



5 Step Guide

Organising using Health and Safety

Health & safety law and the rights you get as a Safety Rep provide an invaluable tool for you to use to organise your workplace.

THE ROLE OF A GMB H&S REP IS TO:

- Speak to members about potential hazards and use the opportunity to build relationships with members
- Raise potential hazards or issues specific to at risk groups that management have not considered or actioned
- Be consulted on risk assessments, not be responsible for them

GMB H&S REPS SHOULD NOT:

- Treat H&S as a purely technical matter (although reps are often better informed than managers...) it's about knowing how to keep your workmates safe
- Carry out a risk assessment on behalf of an employer or agree to become the 'competent person' (this has legal obligations)

STEP 1 Planning Inform your employer of when you plan to inspect. Prepare your inspection checklist & workplace map. Create a short survey on common issues to get colleagues talking. Make sure members and non-members know when it's happening.

STEP 2 Undertaking the inspection Walk around, complete your checklist, workplace maps/contact sheets and survey. Keep an eye on issues and hazards that aren't already on your checklist. Talk to colleagues, listen & note their concerns. If a manager wants to join, ensure some private time/a separate space to talk to people. Ask members to join your union WhatsApp group whilst you go round if you have one.

STEP 3 Dealing with issues If you find something serious, stop the work process and challenge management immediately to act (in front of members). Discuss possible actions with members. Post inspection, collate issues from your checklist, survey and discussions. Share these with your employer & agree actions/deadlines. Keep records.

STEP 4 Taking action Check back with management on agreed actions and escalate if not resolved (e.g. copy a GMB officer in, go up a step higher in management, raise a grievance). If you identify a common problem management aren't dealing with, do research on your employers' duties and get members involved in calling for action.

STEP 5 Keeping members engaged Share your inspection with members and keep communicating with people about the actions taken. Your members are your leverage if you need it and who you represent, so keep them informed at every step.

KNOWING YOUR RIGHTS AS A HEALTH AND SAFETY REP

Here are a few key rights to help you along the way but remember leading with legislation isn't always the best tactic. It gives you authority, but as the HSE and Local Authorities rarely enforce it's more about giving you the confidence to take on your employer. It's always organising & having a strong membership behind you that provides power.

The right to be consulted your employer must consult with you on Risk Assessments and any new or existing H&S measures (pretty much everything) that affect members in good time (*required under The Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations (SRSC regs) 1977, 4A*).

The right to inspect you can inspect your workplace (or parts of it) at least every 3 months (*SRSC Regulation 5(1)*), when working conditions change substantially or new information on a hazard becomes available (*SRSC Regs 5(2)*), after accidents and near misses (*SRSC Regs 6 (1)*), and if you receive new relevant documentation (*SRSC Regs 7*). You also have the right to reinspect to ensure changes have been made (*SRSC guidance notes*) and to inspect documentation (*SRSC Regs 7 (1)*), plus if your workplace is big then you can split it into sections and do each section every three months. **TIP: You have a legal right to inspect but you should still inform your employer.**

The right to take up issues with your employer you have the right to make representations (*SRSC Regulation 4*), report hazards and access your employer without delay (*SRSC Code of Practice 5 (c)*) and form a Safety Committee (*SRSC Regulation 4 & 9*). You can also demand a safety committee, on which management and union have equal status, is set up (*SRSC regulation 9 (1)*).

The right to consult with members you can investigate any safety concerns raised by members (*SRSC Regulation 4(1) (b)*), meet privately with members during inspections and after an accident (*SRSC Regulation 5(3) & 6(2)*), keep members up to date on safety issues and publicise inspection results (*SRSC guidance notes*).

KEY THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **An inspection gives you access to talk to people.** You need to pick up and report anything you identify yourself, but you are there to act as a representative of your members. Be approachable and listen to people.
- **Don't come across like management.** Dressing like a manager, telling people off or only talking to senior people will put colleagues off engaging with you.
- **Use the inspection as an opportunity to map your workplace** whilst you are going round, take note of who's in the union. Encourage non-members to join and update contact details for current members. Identify potential new workplace leaders.
- **You are on equal terms with management** Know your rights. Don't let them force authority over you. They should value the work you're doing to keep colleagues safe- you're helping them meet their statutory requirements and preventing liabilities if incidents occur.