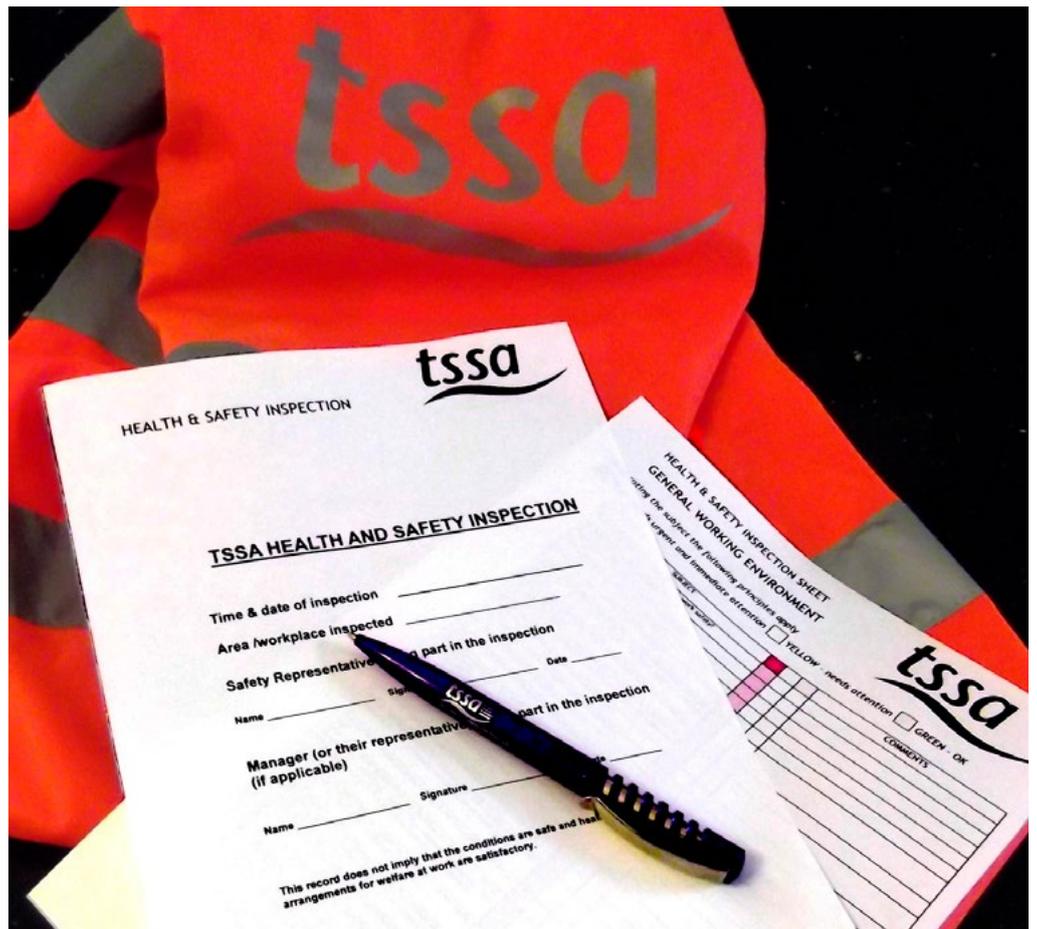


Workplace Inspections





Keeping Our Members Safe & Healthy

TSSA believes that everyone has the right to work in a safe environment that does not jeopardise their personal health, safety and welfare, now or in the future.

TSSA Health & Safety reps make a massive difference in the workplace. An important role of all Health & Safety reps is the workplace inspection.

Workplace inspections help prevent injuries and illnesses. Correct inspection of the workplace on a regular basis will identify and record potential hazards. These can then be reported and addressed so corrective action can be taken.

Regular workplace inspections are an integral part to maintaining and improving the health, safety, and welfare of our members. They also show members that you, and TSSA, take the health, safety, and welfare of our members seriously.

The level of risk for injury and illness varies from work place to workplace and covers both physical and mental hazards. Whilst it is true that office staff are not exposed to the same risks as staff at depots, or on site, figures show that a significant number of British workers across all industries and work locations have at least three days a year signed off sick due to an illness or injury suffered at, or as a result of work.

There is no room for complacency when it comes to health and safety inspections and all reps should ensure that they carry out regular and thorough inspections.

This guide is an introduction on how to identify, report, and resolve potential hazards in the workplace. It is worth remembering that the overwhelming majority of accidents in the office are avoidable and happen as a result of "human factors" which means there is ample scope for both employer and employee to take reasonably simple and practicable measures to reduce the risk of accidents.

