



# Health and Safety Matters

## FORCAST SNOW

### The Year Ahead

Stress and mental health will remain at the top of UNISONS health and safety agenda in 2019.



UNISON will also make sure that musculoskeletal disorders, including repetitive strain injuries don't slip down the agenda and will remain a mini campaign on RSI awareness Day at the end of February.



Slip and trip accidents increase during Winter for a number of reasons: there is less daylight, leaves fall onto paths and become wet and slippery and cold weather spells cause ice and snow to build up on paths. There are effective actions that you can take to reduce the risk of a slip or trip. Regardless of the size of your site, always ensure that regularly used walkways are promptly tackled.  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/slips/step/index.htm>

## *Lone Working Risk Assessments must be suitable and sufficient*

Many UNISON members work alone, or in isolation, as part of their normal day to-day activities, a trend that has increased in recent years. This is as a result of a number of factors including:

- ⇒ **Government cuts leading to fewer staff;**
- ⇒ **Contracting out and fragmen-**

**tation of services, and safety systems;**

- ⇒ **Changes in the way work is organised;**
- ⇒ **Increased home working;**
- ⇒ **An increase in staff employed in domiciliary/home care.**

Those working alone are more vulnerable than those who do not. They get less support from their colleagues and it is more difficult for them to summon help if things go wrong. Good health and safety management may reduce these risks but the best way to eliminate the hazards associated with lone working, is to -

*Eliminate lone working.*

*All employers should have a basic good health and safety system so that workers have someone to contact should they get in trouble, and which also enables managers and colleagues to summon help if necessary.*

## The menopause as a health and safety issue



**Employers have a duty to prevent workplace discrimination and to make adjustments to ensure women can work safely through the menopause.**

Risk assessments should consider the specific needs of menopausal women and ensure that the working environment will not make their symptoms worse. Issues that need looking at include temperature, ventilation, toilet facilities and access to water. It is important that workplace stress is also considered and addressed properly using the health and Safety Executive (HSE) stress management standards.

In the past, less attention has been given to the health and safety needs of women. Traditional emphasis of health and safety has been on risk prevention in visibly dangerous work largely carried out by

men in sectors such as construction and mining, where inadequate risk control can lead to fatalities. Because of this, research and developments in health and safety regulation, policy and risk management have been primarily based on work traditionally done by men, while woman's occupational injuries and illnesses have largely been ignored.

This means that, even today occupational health and safety often treats men and women as if they were the same, or makes gender stereotypes, such as saying women do lighter work. Or that men are less likely to suffer from work related

stress. In contrast, a gender sensitive approach acknowledges and makes visible the differences that exist between male and female workers, identifying their differing risks and proposing control measures so that effective solutions are provided for everyone.



# 48%

Around 1 in every 3 woman has either experienced or is currently going through the menopause.

48% women make up nearly half of the Welsh workforce and with increasing numbers of older workers, many more women are now working through and well beyond the menopause.

Although some women do not experience difficulties as a result of the menopause, around 8 in every 10 women will experience noticeable symptoms and of these 45 per cent will find their symptoms hard to deal with.

Many women report that workplace environments and practices can make symptoms worse.

For a copy of the TUC PDF go to:

[https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/extras/supporting\\_women\\_through\\_the\\_menopause.pdf](https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/extras/supporting_women_through_the_menopause.pdf)

**The Equality Act: Age** - The Equality Act 2010 makes it illegal to discriminate, either directly or indirectly, against a worker on the grounds of age without "objective justification". Direct discrimination occurs when a person treats another less favorably than they treat or would treat others because of a "protected characteristic".



**Working environment** — Employers must take account of the needs of older workers, and consider appropriate adjustments to the working environment. These include: - access requirements, lighting, noise reduction, temperature and when working outdoors, provision of warm clothing, risk assessing

DSE and other equipment and taking measures to minimize slips and trips. **Adjustments to workplace design should take account of all genders and their differing requirements as they grow older.**

# A gender-sensitive approach to health and safety

## Making risk assessment more gender sensitive

The law requires employers to assess the risk of work-related ill health arising from work activities.

They must also ensure that these risks are removed or proper control measures are in place to avoid them where possible – and reduce them so far as reasonably practicable.

Employers should take an “all round” approach to risk prevention, recognising the gender differences that relate to work, including sexual harassment, discrimination, involvement in decision-making in the workplace and many women’s work/life balance issues.

