



GMB **UNION** GUIDE

The security industry

Workers in the security industry are involved with preserving the safety and security of people, premises and goods, but their own health and safety and security is often neglected. GMB has a track record of tackling cases where conditions for security workers are below legal requirements. GMB is committed to working with employers to improve health and safety and ensure that our members are safe at work.

GMB is the union for the security industry. GMB represents many thousands of members in security, including those working as:

- drivers, security guards, ATM operatives, cash processors and vault operatives working with cash and valuables in transit;
- static security guards in control rooms, shops, offices, building sites, public buildings, government premises and airports etc;
- mobile patrols and keyholders;
- prisoner escort and custodial officers in the immigration service, detention centres and the prison service;
- retail store detectives;
- door supervisors and event security staff;
- managerial, supervisory, clerical and administrative staff

The security industry is undergoing many changes, and GMB continually campaigns for improved pay and conditions, better standards and full compliance with the licensing requirements and other government regulations for the industry. This leaflet looks at the health and safety risks of security work and what can be done to address them. If you have any concerns about safety at work, GMB can provide you with advice, support and assistance.



YOUR RIGHTS ON HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK

Your employer has a legal duty to safeguard your health, safety and welfare whilst you are at work. Employers who fail to meet their duty to protect health and safety can be prosecuted and fined. They may also face compensation claims from employees who have been injured by their employers' negligence. GMB believes that avoiding accidents, injury and ill health is more important.

Under health and safety law your employer must:

- ensure that your environment and workplace are healthy and safe;
- carry out an assessment of the risks to your health and safety at work and put measures in place to reduce the chances of an injury or illness happening to you;
- ensure that a supply of drinking water and toilet facilities are accessible to you;



- provide you with personal protective equipment, free of charge, if the health and safety risks of your job cannot be controlled adequately by any other means;
- provide you with information and instruction about the health and safety hazards that you may be exposed to;
- train you how to carry out your job safely, including training in what to do when faced with violence or aggression; and
- consult with you and GMB safety representatives about health and safety at work.

HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES FOR SECURITY WORKERS

VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION

Security workers are often at daily risk of threats, abuse and assault. Many security workers mistakenly see violence as 'part of the job' rather than a crime and are therefore less likely to report it than other workers. GMB offers free legal advice and assistance through UnionLine to members who have been assaulted at work, or who have had allegations of assault made against them.

Employers must carry out a risk assessment and take measures to protect security staff from violence. These could include:

- improving the working environment – for example, by providing adequate lighting or securing items of furniture to the ground so that they cannot be used as weapons;
- ensuring sufficient numbers of staff are on duty in high-risk situations;
- issuing personal protective equipment, such as safety helmets with visors, where the risk of violence cannot be eliminated;
- providing training in how to recognise potentially violent situations and respond appropriately when they occur.

LONE WORKING AND REMOTE LOCATIONS

Working alone or in a remote location can increase health and safety risks. For example, violence may be more likely to occur when a worker is isolated, and the risk of back strain increases if heavy loads have to be handled alone. If an accident or emergency occurs, it may be difficult to summon help.

The law states that lone workers should not be at greater risk than any other worker.

GMB recommends that employers:

- provide a procedure for communicating back to base by telephone or radio;

- provide devices or systems to raise the alarm in the event of an emergency or noncontact from a lone worker;
- check that the worker has returned to their base on finishing the job;
- ensure access to adequate first aid provision.

LACK OF WELFARE FACILITIES

Many security workers act as guards on the premises of other companies when the normal work has ceased for the day and welfare facilities may be unavailable. Night security are often expected to work long shifts and may be forbidden to leave the site. Security staff are entitled to adequate welfare facilities including:

- accessible toilets, washing facilities and drinking water;
- a warm, comfortable rest room (if a suitable office is not available); and
- facilities for making hot drinks and warming food, if they cannot leave the premises.

PROLONGED STANDING OR SITTING

Having to work in a static posture standing or sitting for long periods at a time can contribute to back and other muscular problems. Long periods of immobility are also a recognised risk factor for deep vein thrombosis.

Employers must provide suitable seating where work can be done sitting down. GMB also recommends that security work should be arranged so that workers can take regular short breaks from standing or sitting in order to walk around.



PATROLLING AND INSPECTING PREMISES

Security staff are often required to inspect all parts of premises, including areas that other staff rarely enter. Security staff may be required to patrol areas such as rooftops where there may be additional risks that will require safety precautions. A risk assessment should identify the steps to be taken to protect the health and safety of security staff.

The occupier of the site should ensure that it is in a safe condition, but the security company also has a duty to its employees. The occupier and security employer should liaise with each other to:

- ensure that areas where guards are expected to patrol are safe and without risks;

- provide adequate information, instruction, supervision and training to enable them to avoid danger;
- provide suitable equipment, such as a torch, radio etc.

EXPOSURE TO ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS

Security staff required to work outdoors in all weathers can be exposed to extreme cold or hot weather conditions. Employers must take reasonable steps to protect such workers from suffering health problems.

Where employees are expected to work outdoors in adverse weather conditions, protective measures can include:

- the provision of suitable protective clothing;
- facilities for drying and storing clothing;
- adequate rest breaks in comfortable surroundings;
- access to welfare facilities described above as well as high factor sun screen in hot weather.

