

Health and safety at work

Keeping everyone safe

All employers have the following legal responsibilities:

- a 'duty of care' for workers, customers and anyone else who visits the workplace, under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- a duty to carry out 'suitable and sufficient' risk assessments, under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

This means that by law employers must:

- identify any risks to health or safety at work, for example by carrying out a risk assessment
- take steps to prevent or reduce health and safety risks

A risk is something that could cause harm to someone. [Find examples of common workplace risks from the Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#).

Employer responsibilities

An employer is responsible for:

- identifying risks – for example, by doing [risk assessments](#)
- deciding how to remove or reduce risks
- making changes to avoid or reduce risks
- keeping a record of the action they took
- regularly reviewing changes
- following their organisation's health and safety policy

If someone reports a risk, the employer must take it seriously and take action to protect everyone at work.

[Read advice about assessing and managing risks from the Health and Safety Executive](#)

Worker responsibilities

A worker must follow their organisation's health and safety policy. This includes training and following instructions. For example, verbal instructions during an incident or written instructions about preventing and reporting risks.

If a worker notices a health and safety risk at work, they must do all they reasonably can to:

- avoid the risk
- reduce the risk in a safe way

- report the risk to the most appropriate person

[Find out more about reporting a risk](#)

Having a policy

Employers should have a health and safety policy.

A policy can help make clear:

- that health and safety concerns will be taken seriously
- what workers are responsible for, including mandatory training
- what managers are responsible for, including risk assessments
- how to report a risk
- how to report an accident
- what to do when a risk or accident is reported
- what to do in an emergency

Employers should support everyone to follow the policy. They should:

- share the policy regularly across the whole organisation
- use it as the basis for any health and safety training for managers
- include the policy in any induction process
- regularly review the policy

When developing and reviewing a policy, an employer should also consult any recognised trade unions or other worker representatives they have. They should check if there's any agreement that says the employer must formally consult them.

Things to talk about could include:

- how health and safety is being reviewed and managed – employers should share their latest risk assessment
- any changes to safety measures at work
- any flexible working arrangements, including working from home and hybrid working

Find out more about:

- [writing a health and safety policy \(Health and Safety Executive\)](#)
- [talking to workers about health and safety \(Health and Safety Executive\)](#)
- [consulting employees and their representatives](#)

Having a health and safety committee

If an organisation has several health and safety representatives, it's good practice to set up a health and safety committee. This can help representatives work together to keep everyone safe and healthy at work.

Health and safety representatives appointed by a trade union can ask an employer to set up a committee by making a written request. If 2 or more representatives make a written request, the employer must set up a committee within 3 months.

[Read advice on health and safety committees from the Health and Safety Executive](#)

Agency workers

If an employer hires a worker through an agency, both the hirer and the employment agency have responsibility for the workers' health and safety.

[Read advice on health and safety for agency workers from the Health and Safety Executive](#)