Identify all potential hazards that are liable to cause harm. It could be mechanical, ergonomic, to name a few.
- Identify who might be harmed by such hazards and how.

It is usually advisable that risk assessments be done following consultations with union safety reps or employees. This ensures that these measures don't introduce new hazards.

In Britain, Health and Safety Executives (HSE) and local authorities are the two main agencies that enforce, regulate and encourage health and safety practices. There are however

other bodies like fire services, the maritime and Coastguard Agency, the Office of Rail and Road that enforce the law in particular sectors.