



## *The Future of Health and Safety*

*A report by WorkMobile, an award-winning mobile data capture solution.*



**WorkMobile**

OUTSIDE DATA | INSIDE KNOWLEDGE

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# Introduction

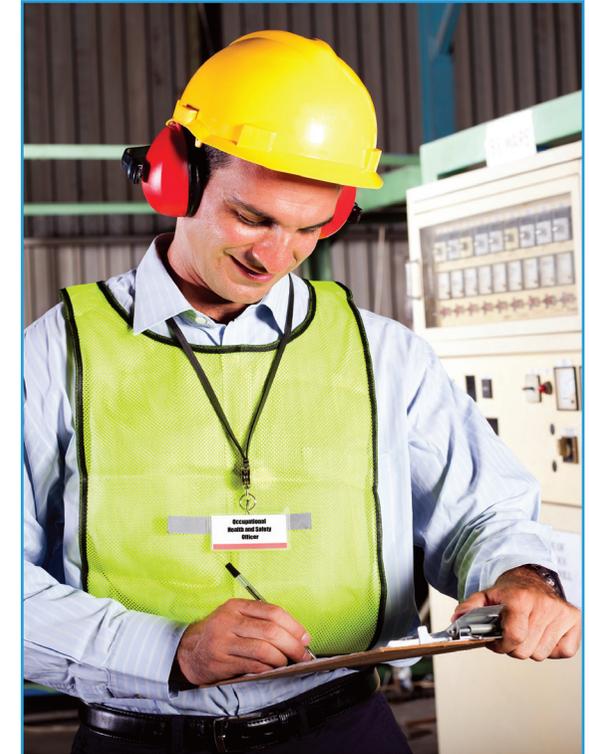
Health and safety needs to be a priority for any business in any industry, as employees face risks regardless of whether they are working in a shop, a construction site or in an office.

Fortunately, Great Britain has a long tradition of implementing health and safety regulations, with the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 being the primary piece of legislation that helps to protect employees and ensures they have the right to work in a safe environment.

Yet despite these legislations having a positive impact on reducing death and injury in the workplace, there are still businesses across the country that are failing to comply with regulations and putting the lives of workers at unnecessary risk.

Sadly, there were 144 deaths in the workplace during 2015 to 2016, and 621,000 non-fatal injuries according to incident reports made by employees in the Labour Force Survey.

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What's more, between 2015 and 2016 the total amount of fines incurred for health and safety offences was £38.3m, more than double the £18.1m between 2014 and 2015. And worryingly the number of businesses prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) rose by 6% during 2015 to 2016.

Manufacturing companies were the worst offenders, incurring half of the total fines issued (£16,816,673), followed by extractive and utility supply companies, which had to fork out £7,375,120, and the construction sector, which was hit with a £4,824,983 bill.

What's most concerning about these stats is that these businesses are operating in hazardous sectors, where adequate health and safety should be high up on the list of priorities.

And as industry evolves so too do the potential dangers to workers. Therefore it's important that businesses are continually innovating, rather than digressing, when it comes to health and safety.

In today's sophisticated, digital world, technology is presenting numerous opportunities to revolutionise the way we operate and that includes in health and safety. We're already seeing the emergence of wearable devices that can monitor where employees are or to alert workers when hazardous machinery is in operation.

And mobile technology is helping to improve mental health and wellbeing by giving employees more flexibility to work from home and create a better work-life balance.

Both employees and employers have a responsibility to protect themselves from avoidable risks and ensure they are compliant and working safely. A person's safety is paramount and there is no better time than the present to ensure we are doing everything we can to reduce the dangers in the workplace.

*By Colin Yates, Chief Support Officer at WorkMobile, an award-winning mobile data capture solution.*

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### *Fines incurred for health and safety offences between 2015 and 2016:*



Manufacturing companies **£16,816,673**



Extractive and utility supply companies **£7,375,120**



Construction sector **£4,824,983**

# About the report

Meeting health and safety requirements is not just about being socially responsible; it also makes good business sense. Companies are less likely to find themselves involved in legal disputes, employees will feel safer and happier, and it will also reduce the number of days lost due to workplace illness or accidents.

