

# Thinking of Becoming a Health & Safety Representative?

It is time for all workplaces to elect a new Health & Safety Representative for the coming year. Every workplace (or section thereof) is entitled to elect a Safety Representative. These elections should be held at properly publicised workplace meetings. If you would like any help or advice to organise such a meeting - please contact the Branch Office on the number below.



If you've been a Health & Safety Representative before and would like to continue - please stand because your experience will be valuable. However, if you have never been a Safety Rep but are keen to try, please put your name forward, a fresh approach is often the most helpful. What is required to carry out this task is; some time, commitment, an ability to involve and inform your members and a willingness to honestly try your best when issues are raised.

## remember....

- The City of Edinburgh Council **agrees** to time-off for trade union duties. This should only be refused under "exigencies of service" which usually means, "emergencies", "Life and Limb Cover" or very short staffing indeed.
- Training is necessary and is provided ( you are also entitled to time-off for this.)
- UNISON will pay "out of pocket" expenses for Health & Safety Representatives.
- Every New Health & Safety Representative will get a Safety Reps pack full of helpful and interesting information.
- If you are not sure what to do, you can contact other Safety Reps or Branch Officers for support and advice.

***If you decide to stand as Health & Safety Rep, please fill in the enclosed form so that the UNISON Office can process your application as quickly as possible.  
Please note: Reps from last year WILL also have to fill in this form.***

## For further information,

**IAN MULLEN 0131 558 7488**  
**Branch Health & Safety Officer for advice on H&S Issues, Courses etc**  
**&**  
**Julie Finlay, Branch Support Assistant for nomination forms etc**  
**or contact your Secretary/Convener of your Stewards Committee for**  
**information.**

## **Why are Health and Safety Reps important?**

UNISON members believe Health and Safety is the most important issue at work. Health and Safety can be a matter of life and death.

Many of our members know what it's like to experience stress, violence or accidents and injuries at work.

Tackling health and safety is also a very good way of organising in the workplace.

## **What do Health and Safety Reps do?**

Everybody who works has basic rights, which include things like sufficient space to work in, clean and well-lit workplaces and safe working practices. Health and Safety Reps work to make the workplace as safe as possible.

### **They can:**

- Make representations to the employer on behalf of members on any health, safety and welfare matter
- Represent members in consultation with Health and Safety Executive inspectors or other enforcing authorities
- Inspect designated workplace areas at least every three months
- Investigate any potential hazards, complaints by members and causes of accidents, dangerous occurrences and diseases
- Employers are obliged by law to carry out risk assessments which identify dangers in the workplace and look at how likely they are to cause harm. Health and Safety Reps can help make sure this happens.

## **What rights do Health and Safety Reps have?**

Health and safety reps have important legal rights, including the right to: Paid time off to carry out their role and undergo either TUC or union-approved training, Raise issues with the employers that affect the health and safety of members, Facilities and support from the employer to carry out inspections, To receive legal and technical information from the employer

## **How do I become a Health and Safety Rep?**

Like stewards, safety reps are chosen by union members. They are not appointed by the employer. Elections are held every **February after the Branch AGM**. Please contact the Branch Office or Branch Health and Safety Officer if you are interested.

Once a Health & Safety Rep is appointed, the employer must be notified in writing of that appointment. The Branch will arrange this on your behalf once nomination received.

## **Where do I go for advice and support?**

The Branch Office is always the first place to go. Health and Safety Reps will give prompt advice and guidance.

## **Do I get any training?**

UNISON provides special introductory and follow up courses for Health and Safety Reps. Details on this will be sent out in New Reps Pack or contact the Branch Office to find out when and where the next training course will be held.