

75% Say Female Workers Shouldn't Be Required to Wear High Heels



Study after study has shown the hazards of women wearing high heels. These shoes put stress and strain on your feet, legs and back, and expose you to an increased risk of slipping, tripping and falling. (Read about one study on high heels as a workplace hazard.)

But some workplaces, such as restaurants, stores and offices, not only let female workers wear high heels on the job but also may actually require them to do so despite the safety risks.

In a recent poll, we asked if the law should bar female workers from being required to wear high heels on safety grounds and a whopping 75% said yes.

Several governments have considered implementing such a ban. For example, politicians in the United Kingdom debated a ban on mandatory workplace high heels in response to a petition started by a receptionist, who was sent home without pay for wearing flats.

In addition a bill was introduced in BC on International Women's Day that would've barred employers from requiring female workers to wear high heels on the job over health and safety concerns. But the bill died when the legislature adjourned on March 23, 2017. However, the BC Premier supported the bill, and the Minister of Labour said requiring women to wear high heels in the workplace isn't acceptable and that she'll take action to make changes.

In some jurisdictions, the current OHS laws could be applied to bar the wearing of high heels. Some OHS regulations say that workers must wear footwear that's appropriate for the hazards associated with the work being done or the workplace. One could argue that high heels aren't appropriate in workplaces with slippery floors or when workers must be on their feet all day.

And some jurisdictions recommend wearing low-heeled shoes. For example,

WorkSafeBC issued a safety bulletin for restaurant hosts, servers and valets that says 'low heels may be more comfortable and are safer for standing, walking or climbing stairs and ramps.'

The OHS Insider has articles, tools and other resources to help you ensure workers aren't endangered by their shoes, including:

- How to comply with the safety footwear requirements under the OHS laws
- The steps to take to select appropriate slip-resistant footwear
- Spot the Safety Violation: Protect Your Feet with Appropriate Footwear.

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