

UK specific guides

Sections of our workplace organising guide specifically about employment in the UK.

Employers who fail to pay employee tax and National Insurance



A guide for workers on dealing with employers who don't pay employee taxes or National Insurance. This can leave you unable to claim benefits if you become ill or unemployed.

Here's a real case of fraud that the government does nothing to stop meaning that rip-off bosses keep getting away with it.

Many people are unaware of a problem until they become unemployed or sick and need to claim contributory-based benefits. They will be refused these benefits and cannot win their appeal if no National Insurance has been paid.

No one has to accept this situation. Employers should be warned, in writing, that the Inland Revenue could be called in to check their books and that this could result in a jail sentence for avoiding tax. This is normally enough to make them pay up. The best way to avoid this situation occurring in the first place is to get a P60 when you start work, insist on regular pay slips, both of which you have a right to.

If you work in a more lawless trade such as the building industry legal avenues may not be as easily accessible, in which case there is always direct action. As the saying goes, if you are knocked, knock it down! It'll make them think twice before ripping the next poor bugger off.

Written by the [Walthamstow Anarchist Group](#)

Health and safety - the basics



Health and safety is important, this page is to help you know your rights.

Every year in the UK, over 20,000 workers are killed by their work. 246,000 workplace accidents are reported each year, and 1.2 million people believe they are suffering from a work-related illness. [1](#)

All employers should:

- Provide safe and healthy working conditions;
- Provide proper information and training for everyone in all types of workplaces;
- Draw up and circulate procedures for dealing with risks at work;
- Inform all workers of Health and Safety agreements, policies and practices before we start work.

Health and safety in the workplace costs money and time and hits profits, so bosses inevitably try to avoid their legal responsibilities. By law, they have to provide health and safety for all workers in their employment.

Remember, you have a legal right to walk off the job if you feel in imminent danger.

Casualisation Kills

Almost two million of us are now employed on a temporary basis. Hundreds of us die through work each year and many more are seriously injured. The vast majority of cases are easily preventable. Millions suffer crippling back pain, repetitive strain injuries and many other long-term injuries and illnesses simply because employers put profits first.

All workplaces are potentially dangerous and all work can kill - and the most vulnerable are temporary and agency workers.

The majority of temporary and agency workers are not self-employed but employees, with similar rights to other workers. However, our rights to basic Health and Safety are often neglected or totally ignored.

After only two hours on the job, Simon Jones, an agency worker in Brighton, was beheaded by a crane on Shoreham Docks. He had been sent to his death with no training or care for his life. This is just one shocking example among countless.

Recently, the courts fined a company just £6,000 for breaches of safety laws that led to a worker's death - so, £6,000 is the price of life at work in the UK today.

On average in the UK, 85 construction workers lose their lives in what the government say are mostly predictable and preventable incidents caused by some failure of management by employers (Tony O'Brien, Construction Safety Campaign).

For example: UK construction workers killed in 6 weeks in April/May 2003: 1 death each in Herefordshire, Bedford, Salisbury, Hillingdon, Staffordshire, Leicestershire & Leeds. 2 deaths each in Essex & Durham. 3 deaths in Wales. The youngest victim was aged just 17.

These are not just statistics, these are real people who met tragic and generally violent deaths, leaving families and friends going through the horror of bereavement.

Only by standing together can we prevent bosses from intimidating and victimising us. We cannot leave it to the Government, the bosses, political parties, or the established trade unions. The most effective way of defending our rights is by organising ourselves and taking collective direct action. By forming our own groups where everyone is equal, we can resist exploitation and enforce our rights at work effectively.

Defending our rights is just the start. Once we achieve this, we can start to take the initiative.

An injury to one is an injury to all!

-> [Read more about your rights at work...](#)

Edited by libcom from a leaflet by the [Solidarity Federation](#).

