

Accidents at work

Health and safety at work - the law

By law, your employers have to protect your health, safety and welfare at work. They have to make sure the workplace is safe and without risk to health. As part of this duty, employers must:

- keep **dust, fumes** and **noise** under control
- make sure that **plant and machinery** are safe and regularly maintained, and that the systems used in the workplace are safe
- provide **protective clothing** where necessary
- report certain diseases and injuries to the **relevant authority**
- provide adequate **first aid equipment** and facilities
- take precautions against **fire** and provide adequate means of escape and means of fighting fire
- **assess the risks** that might be involved in work practices such as using a computer. The work practices must be changed to prevent injuries.

You must cooperate with your employers to make the workplace safe. You must also take reasonable care of your own health and safety at work and that of anyone you work with.

If you think that conditions at your workplace are unsafe, talk to your trade union if you have one. You can also contact the Health and Safety Executive through its website at www.hse.gov.uk.

If you believe that there is a serious and immediate danger for you at work, you have the right to protect yourself. This could mean leaving work until the immediate danger is fixed.

If you have an accident at work

If you have an accident at work, you need to report it to your employers as soon as possible. Make sure they record it in the **Accident Book**. If they don't do this or if there isn't an Accident Book, write down brief details of the accident and send it to your boss, keeping a copy. If you can't report the accident because you are too ill, try to get someone else to do this.

If you've had an accident, you should **see a doctor** even if your injury doesn't seem too serious. This is so the doctor can record the medical details of your accident. This will be useful later on if you want to claim compensation from your boss or if you need to claim benefits.

Even if your accident doesn't seem serious, register the accident as an **industrial injury** with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The DWP will give you a form to fill in with the details. This will help you with any future industrial injuries benefit claims if you develop a disability or health problem later on because of the accident. You can find out more about industrial injuries benefits from the Directgov website at: www.direct.gov.uk.

Work- related deaths

A work-related death is one that happens because of some kind of work-related activity. A work-related death could lead to an individual within a company or organisation being prosecuted for manslaughter.

A company or organisation can also be prosecuted for **corporate manslaughter (corporate homicide in Scotland)** if a death at work is the result of serious management failures.

You can get free and independent advice about a death at work from the Centre for Corporate Accountability, which provides a Work-related Death Advice Service. You can visit their website at: http://www.corporateaccountability.org/death_advice.htm, or phone them on 020 7490 4494.

Money issues

If you need time off because of your injury, you should be getting **Statutory Sick Pay**. You might get more pay if this is in your contract of employment. Depending on the seriousness of the injury, you might also be able to claim **benefits** to boost your income when you are off work and even when you go back to work. For example, you might get Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit.

Also, you might be able to claim **compensation from your employer**. This could be complicated and take a long time. It's best if you get legal advice from a solicitor about claiming compensation. Your local Citizens Advice Bureau (see below) will help you find a solicitor who is specialised in these cases or your union might help if you are a member of one. If you want to make a claim, it must be started within three years of the accident.

Further help

Citizens Advice Bureau

Citizens Advice Bureaux give free, confidential, impartial and independent advice to help you solve problems. To find your nearest CAB, including those that give advice by e-mail, click on [nearest CAB](#), or look under C in your phone book.

Other information on Adviceguide which might help

- Personal injuries
- Using a solicitor
- Claiming compensation for personal injury – no win, no fee agreements (England and Wales only)
- Benefits for people who are sick or disabled
- Off work because of sickness

This fact sheet is produced by [Citizens Advice](#), an operating name of The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux. It is intended to provide general information only and should not be taken as a full statement of the law. The information applies to England, Scotland and Wales only.

This fact sheet was last updated on 3 January 2012, and is reviewed regularly. If it is some time since you obtained this fact sheet, please contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau to check if it is still correct. Or visit our website www.adviceguide.org.uk - where you can download an up-to-date copy.