

31 July 2024

Fifty Years of the Health and Safety at Work Act

This week marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Health and Safety at Work Act, a pivotal piece of legislation that has undoubtedly saved thousands of lives.

Since its enactment, workplace fatalities have decreased significantly, from 651 in 1974 to 138 this year. However, challenges remain, as around 50,000 people still die annually from occupational cancers or work-related stress.

While the Act provides a critical framework for workplace safety, its effectiveness is limited without rigorous enforcement. Over the past 14 years, budget cuts have reduced the number of inspectors, weakening oversight and increasing risks for workers.

The 1974 Act was a significant milestone, but it is not a cure-all. The need for strong unions and effective regulation is as pressing today as it was fifty years ago. As we celebrate this anniversary, we renew our call for a properly funded HSE, stronger rights for union safety reps, and the repeal of anti-strike laws that hinder our ability to act against unsafe working conditions.

In this environment, PCS Health and Safety Reps play a crucial role in ensuring safer workplaces. Unionised workplaces are consistently safer, as unions actively uphold health and safety standards. For any health and safety concerns, workers are encouraged to speak with their local representative.

Find out more

We are always expanding our [Health & Safety content on PCS Digital](#), providing more resources and information to help our members stay informed and protected. As we look ahead, our focus remains on strengthening our [network of health and safety reps](#), particularly by encouraging younger members to step into these vital roles, ensuring continued safety in the workplace for the next fifty years.