

A close-up, artistic photograph of a human eye, showing the iris and pupil. The eye is looking directly at the camera, and the lighting creates a warm, golden-brown glow around the pupil.

Health & Safety

INSPECTIONS

A TUC Guide

Inspections

One of the main functions of a safety representative is to carry out inspections. This is a simple process but can be very important. If you are a new safety representative, you may want to be accompanied by a more experienced representative on your first inspection.

Inspections do more than just help identify potential hazards, they also show your members that you are taking your responsibilities as a safety representative seriously.

The Safety Representatives Regulations give you the right to formally inspect every 3 months (or more frequently if agreed with management). Arrangements for three-monthly and other more frequent inspections will normally be agreed with employers. As well as making an inspection every three months, you also have the right to inspect after any notifiable accident, dangerous occurrence or notifiable disease, where there is a substantial change in working conditions or if new information becomes available.

Formal inspections are no substitute for daily observation, but they provide a useful opportunity to carry out a full-scale examination of all or part of the workplace. Remember that an inspection is not just looking around your workplace, it includes the inspection of documents required by health and safety legislation such as risk assessments and certificates concerning the testing of equipment. It is also another opportunity to talk to your members.

Some safety representatives like to do the inspection on their own or with other safety representatives and then meet management to report their findings. Others prefer to be accompanied by a manager or the employers' safety advisor. Both have their advantages. However management do have to right to be present if they insist, but make sure you always have to opportunity to speak to workers on their own without management present.

You do not have to do all the workplace at one time, you can break it up and do separate inspections. If there are several safety representatives then make sure that you have agreed who does what. Either divide the workplace

up between you or inspect as a group. If there are shifts in your workplace then make sure that you inspect at different times, as some problems may only be apparent on shifts. Also remember to include groups like cleaners and security staff who may work outside standard hours.

Following an inspection, safety representatives should complete an inspection form, recording the date, time and details of an inspection. An example of an inspection form can be found on page 1 of the forms section of this document. One copy of the completed form should be sent to the employer and one copy should be retained by the safety representative for their own records and for reference during safety committee discussions. However if a problem is identified that requires immediate action by the employer, do not rely on just a form, tell them at once verbally as well.

Preparing for an inspection

You should prepare in advance for an inspection. It is often an idea to agree a date in advance and put up a notice telling members when the inspection will take place. You can ask them to let you know in advance if there are any problems they want you to look at.

Before you start, check the accident book and get details of any reports under RIDDOR. You should also ask your employer to show you the risk assessments and any safety cases, inspection records, training records and safety data sheets. You are entitled to see these by law. In the case of risk assessment forms, it is useful to take these with you during the inspection to check whether they have covered all likely risks.

Many safety representatives use a checklist for their inspections. These can be useful and an example can be found on pages 1–6 of the checklist section of this document. However please adapt it to suit your own needs.

Carrying out an inspection

Use the checklist and fill in the report form as you go round. However an inspection is not just about ticking off boxes. Take the opportunity of

talking to workers about any issues or problems. Remember that safety representatives cover all workers, so if there are any non-union people, any potential risk to them is a potential risk to your members so should not be ignored. Also health and safety is a great recruiting tool.

Don't just look at issues such as physical hazards when you do your inspection. Problems such as workload, working time and training are just as important.

Take your time and make plenty of notes. On some issues you may have to seek advice later on from your union, the employers safety officer or the HSE.

Inspections after an incident

Where there has been an accident, dangerous occurrence or a notifiable disease, although you should still notify your employer in advance, it is important that the inspection takes place as soon as possible. However do not investigate until you are sure that the workplace is safe. If there is a serious incident that has led to someone being badly injured, or there had been a major occurrence such as the collapse of scaffolding, the area should be treated as a crime scene and not be touched until the HSE or local authority inspectors have seen it.

In addition to doing an inspection the safety representative should get anyone who witnessed the incident to write down details of what happened while it is still fresh in their mind.

Work should not start until the cause of the incident has been ascertained and measures put in place to ensure that it cannot happen again. If your employer does try to restart work after a serious incident without an investigation contact your union for advice immediately.

Reporting problems after an inspection

Safety representatives should record every health and safety problem or any unsatisfactory welfare arrangement on the report form. An example of a

report form is found on page 2 of the forms section of this document. Serious problems should also be notified verbally immediately.

The report form should be submitted to the employer. Many safety representatives also put a copy on the notice board so that members can see it. This is a good way of involving members and showing the usefulness of union safety representatives.