- 1. Source: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace/tuc-18416-f0.cfm>. The global figure is estimated at 2 million by the ILO <http://www.hazards.org/haz81/twomillionkilled.htm>

Key employment rights

Knowing your rights: The stuff your boss doesn't want you to know. A brief guide to your rights at work in the UK as of 2003-4.

Please note that libcom.org do not have time to keep this guide continuously updated. We will keep this out of date guide up for reference, but recommend that people instead checkout a proper workers' legal rights resource like www.worksmart.org.uk for current legal information.

Regardless of work status (temporary or permanent, agency, full or part-time) or our contracts of employment, most of us have certain basic rights. These include:

1. *The right to be told in writing how much and when we are to be paid.*

Minimum pay is £4.50 per hour from October 2003 (up from £4.20). For 18-21 year olds it is £3.80 (up from £3.60). For agency workers, wages must be paid on the agreed day even if the hiring company has not paid the agency.

2. *The right to at least 4 weeks paid leave per year.*

Any employment contract should set out leave entitlements. If it doesn't, then 4 weeks must be given (which can include public holidays). All workers, agency workers, homeworkers, trainees, so-called casuals and most freelancers are included in this. Holiday entitlement starts immediately, e.g. on day 1, we get 2 days leave, and, after 6 months, we get 10 days (for part-time workers it is less and it applies to jobs started since October 2001). NB many workplac-

es now sidestep this by allegedly factoring in holiday pay to your wages, thereby meaning you will lose money by taking the time off owed to you.

3. The right to breaks of at least 20 minutes during each 6 hours of work.

We are entitled to at least 11 hours rest in each 24 hours and a minimum of a day a week off. Rest breaks for under 18s are minimum 30 minutes every 4 1/2 hours.

4. The right to refuse to work any more than 48 hours each week.

We cannot be forced to work over 48 hours per week unless we have agreed to it in writing (note that this is averaged over any 17 week period, so we can be forced to do more in any one week).

5. The right to sick pay when we are ill.

We are entitled to statutory sick pay if we normally earn over £77 per week and we have been working for over 3 months (or are deemed to have been in continuous employment for 13 weeks).

6. The right to maternity/paternity leave when we have children.

From April 2003, most mothers are entitled to 26 weeks paid maternity leave and an additional 26 weeks unpaid leave. To get maternity pay, we must earn over £77 per week and have been working for over 6 months by the time the baby is 15 weeks from being due. For the first 6 weeks, this should be 90% of average earnings, then a flat rate of £100 for 20 weeks. If pay can't be claimed, Maternity Allowance may be claimed from the DSS. Fathers/male partners get 2 weeks paid paternity leave (subject to the same qualifying conditions as for maternity).

7. The right to be free from harassment.

We are all entitled to a workplace where there is no racial or sexual harassment, bullying, prejudice or discrimination. Agency and part-time workers have the same rights as full-time workers.

8. The right to defend ourselves.

We all have the right to protection from dismissal for asserting our statutory employment rights. We also have the right to join with our fellow workers and organise ourselves collectively, and to join a trade union.

9. The right to refuse work that is unsafe or where training is not provided.

We all have the right to refuse to work if we find ourselves in imminent danger. Also, laws governing agencies mean they should not send us to jobs for which we are not qualified, and they must ensure that proper training is provided.

:> [Read more about Health and Safety...](#)

Standing Up for Ourselves

Casualisation and so-called flexible working are ways of undermining working conditions and exploiting us more than ever. They also make permanent jobs more vulnerable. So casualisation does not only affect temporary and agency workers, but all workers.

Employers will sack workers they do not like, knowing full well that many are reluctant or unable to go through an employment tribunal. It is not enough having a few statutory and contractual rights at work - we need to stand together to ensure that the rights long fought for are respected.

Only by standing together can we prevent bosses from intimidating and victimising us. We cannot leave it to the Government, the bosses, political parties, or the established trade unions. The most effective way of defending our rights is by organising ourselves and taking

collective direct action. By forming our own groups where everyone is equal, we can resist exploitation and enforce our rights at work effectively.

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