Hazards

GREATER MANCHESTER HAZARDS CENTRE

HEALTH & SAFETY 40 YEARS 2021

FACT SHEET

Act Now

on heat at work

There is no legal maximum temperature at work. Here is what the law does say, and the questions safety reps can ask when it gets too hot.

In the UK there is no law that says how hot a workplace can be. Employers must keep the temperature "reasonable" and must deal with the risk when it is not. For people in classrooms, kitchens, labs, offices and sports halls, a hot day can bring headaches, mistakes and, at worst, serious illness.

No limit

in law for the highest indoor temperature. HSE suggests a minimum of 16°C, or 13°C for hard physical work.

30°C

the top temperature the TUC wants written into law, or 27°C for strenuous work.

24°C

the point at which the TUC says employers should start to cool the workplace.

Know the signs, act early

Early signs

Headache, dizziness, tiredness, thirst and muscle cramps. Stop, cool down and drink water.

Heat exhaustion

Heavy sweating, pale and clammy skin, feeling sick, a fast pulse. Move to a cool place and rest.

Heatstroke

Hot dry skin, confusion, fits or collapse.

A medical emergency. Call 999.

What the law says

Employers must keep the temperature at a reasonable level and provide fresh air. This comes from the Workplace Regulations 1992.

HSE says there is no fixed top limit, because some jobs, such as in a bakery or foundry, are hot by nature.

Employers must also assess the risk from heat and consult union safety reps about it.

Who is at greater risk

- **Pregnant workers**
- **Older workers**
- **Health conditions**
- **Menopause**

Some rooms are always hotter. Top-floor classrooms, portable buildings, kitchens, science labs and sports halls heat up first. Staff in uniform or protective clothing feel it sooner.

Six questions to ask when it gets hot

Hazards

THE KEY POINT

No law sets a top temperature, but your employer must still keep the workplace reasonable and deal with the risk.

1. **Is there a hot weather plan?**
   Written down, shared with all staff and agreed with the union.

2. **Who is measuring?**
   Thermometers in the hottest rooms, checked and recorded each day.

3. **When does action start?**
   A set temperature, such as the TUC's 24°C, that triggers cooling measures.

4. **What is done to cool rooms?**
   Blinds, open windows, fans, a move to cooler rooms and a relaxed dress code.

5. **Are people protected?**
   Water on hand, extra breaks, a cool place to rest and extra care for those at higher risk.

6. **What happens afterwards?**
   Safety reps are consulted, and the plan is reviewed after every hot spell.

If your workplace is too hot

Tell your safety rep and your manager in writing. Note the date, the room, the temperature and how it affected you.

Ask to see the risk assessment. If staff are unwell, ask for the hours or the room to change straight away. Your union can take the matter further.

Legal and other standards for prevention and control

- Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977
- Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974
- HSE guidance on workplace temperature

FREE FOR EVERY WORKER

Worried about safety at work?

Scan for free advice, and fourteen more free guides like this one.

gmhazards.org.uk · 0161 884 4229

HSE: workplace temperature
hse.gov.uk/temperature

TUC: too hot to work
tuc.org.uk

Hazards Magazine
hazards.org