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# Health and safety inspections

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# Inspections

## What I will cover is:

- What the law says
- Why we do them
- When and where
- How we do them
- After an incident
- What happens after

There is a TUC guide to inspections

## 3 ways to participate

- **Ask questions** and vote for your favourite – links below this presentation
- **Answer the polls** – link below this presentation
- **Comment and chat** – click on 'Say something nice' (bottom-right)

# The Law

Health and Safety at Work Act – General Duty on employers to cooperate effectively with employees.

Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977

Regulation 4 – one of the functions of a union safety representative is “to carry out inspections in accordance with Regulations 5,6,and 7.”

Regulation 5 deals with inspections of the workforce.

Regulation 6 deals with inspections following over-three-day-injuries, notifiable accidents, dangerous occurrences and diseases.

Regulation 7 deals with inspection of documents and provision of information.

# The Law – what the HSE says

Union-appointed health and safety representatives can inspect the workplace. They have to give reasonable notice in writing when they intend to carry out a formal inspection of the workplace, and have not inspected it in the previous three months. If there is substantial change in conditions of work or HSE publishes new information on hazards, the representatives are entitled to carry out inspections before three months have elapsed, or if it is by agreement.

The frequency of inspections will depend on the nature of the work. Inspections may be less often, for example, if the work environment is low risk like in a predominantly administrative office. But if there are certain areas of a workplace or specific activities that are high risk or changing rapidly, more frequent inspection may be justified, for example on a construction project.



**Why do we  
do them?**

Keep the workplace safe and healthy by:

- Identifying hazards that could injure your members or anyone else in the workplace
- Giving reassurance that the employer has identified risks and controlled any hazards, and that the processes in place are succeeding
- To show your members that you are active in promoting their interests, and give them the opportunity to raise any issues.

# When (and where) do we do them?

## **As often as we need**

- Not just every three months, but also if there is an incident, a change in working methods or organisation, or an incident.
- Also not only in the main premises but the whole building(s) – anywhere anyone has access including basements, outhouses, etc.
- You can visit outside working hours – what about security staff, cleaners, shift workers etc.

# How do we do it?

## **This is what the HSE says – but it is for employers. Not for reps.**

- ✓ Plan a programme of inspections - you and your representatives can plan a programme of inspections in advance...
- ✓ Agree the number of representatives - agree the number of representatives taking part in any one formal inspection...
- ✓ Co-ordinate inspections - plan inspections if there is more than one representative, because they can then co-ordinate their inspections to avoid unnecessary duplication.
- ✓ Inspect together - it will help your relationship with the representatives if you inspect together...
- ✓ Consult specialists - if there is a safety officer or specialist advisers...
- ✓ Break down tasks - for larger workplaces, it may not be practical to conduct a formal inspection of the entire workplace in a single session...



# Preparing

- ✓ An inspection is not just a physical inspection of the workplace. It is an inspection of all the processes and paperwork.
- ✓ Get prepared first.
  - Check the accident book
  - RIDDOR
  - Ask for sickness absence records
  - Risk assessments
  - Safety data sheets
  - Training records

You are entitled to these by law.

# Carrying out the inspection

- ✓ Prepare a checklist (The TUC has one so do many unions).
- ✓ Make it relevant to your workplace.
- ✓ Fire safety???
- ✓ Not just ticking boxes – talk to people.
- ✓ Take photos
- ✓ Make notes
- ✓ Don't be afraid to ask advice after on any issue from your union.

# Inspections after an incident

- After an injury, dangerous occurrence, near miss or notifiable disease make sure the inspection happens as soon as possible.
- But make sure the workplace is safe first.
- If there is a serious injury make sure the area is treated as a crime scene.
- Get witnesses to write down details of what happened as soon as possible
- Make sure that work does not commence until what caused the injury or near miss is sorted.

# What happens after?

- Keep as much information as you can and then do a report on any problems that you identify. Keep it simple.
- Serious problems should be notified verbally immediately.
- Many unions have a form
- HSE website 2 forms

**Inspections** <https://www.hse.gov.uk/forms/incident/f2534.pdf>

**Reporting to employer** <https://www.hse.gov.uk/forms/incident/f2533-f2534.doc>

- Consider putting your report on the union noticeboard or emailing members with the findings.

# After an inspection– what the HSE says (to employers)

- ✓ Explain the reasons for any follow-up action you decide to take to your representatives.
- ✓ Let the representative who notified you of the inspection have the opportunity to inspect again so they can check if the issues raised got appropriate attention, and record their views.
- ✓ Share the follow-up action taken throughout the workplace and other relevant parts of the business, including the health and safety committee where there is one.

**There may be times when action may not be appropriate, you may not be able to act within a reasonable period of time, or when the action you take is not acceptable to your safety representatives. It is advisable to explain the reasons for the action you have decided to take in writing to your representatives.** You can even use the sample inspection form [PDF 16KB] PDF and report form [PDF 16KB] PDF on the HSE website to do this.

You remain responsible for taking decisions about managing health and safety, but by explaining the reasons for actions and being open with your representatives, you can show that you have considered what they had to say.

# After an inspection – What needs to happen

- Prioritise!
- Try to agree a timetable with management.
- Publicise management's response.
- Check the measures are implemented properly and in time.
- Take it further if necessary and the issue is serious. (Including contacting the [HSE](#))
- Get inspection reports considered at the joint health and safety committee.

A man and a woman, both wearing high-visibility yellow safety jackets, are smiling and looking at a clipboard held by the woman. The man is wearing a white shirt and a red tie under his jacket. They are standing in front of a building with large windows and a brick wall. The background is slightly blurred, suggesting an outdoor construction or industrial setting.

## Going further: Union Inspection Notices

This is a negotiated system whereby the employer agrees to respond to any safety issues with a certain time. If not the matter is automatically referred upwards.

[\(click here\)](#)



## Conclusion

Inspections are one of the main parts of a safety reps role.

You are not expected to be experts - always ask for help if you need it.

Your work does not end with the inspection.



The logo for TUC (Transport Union of Canada) features the letters 'TUC' in a bold, sans-serif font. Each letter is composed of two overlapping, semi-transparent white shapes that form an arrow pointing in a clockwise direction, suggesting movement and progress. The 'T' has a horizontal bar pointing right and a vertical stem pointing down. The 'U' has a top bar pointing right and a bottom curve pointing down. The 'C' has a top bar pointing right and a bottom curve pointing down.

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