WHEN TO INSPECT

The SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES AND SAFETY COMMITTEES REGULATIONS 1977

Regulation 5 states that safety representatives are entitled to inspect the work place if;

- They have given the employer reasonable notice in writing
- An inspection of the area has not taken place in the last three months [more regular inspections can be agreed upon between reps and employers].
- Where there has been a substantial change to the conditions of work [such as introduction of new machinery, or working practices].
- New information has been published from the HSE or HSC relevant to hazards affecting the workplace. – For further clarification see the Safety Reps 'Brown Book'.

As a safety representative, you may, at some point, be asked to assist an employee who has been injured in the workplace and/or participate in accident investigation. The purpose of accident investigation is to establish how an accident happened, and how to prevent it from happening again.

Please refer to the TSSA H&S Reps Guide to Investigating Accidents.

CARRYING OUT THE INSPECTION

Giving Notice

Reps should give reasonable notice to their employer that they are going to undertake a workplace inspection. Once this has been acknowledged by the employer, reps should notify members, and advertise the visit using a TSSA Health & Safety Inspection notice. Members should be encouraged to make you aware of any concerns prior to the inspection.



Preparing for the Inspection

Prior to the inspection reps should ensure that they have a copies of;

- TSSA H&S Inspection Report [cover sheet].
- Relevant TSSA Inspection sheets
- TSSA H&S Inspection Report Form.

It may also prove useful to carry a camera, and/or a tape measure.

[At this stage it is important to remember that the Inspection Sheets are to be used as a tool to help with the inspection. Safety inspections are not a tick box exercise.]

Reps may also want to consider conducting both a body mapping and/or rick mapping exercise with members and non-members at the same time as the inspection – see TSSA H&S Reps Guide to Body Mapping and TSSA H&S Reps Guide to Risk Mapping.



THE INSPECTION

By law [again refer to 'Brown Book'] Safety representatives are allowed access to the accident book, RIDDOR reports, risk assessments, safety data, training records and previous inspection reports. Reps should ask the employer to provide these at the onset of the inspection.

Reps should make note of previous concerns to ensure they have been addressed. It might be an idea to take copies of risk assessments with you on the inspection to check that all risks have been covered.

On the inspection use the Inspection Sheets as a guide to ensure you cover all areas and fill in the report as you go [see TSSA H&S Reps Quick Guide to Inspection Sheets].

However, an inspection is not just about ticking boxes. Use your time wisely, talk to members and non-members. Look everywhere. Make notes as you go. Look at the workplace from the perspective of both able and disabled members. Consider both the physical and mental hazards in the workplace.

AFTER THE INSPECTION

Using your notes and the results on the Inspection Sheets, reps should complete the TSSA H&S Workplace Inspection Report form. This report should record all health, safety, and welfare concerns either identified or raised during the inspection.

A copy of this report should then be presented to the employer. Upon receipt the report should be signed by both the rep and the employer. A copy should then be made and at least one copy retained by both parties.

The rep should keep this report along with the completed Inspection Report [front sheet], Inspection Sheets and any other notes made during or relating to the inspection.

WHAT NEXT ?

The inspection and submission of the report is by no means end of the inspection process. In submitting the TSSA H&S Workplace Inspection Report you will have notified the employer, in writing, of issues and concerns arising from the inspection.

The Safety Reps Regulations [see 'Brown Book'] states that after receiving the report ***"appropriate remedial action will normally be taken by the employer. Where remedial action is not considered appropriate, or cannot be taken within a reasonable period of time, or the form of remedial action is not acceptable to the safety representatives, then the employer should explain the reasons and give them in writing to the safety representatives"***.

Reps should agree with the employer a suitable timescale to address each issue raised in the report.

Safety reps should then follow up the report to check that all agreed measures have been taken within the appropriate timescales etc. The TSSA H&S Workplace Inspection Report has an area that should be completed by the employer to explain what remedial action has been taken, or an explanation as to why not.

The Safety Reps Regulations guidance also states that responses should be available to all staff. Safety reps should share the outcomes and responses from health and safety inspections with members and non-members.

As well as playing a vital role in ensuring the health safety and welfare of our members, health and safety inspections are an excellent way of involving members and showing the relevance of TSSA to all workers.

WHAT IF THE EMPLOYER FAILS TO ACT?

If the employer fails to respond to any issues likely to cause injury or illness within the agreed timescales or outside of the agreed remedial action, reps are advised to contact their TSSA Regional Official and/or senior TSSA Health & Safety Representative[s].

For non-urgent issues reps should consider issuing a TSSA Health & Safety Alert: Union Inspection Notice.

Before doing so reps should read and understand the TSSA H&S Reps Guide to Union Inspection Notices.



Protection for Health and Safety Reps

The rights and functions of safety reps do not place any legal duties on them.

This means that a safety rep has no greater liability in law for health and safety breaches than any other employee.

BROWN BOOK

For further information on regulations, points of clarity and guidance, reps should also refer to the TUC Safety Representatives and Safety Committees, Commonly known as the 'Brown Book'.

