

# HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS IN THE FINANCE SECTOR



Everyone has the right to work in a healthy, safe environment

Unite offers the latest training, information and advice to representatives, members and employers to ensure that best practice is followed, creating healthier, safer working environments for everyone.

Unite is committed to improving health & safety in all workplaces.

Union organised workplaces are safer than non-union organised workplaces.

[www.unitetheunion.org](http://www.unitetheunion.org)



# Employers have a general duty of care for the health, safety and welfare of their employees



This includes providing:

- a safe and healthy workplace where risks are suitably and adequately controlled
- safe work equipment, properly maintained and used, suitable for the purpose and safe systems of work
- adequate welfare facilities
- information, training and supervision necessary for health and safety.

# SPECIFIC ISSUES RELEVANT TO THE FINANCE INDUSTRY MAY INCLUDE:

- **Use of DSE and Work Stations**, can cause injuries due to repetitive work, eye strain, back shoulder and neck ache, and headaches.
- **Trailing cables**, wet or damaged floors, can lead to slips, trips and falls
- **Lifting** – lifting equipment during office moves or handling bags of coins can lead to back injuries.
- **Work equipment** – poorly maintained and positioned photocopiers can cause eye irritation, skin problems, sore throats and headaches. All electrical equipment, including kettles and microwaves should be checked regularly and maintained to prevent electric shock.
- **Voice loss** – the term used to mean more than just not being able to speak, symptoms can include – pain, smarting, burning, tension, swelling, irritating cough, croakiness, change in pitch. Unlike normal speech call centre operators often speak from a prepared script using a particular style, voices may be raised to compensate for surrounding noise.
- **Noise** – background noise from printers, traffic, fax machines and telephone's can lead to stress, and in extreme cases hearing damage.
- **Stress** – excessive pressure and demands placed on a person can lead to stress which can make people ill and is costly to the employer. Stress is a health and safety issue that the employer should address through risk assessment.
- **Violence** – The HSE defines work-related violence as any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work. This can include verbal abuse or threats as well as physical attacks.
- **Bullying and harassment** – 'Bullying can take many forms. It is generally accepted as unwanted behaviour that offends, persecutes or excludes someone. It includes treating individuals in a demeaning and unacceptable way and can be intimidating, malicious or insulting, or misuse of power to undermine, humiliate, threaten or cause injury.

Harassment is usually seen as a constant interference or intimidation that violates people's dignity or creates a hostile or degrading environment.' Dignity at Work Partnership

- **Lone working** - call centres work are often located in isolated or remote areas and call centre workers often work shifts during the dark. Employers must ensure that employee safety is taken into consideration in the immediate surroundings of the workplace.
- **Hygiene** – all equipment that comes into contact with the body should be cleaned regularly, including keyboards, telephones and desk surfaces.
- **Work environment** – issues such as temperature, lighting, space, design and layout of the office furniture and the equipment itself are factors that need to be carefully considered to reduce any ill-health effects.

**Unite has thousands of safety reps that are supported by branches regions and national staff and resources. Safety reps deal with issues locally supported by their senior workplace reps.**

**Unite the Union Health and Safety Representative contact:**

**To access your regional office call: 020 8462 7755  
or visit the Unite web site:  
<http://www.unitetheunion.org>**



## Legal help

Unite offers free legal assistance to any member who wants to bring a personal injury claim for damages for any accident (outside of their own home) in the UK or Republic of Ireland. We provide free legal advice and representation to members who have employment related problems. As a unite member, you and your family members can obtain free initial advice on any non work related legal matter by telephoning our 24 hour helpline on 0870 240 45 45.

Unite has a dedicated Health and Safety Unit consisting of several Health and Safety Advisers and Researchers dealing with national issues around specific sectors and specialist topics.

Unite Health and Safety Unit  
[healthandsafety@unitetheunion.org](mailto:healthandsafety@unitetheunion.org)

## INFORMATION LINKS

- Health and Safety Executive: [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)
- HSE info line Tel: 0845034500055
- TUC: [www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk)
- Greater Manchester Hazards Centre: [www.gmhzards.org.uk](http://www.gmhzards.org.uk)
- Hazards magazine: [www.hazards.org](http://www.hazards.org)
- Labour Research Department: [www.lrd.org.uk](http://www.lrd.org.uk)

Join Unite online [www.unitetheunion.org](http://www.unitetheunion.org)

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# SAFETY REPS RIGHTS

**Unite safety reps are a key part of providing better health and safety for Unite members at work. Safety reps have specific rights enshrined in law, which enables them to:**

- Inspect the workplace regularly
- Investigate employee complaints concerning health and safety issues at work.
- Investigate accidents, dangerous occurrences and potential hazards.
- Represent workers on health, safety and welfare matters to their employer.
- Inspect health and safety documents.
- Receive information from HSE Inspectors.
- Establish joint union-management Safety committee.
- Time off to carry out functions.

**Employers are required to consult safety reps, especially about:**

- Measures introduced at a workplace that may substantially affect health and safety.
- Arrangements for appointing health and safety competent persons and establishing emergency procedures.

- Health & safety information required to be provided to employees.
- Health & safety training arrangements for the workforce, such as induction training.
- New technology introduced and planned, regarding consequences to health & safety.

**Employers should provide safety reps with resources to carry out their functions. ACAS suggest:**

- Room with desk and chairs at work, for carrying out interviews and meetings.
- Secure facilities for storing documents.
- Access to internal and external telephones.
- Access to IT facilities.
- Access to duplicating facilities.
- Notice board.

**Other facilities should include copies of relevant statutes, regulations, approved codes of practice and HSE guidance, copies of safety journals, and legal and international standards that are relevant to the workplace.**