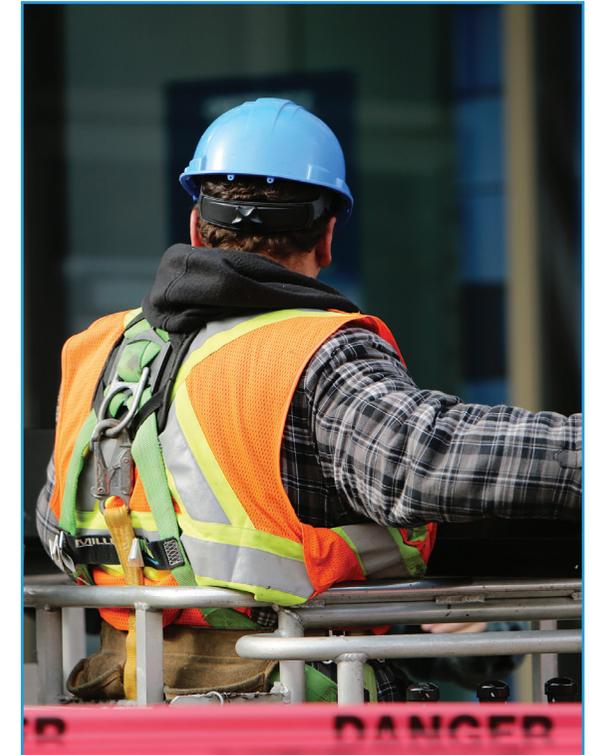
That said it can feel like a huge task keeping up with every piece of regulation that is relevant to the business, or ensuring that all employees follow the correct procedures that are in place. Regulations can often change, meaning that new training will need to be provided and operations manuals regularly updated.

Therefore to help businesses become more compliant with health and safety legislation, this report will look at the standards of health and safety that companies across all sectors currently have in place, and the common mistakes they are making.

It will also assess whether employees are actually following the safety guidance they are given, or if they are putting themselves in danger.

After analysing the current state of health and safety in businesses across the UK, we will explore how improvements can be made and offer advice on the solutions that can help companies become more compliant.

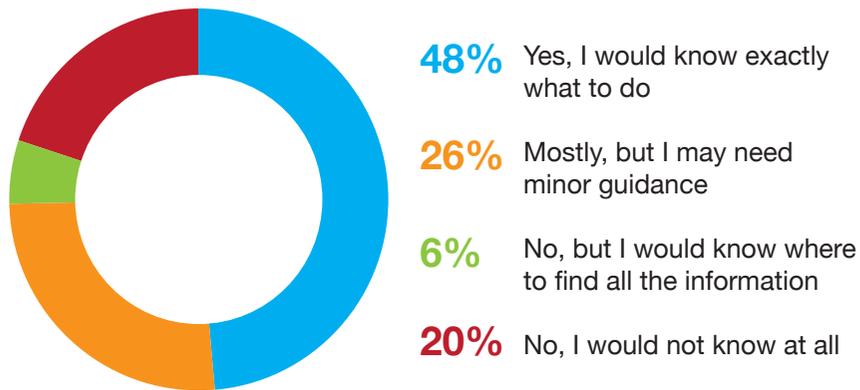
By reading the report, we hope business owners will have a better understanding about their roles and responsibilities when it comes to health and safety, and the importance of investing in effective safety procedures.



# Key findings

To gain an insight into the current state of occupational health and safety in the UK, and where improvements can be made, we asked 2,000 employees that work in various businesses, with more than five workers, about the health and safety procedures in their workplace.

*Would you know how to report an issue to HR if a hazardous incident occurred at work?*



- **65%** of employees haven't been supplied with an operations manual on starting their job
- Of those who work in hazardous or high-risk roles, almost half (**48%**) have not read their operations manual. Whereas, **60%** of those who work in low-risk roles have read their manual
- **17%** of employees have put themselves at risk by not following their manual correctly or failing to read it
- A fifth of workers (**20%**) have no idea how to report a hazard
- More than half (**54%**) of male respondents said they worked in a hazardous role, yet despite being exposed to more risks, a worrying **61%** haven't received an operations manual
- **27%** of 18 to 34 year olds confessed to putting themselves at risk by not following procedures correctly. While only **8%** of 45 to 64 year olds admitted putting themselves at risk by not following procedures.