However that is not the end of it. The safety representative must make sure that management act on the report. The guidance to the safety representatives' regulations states that "Where safety representatives have made a written report to the employer, appropriate remedial action will normally be taken by the employer. Where remedial action is not considered appropriate, or cannot be taken within a reasonable period of time, or the form of remedial action is not acceptable to the safety representatives, then the employer should explain the reasons and give them in writing to the safety representatives" The guidance also recommends that managements response should be publicised. The best way of doing that is putting it on the notice board next to the safety representative's report.

If there are several problems you may want to try to agree with management a timetable for getting things done, however if there is a serious matter that is likely to cause injury or illness and the employer is not treating it with the urgency it deserves, please contact your union immediately for further advice.

Even after management have agreed a programme to rectify any problems you will have to check that the measures have been carried out by the agreed date.

Union Inspection Notices (UINs)

Some safety representatives have negotiated a system whereby the employer agrees the line manager will respond to any queries within a certain time (such as 14 days). If not the matter will be referred to the employers safety officer or HR Manager for action. This system can also be linked to inspections, but is not suitable for urgent matters.

Safety Representative: Inspection form

Record that an inspection by a safety representative or representatives has taken place. Date and time of inspection: Area or workplace inspected:	
Name(s) and signature(s) of safety representatives taking part in the inspection	Name(s) and signature(s) of employer (or their representative) taking part in the inspection (if appropriate)
Record of receipt of inspection form by the employer (or their representative)	
Signature	Date

This record does not imply that the conditions are safe and healthy or that the arrangements for welfare at work are satisfactory

Safety Representative: Report form

Notification to the employer (or their representative) of conditions and working practices considered to be unsafe or unhealthy and of arrangements for welfare at work considered to be unsatisfactory.	
Date and time of inspection:	
Particulars of matter(s) notified to employer or their representative (include location where appropriate)	(This column to be completed by the employer) Remedial action taken (with date) or explanation if not taken. This information to be relayed to safety representative(s)
Name(s) of safety representative(s) notifying matter(s) to employer or their representative	Signature of employer or their representative
<p>Signature(s) of safety representative(s): Date:</p> <p>Record of receipt of form by the employer, or their representative(s):</p> <p>Signature: Date:</p>	

This report does not imply that the conditions are safe and healthy or that the arrangements for welfare at work are satisfactory in all other respects

Inspection checklist

	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>
Asbestos		
Are any areas containing asbestos identified, marked and an up-to-date record kept?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is all the asbestos in good condition/sealed in and monitored?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the risk of exposure to asbestos dust and fibres been assessed and an up-to-date written record kept?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there arrangements in place to inform any contractors about any asbestos presence, or locations where it is not known if that area is clear of asbestos?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a plan for specialist removal of asbestos?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chemicals		
Are all containers clearly labelled with contents, hazards warnings and the precautions to be taken?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there safety data sheets for all chemicals including cleaning and other materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is training provided in safe use of chemicals and on what to do in an emergency (spillage, poisoning, splashing etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cleanliness		
Are all work surfaces, walls and floors kept tidy and regularly cleaned?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Electrical safety		
Are all electrical equipment, fittings, and tools regularly checked and maintained?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is access to live high voltage equipment restricted to authorized people only?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fire precautions		
Are there separate storage arrangements for flammable materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are bins regularly emptied and rubbish safely disposed of? Are cigarettes and matches disposed of separately from other rubbish?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are clear fire instructions displayed throughout the workplace?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have sources of ignition (portable heaters etc.) been replaced with safer alternatives?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	yes	no
Are fire drills carried out regularly and at least once per year?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are fire alarms and smoke detectors checked and tested weekly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the alarms capable of warning employees throughout the building?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there other forms of fire warning for the hearing-impaired?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all employees given information, instruction and training on fire risks and precautions, as well as what to do in the event of a fire or fire alarm?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is emergency lighting provided and tested regularly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are fire escape routes clearly signed, kept clear and wide enough to prevent a crush, and do they lead quickly and directly to a safe area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are fire doors and exits clearly marked, kept clear on both sides at all times, never left open, and do they open easily and quickly in the direction of escape and lead quickly to a safe area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

First aid, accidents and illnesses

Is there a first aid box and is it fully equipped and accessible to staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a trained first aider or appointed person on the premises?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is it clear who the first aider(s)/appointed person is/are and how they may be contacted?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is a clean and properly equipped first aid room available?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all accidents, near misses and illnesses caused by work reported and recorded in an accident book?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Gas safety

Are gas appliances regularly checked and serviced by qualified people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do staff know what to do if there is a gas leak?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Lighting

Is the lighting bright enough, especially over workstations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are stairs and corridors etc properly lit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are light bulbs replaced promptly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are windows clean on both sides and free from obstructions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Lifting and manual handling

