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What will happen if a HSE inspector turns up at my site/premises?

HSE inspectors may arrive without telling you first, the law allows them to visit your workplace at any reasonable time.

During the visit

The HSE inspector will look at how you keep your workers, and anyone who may be affected by your work, healthy and safe. They may also give you advice on health and safety or make sure you are providing suitable welfare facilities, such as running hot and cold water and toilets.

While the inspector is with you, they may;

- ◆ Ask you about your workers and what they do.
- ◆ Look at any possible health risks arising from the work you are doing.
- ◆ Look at any machinery or other equipment that you have.
- ◆ Ask to see records or other documents.
- ◆ Take photographs.

The inspector will want to know about;

- ◆ The main health and safety issues in your workplace.
- ◆ Your own knowledge or experience of health and safety.

The inspector may also talk to you about things like safety standards, guidance and everyday practices in your industry.

The inspector will also need to talk to your workers during the visit.

What if there's something wrong?

If the inspector finds you are breaking the law during the visit, they will take action. They may also tell you to stop a dangerous activity in your workplace immediately. For example, a dangerous activity could be people working on a roof where scaffolding is unsafe.

After the visit

The HSE publish all improvement and prohibition notices on their website www.hse.gov.uk/notices. They will then decide the best course of action.

Advice

The inspector may give you advice, verbally or in writing, about some improvements you could make to health and safety in your workplace. This advice is free.



Notification of contravention

A notification of contravention (NoC) is a letter that tells you about the health and safety laws you have broken and how you've broken them. A NoC will tell you what you need to do to stop breaking the law.

The inspector will only give you a NoC if they think you are in 'material breach' of the law. This means the inspector thinks you have broken the law seriously enough for them to write to you about it. If the inspector gives you a NoC, you'll have to pay for the cost of the visit.

Improvement notice

An improvement notice will tell you;

- ◆ What's wrong.
- ◆ Any changes you need to make to put things right.
- ◆ How long you have to make those changes.

The HSE will give you at least 21 days to make any changes. You are committing a criminal offence if you do not make the changes in the time they give you.

Prohibition notice

You may get a prohibition notice if there is a risk of serious personal injury now or in the future. This could be, for example, people working on a roof where scaffolding is unsafe. A prohibition notice orders you to stop doing something until you have made it safe to continue. This could be, for example, keeping workers off a roof until you fix any unsafe scaffolding. You commit a criminal offence if you don't comply with a prohibition notice.

Prosecution

The HSE can prosecute you for breaking health and safety laws or for failing to comply with an improvement notice or a prohibition notice. The courts can fine you or in some cases send you to prison.