# Businesses are breaching health and safety laws with inadequate health and safety procedures

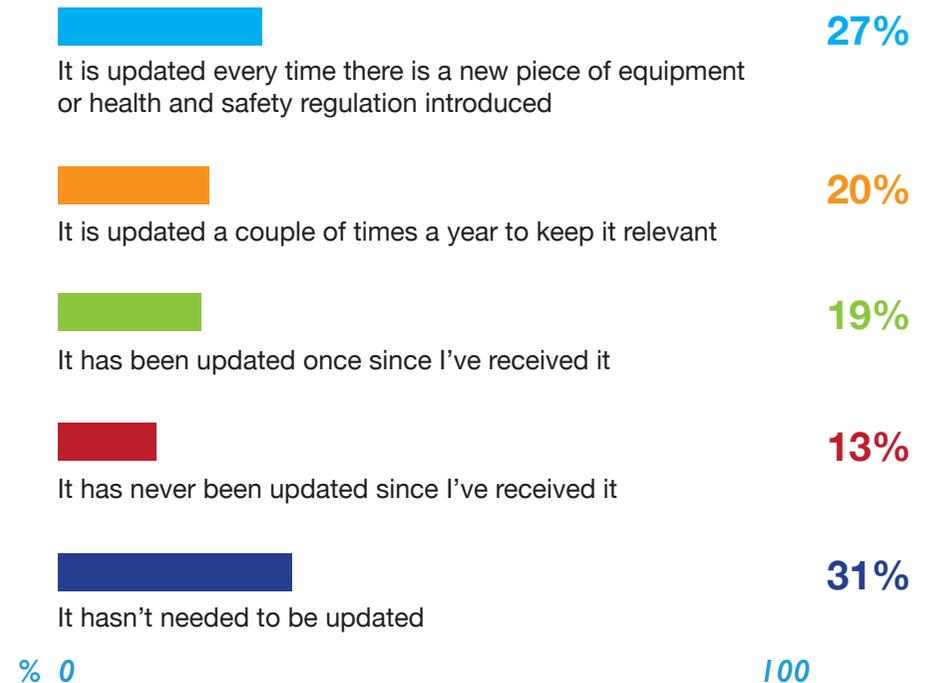
Worryingly, our research found that a large proportion of businesses in the UK are failing to provide their staff with appropriate health and safety guidance, namely an operations manual or an employee handbook that sets out the company's health and safety policies. Two thirds (65%) of employees said they were not supplied with this information on starting their job, despite it being required by law for all companies with five or more employees.

And even when workers were provided with written health and safety guidance, the information wasn't sufficient enough to fully explain the company's procedures or the risks of the job. 27% of those who received their company's health and safety manual thought the information didn't go into enough detail about their role and the dangers they could face, or how to deal with them.

This helps to explain why many workers have a lack of knowledge when it comes to operating safely or dealing with incidents when they occur. A fifth (20%) have no idea how to report an issue or hazard at work, while a third (32%) would have a vague idea about how to handle the situation, but would still need to ask for help or consult with the company's procedure documents first.

Thankfully, just under half (48%) would know exactly what to do in a hazardous situation. As with many UK laws, health and safety legislation can be subject to various changes and amendments to ensure they remain relevant to today's society – yet company manuals are not being revised as often as they should be to keep them up-to-date.

## Is your employee handbook updated regularly and are these updates communicated to you?



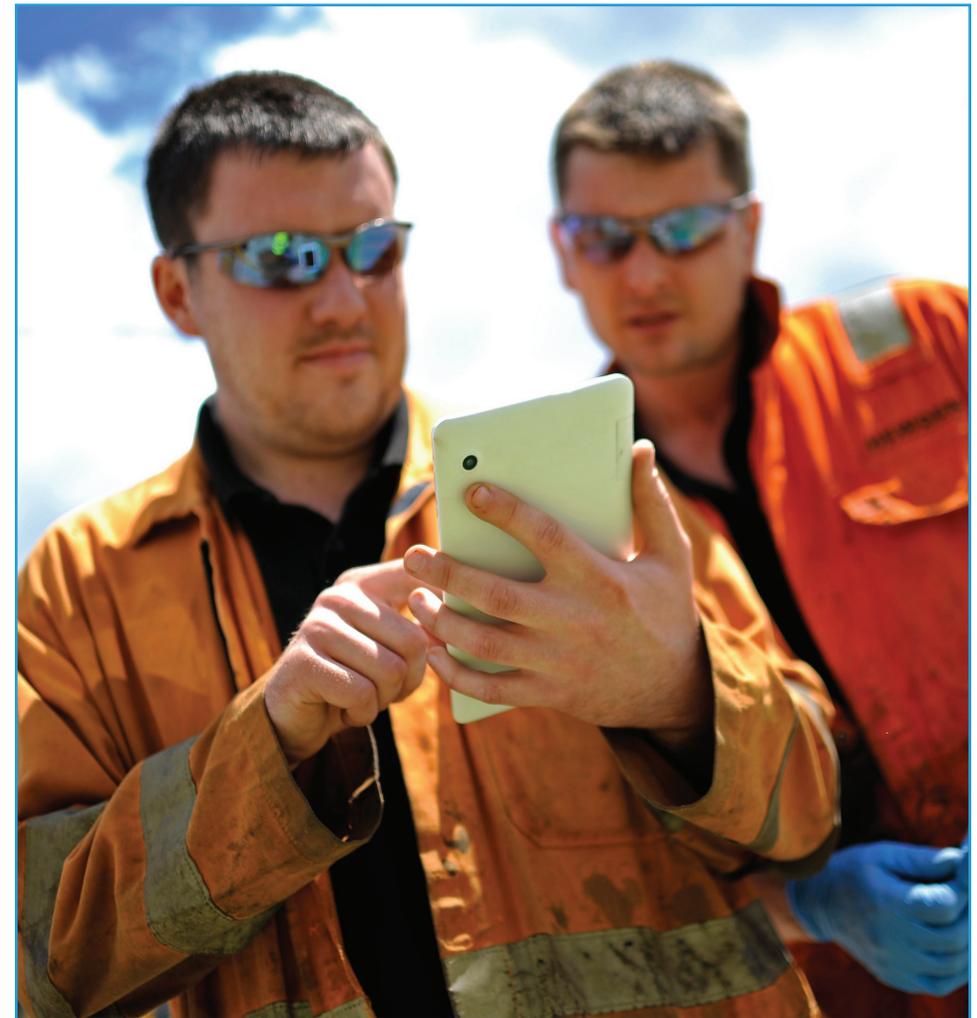
**13%** of employees said their handbook has never been updated since they first received it, but perhaps more worryingly, almost a third (**31%**) don't actually think that their handbook ever needs to be updated.

