

Guidance for managers and team leaders on the role of trade union health and safety representatives

Introduction

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) places great importance on worker involvement and consultation because evidence shows that:

- workplaces where employees are involved in decisions affecting the health and safety are healthier and safer
- the effective involvement of union safety reps reduces accidents by, on average, 50% and significantly lowers the likelihood of ill-health

HSE says worker involvement is a key factor to improving health and safety in the workplace. As a company [Name of organisation] recognises the important contribution that is made by Prospect health and safety representatives. We support them in their role.

Worker involvement

We have a duty to make and maintain arrangements for creating a culture of health and safety cooperation; and we have duties to consult our workforce on health and safety matters. Prospect safety reps can help us by:

- ✓ being conduits to our health and safety communications
- ✓ promoting health and safety messages and campaigns.

Line Management Support

It is important that managers recognise that Prospect safety reps are unpaid volunteers who are entitled to time off with pay for their activities and for training, albeit some choose to do much of the work and studying in their own time.

The amount of time safety reps spend on their activities varies considerably. The better our health and safety performance, the less they will need to do!

References:

www.hse.gov.uk/involvement/talktoyouremployees.htm

www.prospect.org.uk/at-work/health-and-safety/about/union-effect



Worker involvement good practice for employers

Recognition

- ✓ **Recognise the role** - when a health and safety rep has been appointed or elected, the role becomes part of their job. They may need cover to fulfil their role, attend meetings/training
- ✓ **Support** statutory volunteers. Health and safety reps are similar to first-aiders and fire-wardens

Inspections

- ✓ **Inspect together** - it will help your relationship with your reps and make better use of time
- ✓ **Plan a programme of inspections** – so you resource inspections and secure appropriate cover
- ✓ **Break down tasks** - for large workplaces it may not be practical to conduct a formal inspection of the entire workplace in a single session
- ✓ **Involve specialists** – a safety officer, occupational hygienist, occupational health practitioner, human factors or other specialist adviser

Investigations

- ✓ **Plan for incidents** – so you know how to contact and involve a safety rep in your investigation
- ✓ **Involve the rep** – investigations that involve a Prospect health and safety rep can give employees more confidence to co-operate with enquiries
- ✓ **Identify root causation** – and seek to agree this with the Prospect safety rep. If a Prospect member is suspected of wrong-doing, a Prospect lay rep or Officer should step in
- ✓ **Remember** minor incidents and near misses - when considering accident and injuries statistics, look at minor injuries and incidents as well as reportable ones

Committee work

- ✓ **Plan meetings in advance** – to ensure attendance and demonstrate commitment
- ✓ **Be strategic** – analyse data, understand trends, inform priorities and strategy
- ✓ **Agree** – issue resolution measures so that conflict is avoided and solutions are achieved.

References:

www.hse.gov.uk/managing/index.htm

www.hse.gov.uk/involvement/improve/goodpractice.htm