

# **An Introduction to the Role of an NGSU Health and Safety Representative**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This introduction is designed to provide some basic information on the role of the NGSU Safety Representative.

Firstly, Safety Representatives are volunteers and we recognise that you will have other commitments both inside and outside work. Therefore the first important issue is the support you will need from your colleagues and line managers. Nationwide has to fulfil its obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 and the Health & Safety (consultation with employees) Regulations 1996. Therefore, Nationwide will fully support you as an NGSU Safety Representative. The Union is working in partnership with Nationwide to ensure that our Representatives will be fully supported by line management to enable you to fulfil this role effectively.

The issues concerning health and safety can be extremely variable and the following sections will outline all the various jobs that you may be involved with.

## **THE ROLE**

As well as being invited to attend workshops to represent the views of your area:

- You may be asked by members to take up a complaint whether from an individual or group regarding a health and safety matter. Because this would be a local issue, you will be in the best position to bring any issues to a successful conclusion.
- You will be asked to complete health and safety inspections of branches in your retail area or department in your allocated area in admin centres.
- You will be providing members with information and giving them advice on procedures.
- Occasionally you may be asked to liase between management and our members regarding health and safety matters.
- You could also find yourself helping your area team/department with issues such as the annual health and safety audit.

Your newly acquired skills will enable you to take an active role in:

- Pilot schemes and new procedures that will arise in the future.
- Workshops that will cover a range of specialist health and safety issues such as violence at work, stress and any other issues that NGSU and Nationwide feels needs special attention.
- If you express an interest in any specialist subject that arises NGSU and Nationwide will offer all the support necessary for you to take the opportunity to be involved.

As we have already mentioned, the time required to fulfil your role will be kept to a minimum, especially regarding meetings and workshops.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ROLE

To ensure that you can respond to health and safety issues as they arise, you will need:

- To have completed TUC Health & Safety Stage 1 and to be 'signed off' by the Union when an acceptable level of knowledge has been achieved
- Normally a minimum of 2 years NBS service, but if you already have a substantial health and safety background this will be taken into consideration
- To be committed to further training and development

## TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

You will be offered a place on the TUC Health and Safety course Stage 1. This will take place over 3 separate weeks at The Union's main office in Middleton Cheney, Oxfordshire. Our designated TUC Trainer, Julie Weekes has designed the course content to ensure that it is appropriate to Nationwide's workplace.

The course synopsis is:

- The role and responsibilities of Safety Representatives
- How to identify hazards and problems in the workplace
- How to improve Union organisation on health and safety
- How to take up problems with management
- What the law says about health and safety

The TUC course programme is accredited through the Open College Network (OCN). This offers you as a trade union student; the *option* of gaining credits for your achievements in learning – credits which have a real currency in the wider world of education and training. The structure of accreditation will enable credits earned through TUC education programmes to be transferred to vocational awards or other further and higher education and training opportunities.

## CONTINUING EDUCATION PLAN

As well as the TUC stage 1 course, the Union will support you if you wish to follow on with stage 2 or any courses on a particular topical subject such as bullying at work, developments in legislation, and stress and violence at work. These courses are run by the TUC and can be delivered in various ways such as computer based training.

When particular issues arise that are only applicable to Nationwide we will then, in partnership with Nationwide, initiate workshops.

## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Nationwide recognises the value of Safety Representatives and to reflect the importance it attaches to this role has agreed that the role will be included in your Performance Agreement, Appraisals etc.

## INFORMATION

As a Safety Representative you will receive information from the Union and Nationwide at regular intervals. You will be sent the Safety Representative's own publication, **NGSU Health and Safety Newsletter**, four times a year along with other information such as progress on new projects, issues as they arise and new statutory regulations. Some of this information will be highly confidential.

To help you get started in this role, we will provide you with all the information that you will need. This will include the Union's Health and Safety Representative Information Handbook, any briefing papers on specific issues, a copy of the Regulations which detail your legal rights and functions, passwords to enter the discussion forum and contact lists for Nationwide and NGSU.

## COMMUNICATION

**Communication** is very important and you will have access to several different ways in which to keep up to date and in touch.

We are continually developing our Union web site, and as Health and Safety Representatives you will have your own password locked section. This section has a conference room in which you can keep in contact with other Representatives and discuss issues. We will also have sections that will help and advise you, inform you of training opportunities, copies of publications and links to other sites. You will also have an easy to use reporting system.

We occasionally plan Mini Conferences. This is where all Safety Representatives will meet up for the day and discuss topics and issues. These will be held in partnership with Nationwide.

In all of the channels of communication you will be given the opportunity to raise local concerns and share experiences.

## SO WHAT SHOULD YOU DO NEXT?

If you have got this far through the introduction paper and decided that you would like to go ahead and become an NGSU Safety Representative, you should return the contact card to the Union at Middleton Cheney and we will contact you with details of forthcoming training courses.

If after reading this paper, you would still like to discuss the role of an NGSU Safety Representative further, please contact Sheena Hayward or Angela Kerriage at Middleton Cheney.

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