Fortunately, many businesses are taking health and safety seriously and making sure their policies are in line with current legislation - **27%** of workers said their company handbooks are updated whenever a new piece of equipment or health and safety regulation is introduced, and a fifth (**20%**) see their manuals updated regularly throughout the year.

Although it is the duty of the employer to keep staff members safe, workers must also take responsibility for their own welfare and follow the rules that have been put in place. It's therefore concerning to see that almost half of employees (**43%**) are failing to read the health and safety policies and procedures, even when their employer has supplied them.

When comparing workers in different jobs, **48%** of those who work in a hazardous or high-risk role, such as construction, have not read their operations manual. However, almost two thirds (**60%**) of those who work in low-risk roles, like office work, have read the health and safety documents they were provided with.

What's even more worrying to see is that almost a fifth (**17%**) of employees admit they have put themselves at risk by not following the procedures correctly or failing to read the health and safety information. This could cause a serious compliance headache for businesses if an incident was to occur.



# Men are more likely to put themselves at risk or be let down by inadequate procedures

According to our research, men are more likely to operate in sectors that present higher risks to their health, such as construction. Over half (54%) of male respondents work in a hazardous role, compared to 19% of women. In fact, four fifths (81%) of women are likely to work in a non-hazardous role, such as office work.

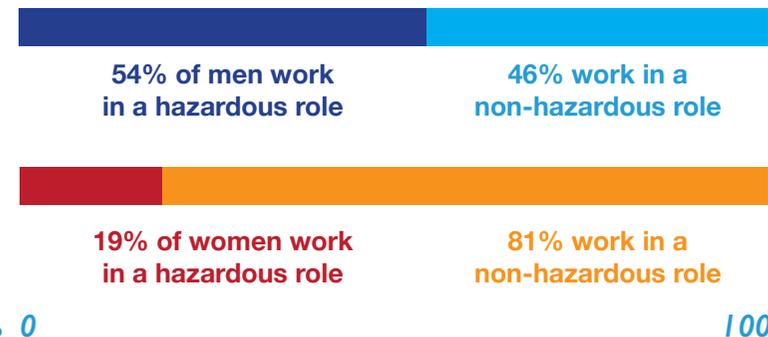
Yet despite men being more likely to come across high-risk situations in their daily work, 61% said they haven't received sufficient health and safety information to keep them safe, such as an employee handbook that explains the company's safety procedures.

For those males who did receive written guidance, a quarter (25%) didn't feel like the risks of their role were explained thoroughly enough. And 13% of male respondents said the health and safety information hadn't been updated since they've received it, so it's likely to be out-of-date and even ineffective.

But men are also more likely to put themselves at risk of serious accidents by not following the procedures put in place by their employer. A quarter of men (23%) said they failed to follow the correct safety procedures, compared to just 4% of women.

Reassuringly though, if an incident was to occur four fifths (83%) of men would know how to report it.

However, a third (31%) of women would not know what to do if faced with a hazardous situation, which suggests that they might not be adequately trained on how to keep themselves and others around them safe.



# Younger workers are more likely to put themselves in danger, compared to their older colleagues

More than a quarter of young people (27%), aged between 18 and 34, have put themselves at risk by not following their employers' safety procedures, despite being more likely than their older colleagues to read the health and safety guidance.