WORK-RELATED STRESS

Poor health and safety conditions mean that many security workers suffer from high levels of work-related stress. Working in isolation, the risk of violence or threats, long working hours and inadequate rest and hygiene facilities can all contribute towards stress amongst security workers.

The key to improving working conditions and reducing stress levels is to identify the causes and then for employers to take steps, as outlined below, to eliminate or control the health and safety risks faced by security workers. The Health & Safety Executive have produced guidance on management standards on stress which your employer should be following.

BIOLOGICAL AND CHEMICAL HAZARDS

Security workers can be exposed to hazardous chemicals and other substances that may be harmful to health. Security guards may encounter discarded needles, or have to deal with members of the public who pose a risk.

Security guards in hospitals can be at risk of developing infections such as hepatitis B if they are exposed to human blood or bodily fluids.

They may also be exposed to high levels of vehicle fumes in cash depots and warehouses, whilst those guarding workplaces that use chemicals may also be at risk, as they are often overlooked when any possible exposure is assessed.

Employers are required to:

- assess the risk of exposure to any biological or chemical hazard that might be encountered by security workers;
- prevent or control their exposure to the hazards, with personal protective equipment only being used as a last resort

- consider providing vaccination against hepatitis B, where there is an infection risk.

MANUAL HANDLING

Lifting and handling heavy or awkward loads, such as cash boxes and cash bags, can lead to back and other strain injuries. Employers have a legal duty to avoid the need for manual handling where possible, but when it cannot be avoided, they must assess the risks from manual handling and take steps to reduce the risk of injury.

Preventative measures can include:

- providing handling and lifting aids;
- making sure that equipment is properly maintained;
- ensuring that loads (e.g. cash boxes, cash bags etc.) do not exceed agreed weight limits;
- taking individual capability into account when planning work;
- storing loads where they can be reached and handled safely.

DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT

Many security workers use screen based equipment in their work. They may spend long periods looking at CCTV screens, or work in Alarm Receiving centres, which rely on computers. Work with display screen equipment can contribute to a range of health problems such as headaches, sore eyes, backache, and pains in the hands, wrists and neck.

Employers must assess display screen equipment workstations and reduce risks by:

- providing suitable and adjustable seating and workstations;
- organising work so that there are breaks and changes of activity;
- providing regular eyesight tests for users and paying for VDU spectacles if they are prescribed by an optician;
- providing training and information to users.

TRAINING

Providing adequate health and safety training is an important way of protecting security workers. However, training has often been minimal and all too frequently security workers have been ill-prepared to deal with the risks they encounter, such as violence.

Employers have to ensure that all security staff are trained and competent to do the work. Health and Safety training should be provided for all security staff and should include topics such as:

- dealing appropriately with incidents of aggression and violence, and the procedure for reporting such incidents;

- the specific health and safety risks of the job, such as manual handling, lone working procedures, use of equipment etc;
- emergency and fire procedures;
- first aid.

GMB HEALTH AND SAFETY REPRESENTATIVE CHECKLIST:



	Yes	No
Have adequate risk assessments been carried out?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have GMB safety reps been involved in the risk assessment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has adequate health & safety training taken place?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was this training given before work started?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the HSE management standards on stress followed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a clear policy on violence at work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are policies in place for lone working, with clear emergency procedures?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is suitable personal protective equipment supplied for all circumstances?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

YOU'RE SAFER AND HEALTHIER IN THE GMB

GMB is proud of its focus on workplace health and safety. Will Thorne founded GMB in 1889 in part because of the terrible working environment he experienced, and we will always fight to improve conditions and provide protection for GMB members.

It's been an established fact for more than 25 years that trade unions make the workplace safer. Time after time, research has shown that the presence of trade union Safety Representatives identify hazards and resolve issues before they can cause harm, and reduce exposures to substances that may damage health.

To back up our Representatives the GMB has a network of health and safety specialists in our Regions. The GMB also has a National Health and Safety Department that is widely acknowledged to offer amongst the best health and safety service of any trade union.

It has been proved many times that workplaces with active Safety Representatives have half as many major and serious injuries as workplaces without them – in other words you're safer and healthier in the GMB.



WHEN INCIDENTS OCCUR AT WORK - UNIONLINE

Report all accidents, incidents and attacks to your employer and get it recorded in the accident book.

Make sure you also tell your GMB Safety Rep and GMB Workplace Organiser, they will make sure that your employer acts to stop anyone else being hurt in the same way.

ROLE OF GMB SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES

GMB Safety Reps have rights on health, safety and welfare issues over and above their fellow workers. They have the right:

- To **INVESTIGATE** potential hazards and causes of accidents at the workplace.
- To **INVESTIGATE** employee complaints concerning health, safety and welfare at work.
- To **MAKE REPRESENTATIONS** to the employer on any health and safety matter in the workplace.
- To **INSPECT** the workplace on a quarterly basis.
- To **INSPECT** the workplace after a reportable accident, dangerous occurrence or reportable disease.
- To **VIEW** documents relating to health and safety in the workplace.
- To **REPRESENT** employees in consultation with HSE inspectors and to receive information from them.
- To **ATTEND** safety committee meeting.
- To **TIME OFF** for **HEALTH & SAFETY** training.
- To **PAID TIME OFF** to carry out all of the above functions.

You could also contact UnionLine on **0300 333 0303** to trigger the process to make a claim against your employer to get compensation. As a GMB member you are covered against the cost of lawyers and court cases or tribunals that may be necessary to get justice for you.