Have all staff who are at risk from lifting or moving been trained in manual handling?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	yes	no
Is mechanical equipment used whenever possible, have staff been trained in its use, and is there enough space to use it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where mechanical assistance is not possible, are staff trained in safe lifting techniques and is there enough space to use them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are heavy items stored at a convenient or adjustable height to suit the user?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the weight of loads known and clearly marked, and are they small and light enough?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are unbalanced, uneven, slippery, sharp or too hot or too cold loads avoided?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are loads securely packed to avoid them shifting or spilling?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are work surfaces at a comfortable or adjustable height to suit the user and at compatible heights to reduce lifting from one to another?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is frequent or prolonged stooping, stretching or reaching above shoulder height, or sideways twisting of the body avoided?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are lifting and handling needs included in patient/client care plans?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do uniforms, protective equipment and other clothing that is provided allow easy movement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Machinery and equipment

Are all staff trained to use, clean and adjust equipment safely?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is all equipment regularly inspected and maintained?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a procedure for reporting faulty equipment and for taking it out of use until repaired?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all guards in place on machinery?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are potentially dangerous machines only operated by properly trained staff aged 18 and over?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Noise

Are noise levels below the recommended maximum (rough guide – you should be able to talk with someone a metre away without shouting)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have the causes of noise been tackled?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
As a last resort, are suitable earmuffs or plugs provided, and are they regularly checked, cleaned and maintained, and stored in a clean and safe place?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Overcrowding

Is there enough space for staff to work safely?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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yes

no

Protective clothing

Is proper and appropriate protective clothing provided free of charge?

Is it effective, comfortable and well fitting?

Is it replaced as soon as they are worn out or damaged?

Are clean overalls provided regularly?

Slips, trips and falls

Are floors and stairs in good condition, free from obstructions and non-slip?

Are spills cleared up immediately?

Is non-slip footwear provided free of charge where needed?

Do all staircases have securely fixed handrails?

Are trailing leads and cables secured or covered?

Is there enough storage space?

Has a risk assessment been done on all work from heights and are the measures required being implemented?

Stress

Do risk assessments include stress?

Has your employer done a stress audit?

Are there measures in place to avoid or minimise the risk?

Has the employer introduced the HSE Stress Management Standards?

Temperature (working indoors)

Is the temperature comfortable all year?

Does the temperature reach at least 16°C within one hour of starting work?

Can breaks be taken away from hot areas?

Temperature (working outdoors)

Is warm clothing provided in cold weather?

Are there facilities for warming up and making hot drinks when cold?

In hot conditions, is cool drinking water provided and can breaks be taken in the shade?

yes

no

Can the work be organised so that it takes place in the shade or not during mid-day when the sun is at its strongest?

Toilets, wash and rest facilities

Are there enough toilets, and are they clean and in good repair?

Are washing facilities (hot water, soap and towels) provided?

Are sanitary disposal facilities provided in women's toilets?

Are lockers (or something similar) provided for staff?

Is there a rest room, and is it clean, properly lit, and ventilated?

Are there suitable facilities for pregnant and nursing mothers to rest?

Are there facilities for workers to eat meals?

Ventilation

Are fumes, steam and stale air removed?

Is there a supply of fresh air without draughts?

Are special precautions taken when working in confined spaces?

VDUs (computer users)

Are workstations and seating fully adjustable, and are staff trained and encouraged to make adjustments?

Does seating give proper back support?

Are footrests provided where needed?

Is furniture and equipment checked and maintained regularly, with faulty items taken out of service and replaced?

Can users easily read screens, and are they flicker and glare free?

Is the pace of work comfortable and can breaks be taken?

Are users offered full free eye tests?

Are reports of aches, pains, numbness or tingling in limbs investigated?

Is the work free from awkward postures, movements and very repetitive work?

Is training provided about the use of equipment, methods of work, and how to avoid repetitive strain injury (RSI)?

yes

no

Violence

Has a risk assessment on violence or the threat of violence been conducted (physical, verbal abuse or intimidation)?

Are they encouraged to report all incidents, including intimidation?

Are there preventive measures in place to avoid or minimise the risk?

Are there panic buttons, do they work, and are they quickly and reliably responded to? If name badges are worn are only forenames given?

Is there a policy and procedure for home visits, lone working and community based working, and is this work avoided if it is unsafe?

Is information about potential incidents or clients which may present a risk passed on?

If staff have to make home visits or work through an isolated or threatening area, do they have alarms?

Can public waiting areas be improved to reduce tension and stress?

Can appointments be arranged to avoid long waiting times?

Do interview rooms allow easy escape whilst giving privacy to the client?

Are staff trained in what to do and how to diffuse potentially/violent situations?

Is counselling and support for the victims and witnesses of violence provided?