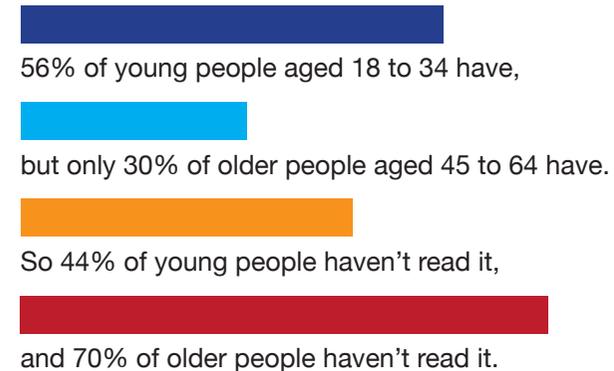
Over half (56%) of people aged between 18 and 34 have read their operations manual, compared to only 30% of 45 to 64 year olds. Yet, just 8% of 45 to 64 year olds have put themselves in danger by not following the procedures correctly.

Despite saying they have read their handbook, many younger workers still don't know how to act if a risk was presented to them. This poses the question as to whether they are reading the safety documents thoroughly, and on a regular basis, in order to take their health and safety seriously.

A third (33%) of 18 to 34 year olds admitted they have no idea what to do in this kind of situation. And a further one in 10 (11%) said that while they would not know how to handle the incident correctly, they would know where to find the right information.

If we compare this to older workers, two thirds (67%) of 45 to 64 year olds would know what to do if a potentially dangerous situation occurred.

## Have you read the operations manual supplied by your employer?



## Have you ever put yourself at risk by not correctly following instructions or failing to read the manual?



% 0

100

# How can businesses become more health and safety compliant?

By looking at the research, we can see that many businesses are struggling to guarantee that their employees are up to speed with the current legislation and are correctly following procedures that are in place. It's clear that there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to make sure both employers and employees take health and safety more seriously and operate compliantly.

One reason why compliancy can be difficult is that, traditionally, health and safety policies have been paper-based. This can be problematic as they can be easily lost or damaged. They can also be time-consuming and costly to update and distribute to all employees when new legislation comes out. So how can this process be managed more effectively?

As we're living in an increasingly digital world, technology can play a huge part in helping businesses become more health and safety compliant. Rather than relying on paper-based employee handbooks or operations manuals, there are solutions available that can allow employers to host their health and safety policies on a digital platform.

With a digital health and safety manual, information can be updated quickly and easily on a simple online form and then instantly sent via the cloud to every employee in the business. This helps to save time and money as it completely removes the need to print and manage the distribution of physical documents. It also ensures compliance as teams will always have access to up-to-date information, and there is no chance of the documents being misplaced.

From our research, we can see that a digital employee handbook would go down well with the majority of workers - when asked how they would feel if their employer was to adopt a digital solution, two-thirds (68%) of employees thought it would be more beneficial. 37% believed it would be easier to read and access, and a fifth (19%) said it would save time and money.

Most importantly, almost two thirds (64%) of staff admitted they would be more likely to read the manual if it was presented in a digital format, helping businesses ensure their employees are always up-to-date on the latest legislation and are operating compliantly.

## Do you think it would be more beneficial if the operations manual was digital, rather than paper-based?





## Conclusion

Overall, the current state of health and safety in the UK is certainly below an acceptable standard. It's worrying that some employees aren't taking their own safety and the safety of their colleagues seriously enough. But it's even more concerning that some employers don't actually have the correct policies in place, despite them being responsible for their workers' wellbeing.

Every employee has the right to feel safe in their place of work, and it's up to business owners to fulfill this right. And in today's digital society, where working practices are constantly being improved, company owners have no excuse for not obeying with the law.

Business bosses need to be doing all they can to ensure they are in the know about current legislation. This is even more vital given that health and safety has been brought back into the spotlight, with rumours suggesting that the impending Brexit could mean a significant overhaul of the country's occupational safety rules.

That said, it's yet to be seen whether a break away from the EU will actually spell amendments to health and safety regulations. But, should this be the case, investing in a digital solution will make it considerably easier to update the company's procedures to remain in line with new laws.

Therefore, now is the time to think about the processes that are currently in place and consider adopting an effective solution that will make it easier to manage health and safety compliance. A small investment in a digital solution that will simplify health and safety means less money spent on fighting legal cases or paying fines, and less chance of ending up with a prison sentence.

***It makes perfect business sense.***

**For more information, please visit:**  
[www.workmobileforms.com](http://www.workmobileforms.com)

