

**Know your
rights at work**



health & safety

What is Occupational Health and Safety?

Occupational health and safety is an issue not just for factories and building sites but for every industry. Different sectors have different hazards and your workplace is no different. Hot and sharp hazards in fast food kitchens are common, as is heavy lifting in retail. Workplace bullying and harassment can also be a problem.

Young workers are generally injured at higher rates than adults. This is often because of a lack of experience or a lack of proper training or supervision.

If you have a health and safety issue at work contact your union. They can advise you about how to deal with these issues. You don't have to put up with an unsafe workplace.

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004, your boss has a general duty to provide and maintain a working environment that is safe and without risk to your health and safety. This means it is your bosses' responsibility to make sure you are safe at work - not yours!

If it's not safe you can refuse to do it!

You have the right to refuse to work if you think it is unsafe. It is illegal to be sacked for refusing to do unsafe work. This can include working off ladders at dangerous heights or carrying hot oil in unsafe containers. If an object is too heavy make sure you get help to lift it.

Occupational Health and Safety does not just cover physical injuries at work. Workplace bullying and harassment are also health and safety issues.

Workplace bullying

Workplace bullying is repeated, unreasonable or inappropriate behaviour directed toward a worker, or group of workers, that is unwanted and causes offence, humiliation or distress. It can be carried out by bosses, supervisors or co-workers and may be deliberate or unconscious.

It is estimated that about 25% of young workers are bullied at work. Being bullied does not just mean being yelled at but can include:

- practical jokes or the spreading of rumours
- being sworn at or insulted
- being excessively supervised
- being constantly criticized or put down
- being overloaded with work
- being pressured to work overtime
- being forced to work through rest breaks
- being threatened with losing your job

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is unwelcome comments, conduct or behaviour of a sexual nature. It may happen only once or may be repeated. Sexual harassment can include:

- name calling (slut, poof etc.)
- asking personal questions (e.g. Do you have a boyfriend? Are you a virgin?)
- inappropriate touching
- asking for sex
- showing you pornography or leaving it around your workplace

Disgustingly, about 20% of young workers have also experienced sexual harassment at work. This is totally unacceptable and there are laws in place that protect you from this discrimination in the workplace.

What can you do?

Your union can provide you with training about Occupational Health & Safety issues. Unions are often looking for members to become OH&S representatives in their workplaces. If you want to become an OH&S rep, want training about particular issues or just need to ask a question about an issue at work contact your union today!

Compensation

Many workers are not aware that they are entitled to compensation if they obtain a physical or psychological injury at work. This includes the payment of medical costs and paid time off work. All workers are entitled to compensation; this includes full time, part time and casual workers.

If you are injured at work remember you must –

1. Report the injury. Notify your boss and OH&S representative as soon as it happens
2. Go to **YOUR OWN** doctor and get a medical certificate
3. Fill in a Work Cover claim form and give it to your boss ASAP
4. If there are any problems contact your union for advice.

Union workplaces are safe workplaces!

If you experience workplace bullying or harrassment –

1. Keep a diary or records of the incidents that occur, including any hard evidence such as notes, pictures, memos, emails etc.
2. Contact your union for advice and support

If you work in fast food or retail....

join UNITE!

UNITE is a fighting union for fast food and retail workers in Victoria. The fast food and retail industries are a source of employment for thousands of young people. Employment in these industries usually means casual hours, low pay, workplace bullying, and unsafe work practices.

This growing sector is mostly dominated by a handful of greedy corporations who are determined to drive down production costs in order to boost profits. One way that they reduce production costs is by employing young people and paying them low wages. Another way is by employing most of their staff on a casual basis. This saves them money by not having to pay out holiday pay, sick pay and all of the other benefits permanent staff enjoy.

It doesn't have to be this way! The creation of low paid casual jobs in the fast food and retail industries is only a relatively recent development. The reason other industries have been able to achieve better wages and conditions is by building fighting unions and bargaining collectively to force these greedy companies to pay higher wages, improve conditions and to provide workers with some security in their lives.

The time for workers in fast food and retail to have their own fighting union is long overdue. We urge all workers in the fast food and retail sectors in Victoria to join UNITE.

**CONTACT
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Membership fees:

HOURS (per week)	WEEKLY FEES
0 - 10	\$2
10 - 20	\$4
20 +	\$6