



For GMB Members in **ASDA STORES**

GMB – WORKING FOR YOU IN ASDA

October 2008 - 32

KNEE PADS

Dear ASDA Members

At the recent National Forum meeting we again raised the issue of knee pads.

It seems that the Company will be carrying out a trial in one of the areas, looking into the most suitable form of knee protection. GMB will be involved.

We anticipate that the trial will take place in the store of Jean Foster (GMB National Forum Chair). Jean will lead for us.

Members will be kept advised of developments.

In the meantime attached is the GMB Guide to Knee Protection.

**GARY SMITH
NATIONAL SECRETARY**

[ASDA Knee Protection](#)

**YOUR VOICE IN ASDA
GMB COMMERCIAL SERVICES SECTION**



GMB GUIDE TO KNEE PROTECTION

Introduction

The human body is a wonderful piece of bio-mechanical engineering designed to be both flexible and efficient. However sometimes too much is asked of it, particularly in an industrial or workplace context. We are asked to work in awkward and un-natural positions and sometimes to stay in one position for a long period of time. Any physical problems which occur from this can be exaggerated by the nature of the surface we are in contact with. In effect the harder and less giving it is the greater the pain and potential damage to our body parts.

My work involves kneeling for prolonged periods – is there anything that can be done to help me?

Wherever you work and whatever you do your employer should be carrying out a Risk Assessment to determine the risks you face from the hazards you are exposed to. In this case it is prolonged kneeling that is the *hazard* and the *risk* is to your joints, bones, muscles and cartilage and the potential for damage to you personally.

Risk assessments do not have to be a complicated exercise. The Health and Safety Executive say that a proper risk assessment evaluates all the risks associated with any job and then seeks to either eliminate the risk, which is not always possible, or at the very least to reduce the risk to the lowest level possible, which is often much easier to do.

How would a risk assessment work for the part of my job involving kneeling?

The risk assessment would involve a number of different factors. The length of time spent kneeling would be an obvious area, as would the number of times it had to be done each shift. Another important factor would be the use of any equipment which could be used to protect the knees, in particular. Many jobs where people have to carry out tasks while on their knees, such as Gas Service Engineers or Floor/Carpet Fitters have benefited from the involvement of GMB negotiators in getting knee protection while working on hard surfaces on their knees. Often this equipment can be purchased for as little as £6.

Even at £6 my colleagues and myself would have difficulty in affording that much on our wages.

The good news is that if there is a need for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at work it is the employer's responsibility to pay for it. This can be checked out by reference to the Health & Safety at Work Act (which most people have heard of).

Section 9 of this Act states –“*No employer shall levy or permit to be levied, on any employee of his any charge in respect of anything done or provided in pursuance of any specific requirement of the relevant statutory provisions*”. In a nutshell this means that if a risk assessment identifies the need for PPE then it MUST be supplied by the employer.

Why has this issue never been tackled by the Colleague Circles?

Your work-mates who sit on the colleague circles have not had the benefit of external health and safety training. GMB safety representatives are trained away from the store by GMB. This training involves looking at workers rights under health, safety and welfare legislation, the right to challenge the employer if you think their advice is wrong and how to get involved in Risk Assessments, particularly if they have not been carried out by a Competent Person.

What is a Competent Person?

A Competent Person, under health and safety legislation, is one who is trained in the principles of Risk Assessment, has some basic understanding of health and safety law, usually has **experience** of the job being assessed and is confident enough to suggest changes which are identified by the assessment, even if senior management are not too happy with the outcome.

What should I do to solve the problem of kneeling at work?

Firstly you should ask to see the Risk Assessment. In the assessment there should be reference to knee pads or other protective measures. Then you should be supplied, free of charge, protection for your knees. Other measures could also be implemented such as cutting down the time spent on your knees or job rotation so you don't have to do the same task so often. Best of all you could join GMB and elect a trained safety rep to ensure that similar situations do not arise in the future.

REMEMBER YOU ARE SAFER IN GMB!