

Health and Safety Committee Meetings



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Health and Safety Committee Meetings

Legally, all UK employers must consult their employees (and/or employee representatives) on matters affecting employees' health and safety at work. This means giving employees information about the health and safety hazards they face and listening to and taking account of their concerns and ideas before making any decisions about the best ways of protecting them.

However, involving workers in managing health and safety brings benefits for employers, as research has shown workplaces where staff are involved in taking decisions about health and safety are safer and healthier.

Consultation with employees

In some industry sectors where there is a recognised trade union, safety representatives are appointed by that trade union. The trade union is required to notify the employer in writing when this occurs.

In the absence of a recognised trade union or unions, and for employees not represented by a recognised trade union, the Health and Safety, Consultation with Employees Regulations 1996 requires that an employer either directly consults with employees, or arranges for the election

of "Representatives of Employee Safety", or RoES as it is sometimes referred to, by the workforce for the purposes of consultation. The role of the RoES is to take up with employer concerns about potential hazards and dangerous events in the workplace that may affect the workers they represent. They may also raise general matters affecting health and safety to their employer.

The benefits of health and safety committee meetings

A health and safety committee meeting will give you as an employer the opportunity to discuss with your employee representatives the general matters about which you must consult your workforce on by law. As a reminder these are:

- Any change that may substantially affect your workforces health and safety. Such changes may include:
 - New or different procedures
 - Types of work
 - Equipment
 - Premises
 - Ways of working (for example, new shift patterns)

- Your arrangements for getting competent people to help you meet your obligations under health and safety laws, for example, appointing a health and safety manager
- Information you must give your workforce on the likely risks in their work and precautions they should take. Discuss with employees and representatives the best way for information to be shared. Consider issues of language, literacy and learning disabilities if appropriate
- The planning of health and safety training
- The health and safety consequences of introducing new technology

To ensure you cover all relevant issues at your health and safety committee meeting, the committee should agree a standard agenda but also allow for any other business to be added as required. An example of an agenda is detailed below and the list is not exhaustive:

- Statistics on accident records, ill health and sickness absence
 - Accident investigations and subsequent action
- Findings from inspections of the workplace by enforcing authorities, management or employee health and safety representatives
- Risk assessments
- Health and safety training
- Emergency procedures
- Changes in the workplace affecting the health, safety and welfare of employees

There are no standard rules on the frequency of safety committee meetings; this will be dictated by the size of workplace, nature of risks and volume of business. However, the employer is obliged to post the membership in the workplace (or workplaces) where the committee operates in such a way that the workforce is easily aware of the arrangements and who represents them.

A health and safety committee made up of employee representatives, union-appointed representatives, management, and health and safety professionals is an ideal way of showing your commitment to consulting your workers and jointly dealing with health and safety issues within your organisations. It shows safety leadership from the very top of the organisations and will help to promote and develop a positive safety culture through your organisation.

Further reading

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/involvement/hscommittees.htm>

If you have any queries or are in need of specific Health & Safety advice, please use the contact form in the Health & Safety policy section of our system to contact a member of the AfterAthena team (part of the Napthens Group) who are able to offer your advice via email and a FREE virtual Health & Safety Audit.

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