Recognising gender differences in the workforce is vital if we are to ensure that workplaces are safe and healthy for

everyone.

UNISON has always supported a “gender sensitive” approach to ensure that gender issues are an integral part of information gathering, standard setting, legislation, practical action to prevent and control risks, policy setting and involving women in decision-making bodies.

**Across the UK approximately half of workers are women and UNISON knows that women often experience the working environment in a different way than their male colleagues do.**

**If a UNISON member believes that an employer isn’t taking her issues seriously or isn’t doing enough to support her she should speak to her UNISON safety rep.**

## MSDs are preventable

Work-related musculo-skeletal disorders (MSDs) are the most commonly reported cause of occupational ill-health in Great Britain with over half a million workers suffering from a work-related MSD at any one time.

MSDs are prevalent in all sectors but agriculture, logistics and transport, construction and health and social care have significantly higher than average rates.

The 2016 TUC survey of safety reps showed that it was also one of the problems most encountered by health and safety reps with 32 per cent of those responding saying that that back strains were a major concern for members and 26 per cent saying that repetitive strain injuries were a major concern.

### Regulations

The main regulations and related guidance are also on the HSE site.

These are the [Manual Handling Operations 1992 and the guidance on the regulations](#) and the [Health and Safety \(Display Screen Equipment\) regulations and guidance](#).

### Guides

There are a range of guides published by the HSE. Many of them are written for employers to tell them how to comply with the law, but they are equally of use to health and safety reps.

These include:

[Manual handling at work](#)

[Working with display screen equipment](#)

There is also a [display screen equipment workstation checklist](#).

The HSE material will ensure that you know what your employer must do to obey the law. Some sectors have their own guidance that is published jointly between the employers and unions.

The HSE also has a “[Go Home Healthy](#)” campaign website which includes material on MSDs. To keep up to date with developments in health and safety you can subscribe to [HSE eBulletins](#), or to the TUC [Risks newsletter](#) ..

As a UNISON member you receive:

**Free legal advice and representation on:**

- Personal injury at work (including assaults) • Personal injury away from work
- Road traffic accident injury • Holiday injury • Slips and trips • Industrial disease or illness
- Employment law accessed through your union branch
- Any non-work issues such as landlord disputes, neighborhood disputes, matrimonial and consumer issues
- free wills - complete online at:

[www.thompsons.law.co.uk/unison-wills.htm](http://www.thompsons.law.co.uk/unison-wills.htm)



## TEMPERATURE AT WORK - What does the law say?

The law does not state a minimum or maximum temperature, but the temperature in workrooms should normally be at least: **16°C or 13°C** if much of the work involves rigorous physical effort.

A meaningful maximum figure cannot be given due to the high temperatures found in, for example, glass works or foundries. In such environments it is still possible to work safely provided appropriate controls are present. Factors other than air temperature, ie radiant temperature, humidity and air velocity, become more significant and the interaction between them become more complex with rising temperatures.

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 lay down particular requirements for most aspects of the working environment. Regulation 7 deals specifically with the temperature in indoor workplaces and states that: **'During working hours, the temperature in all workplaces inside buildings shall be reasonable.'** However, the application of the regulation depends on the nature of the workplace, such as a bakery, a cold store, an office, a warehouse. **The minimum temperature in Schools is 16°C irrespective of working practices.**

These Regulations only apply to employees – they do not apply to members of the public, for example, with regard temperature complaints from customers in a shopping centre or cinema.

Applying the control measures described on these webpages should be sufficient to ensure the welfare of those affected. While there's no requirement on employees to disclose conditions that may affect thermal comfort, if an employee chooses to do so then it may be that the temporary measures described on these webpages could manage their thermal comfort. **If a significant number of employees are complaining about thermal discomfort, your employer should carry out a risk assessment and act on the results of that assessment.**

Sufficient **thermometers** should be provided to allow employees to tell the temperature in any inside workplace.

Contact the Branch today for your free  
UNISON Thermometer

Further advice can be found at - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/faq.htm>  
<https://www.unison.org.uk/.../TowebTemperature-at-Work-Information-Sheet-Aug14...>



Interested in becoming active in Health and Safety ?

Remember, you only do as much, or as little, as you want as a UNISON activist...

Why not give it a try.

For further information please call: **01443 863279**



**UNISON** - Working together to protect you and your workplace