

## HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE

Focus of the Month

Issue No 25

### Employees' Health and Safety Responsibilities

The vast majority of legislation sets out the requirements for Employers to manage H&S and to ensure employees (and others) are not injured or suffer ill health as a result of work activities. However, various pieces of legislation also set out duties for employees including:

- Health and Safety at Work Act
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations
- Manual Handling Operations Regulations
- Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations

Duties and responsibilities for every employee include:

- Everyone must take reasonable care for their own and for others H&S. The legal description includes “acts and omissions” – i.e. you are responsible for what you do and also what you don't do (that you should have done). So if you see someone working unsafely, or see a dangerous condition and do nothing about it then you are failing to meet your legal responsibility. How would you feel if someone got hurt and you could have done something about it?
- Everyone must work in line with their training – apply your training, follow procedures and use equipment correctly. It is specifically prohibited to interfere with or damage equipment provided for H&S purposes.
- Everyone needs to co-operate with their employer in matters of H&S, to help the employer meet their responsibilities. This would include telling your employer if you have suffered an injury or have an illness that could affect your safety at work (e.g. where medication could affect your ability to operate machinery), so that any special arrangements can be considered.
- Everyone must immediately report any injuries or illness caused by work activities, so that investigations can take place and remedial actions taken. You should enter all injuries in the company accident book, or ensure it is done for you.
- Everyone must advise their employer if they believe H&S controls are inadequate. This includes reporting hazards and near misses – again, so that action can be taken to make the workplace safer.
- Everyone has a duty to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) provided for their safety, use or wear it correctly, and you must also look after it – keep it clean and report any defects or damage so it can be replaced.
- You should read and understand the Health and Safety Law Poster – *What you need to know, it is there for your benefit. Your employer must display it in each workplace in a prominent position, or provide you personally with a pocket card version.*

What does this all mean in practice? It's basically about looking after yourself and others in the workplace as any reasonable person would. Wearing your PPE, maintaining a tidy workplace, following the rules (no short cuts!), using equipment properly and reporting any injuries or concerns are all simple practical things we can all do to keep ourselves and others safe. Take pride in working safely, play your part and be your brother's keeper.

**IF EVER IN DOUBT ABOUT SAFETY – ASK!**

### More useful links

- A guide for workers - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/hse27.pdf>
- Workers' health and safety - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/workers/>
- Employers' responsibilities - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/workers/employers.htm>
- [http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Employment/HealthAndSafetyAtWork/DG\\_4016683](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Employment/HealthAndSafetyAtWork/DG_4016683)

***DISCLAIMER: This is the opinion of the NASS H&S Committee but only the courts can interpret the law.  
All employers should refer to the legislation.***