



Health and Safety Newsletter Update November 2004

Welcome to the November Newsletter Update. In this month's edition, we discuss:

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Contact us

If you would like further information or advice on any health and safety issue then please contact us.

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Also, if you have any comments with regards to the content/layout of our Newsletter Update – please let us know.

Health and safety news

HSE Updates costs to Britain of workplace accidents and work-related ill health

The HSE has prepared interim updated estimates of the costs to Britain of workplace accidents and work-related ill health. These indicate that in 2001/02 health and safety failures cost

- employers between £3.9 - £7.8 billion,
- individuals between £10.1 - £14.7 billion,
- the economy between £13.1 - £22.2 billion, and
- society as a whole between £20 - £31.8 billion.

The new estimates also quantify the major cost categories that make up the totals. For employers, figures are given by industry sector, occupation and region.

HSE has published two previous sets of cost estimates using data from 1990 and 1995/96. These have been used widely within HSE to inform strategic policy, new programme development, appraisals of policy proposals (e.g. Regulatory Impact Assessments) and, more recently, evaluations of HSE's impact. The information has also been used to answer enquiries from other government departments, the private sector, employer organisations, trade unions, academics and the public.

To carry out these detailed calculations, HSE needs to draw on a large amount of data from many different sources. The full set of data required will not be available until 2005, so HSE has produced an interim update using the best available occupational injury and illness data from 2001/02. Where there are gaps in the data, assumptions have been made and changes in prices and incomes have also been taken into account.

The updated figures carry some limitations. The estimates are only meant as broad indications of cost and a review of the previous update has led to HSE adopting proportionately wider ranges for many of them. This better reflects the uncertainty in the figures.

Finally, only broad comparisons can be made between the 1995/96 and 2001/02 estimates, and even these must be treated with caution as there are differences in the design of the 1995 and the 2001/02 Self-reported Work-related Illness surveys (part of the ONS Labour Force Survey) that provided the bulk of the data used in calculating the ill health cost estimates.

Interim update of 'The costs to Britain of workplace accidents and work-related ill health in 1995/96' can be found on HSE's website at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/dayslost.htm>

HSE Launches new business benefits of health and safety web pages

The HSE has launched new pages on its website featuring three new case studies that illustrate the business benefits of managing health and safety effectively.

Effective health and safety management clearly helps reduce the unacceptable toll of suffering that accidents and ill-health bring. The case studies show that there are also good business reasons for organisations to improve their management of health and safety. The benefits seen by the companies in the case studies include increased productivity, lower insurance costs, less absenteeism, better staff retention and morale, improved reputation and reduced liability claims.

One of the key themes in the Health and Safety Commission's (HSC) Strategy for workplace safety is helping people to benefit from effective health and safety management within a sensible health and safety culture. The Strategy recognises the need for HSE to do more to make health and safety and its benefits more widely understood and accepted, and to demonstrate the moral, business and economic cases for health and safety. One of the ways HSE is trying to achieve these aims is by providing practical information, including the case studies, on its new web pages.

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Brief details of the companies covered in the three new studies, and some of the initiatives they undertook are:

Company	Industry	Initiative	Benefits include
T L Visuals Ltd, Bristol	High quality litho printers	Investment in latest plant to reduce manual handling	Increased productivity
C6 Solutions Ltd, West Yorkshire	Chemical manufacturers	Union/management agreement to improve health and safety performance	Fewer accidents and reduced compensation claims
Wilson James Ltd, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex	Security and logistic support services to construction industry	Provided full-time nurse and well-equipped medical room	Reduced lost time and healthier workforce

If organisations want to share their experiences, they should email the HSE on business.benefits@hse.gsi.gov.uk."

HSE targets manufacturing industries

The HSE has launched a new enforcement led campaign to reduce the unacceptable high number of fatal and serious injuries that continue to occur in manufacturing industries.

The nationwide campaign will see HSE inspectors targeting scrap metal, rubber, paper and wood industries over the next three years to ensure that correct procedures are in place for working on machinery.

During the past three years over 40 people have died as a result of incidents in the manufacturing industry, most commonly when cleaning machinery blockages or carrying out running repairs without the correct safeguards. Properly managing isolation and lock off procedures to secure machinery and ensure there is no power feed to the equipment lowers the risk of serious or fatal injury.

The campaign aims to:

- raise awareness about the risks and standards required for safe isolation and lock off;
- ensure, through formal enforcement, that robust isolation and lock off procedures are implemented; and
- ensure that employers have, or put in place, sound risk control systems for managing these procedures.

The questions that inspectors will be raising with companies are being shared with relevant trade associations and their members, and are available to anyone else interested in checking their own standards before an inspector calls. The questionnaire can be obtained by contacting Anne Rayner at HSE, Marshall's Mill, Marshall Street, Leeds LS11 9YJ, Tel 0113 283 4354 or e-mail: rubi.ac.area14@hse.gsi.gov.uk to request a copy.

Further consultation on Work at Height Regulations: 2-Metre rule

The Health and Safety Commission (HSC) has launched a six-week consultation on a proposed regulation to be added to the draft Work at Height Regulations.

This regulation will retain a provision already in construction safety law that requires employers in the construction industry to provide particular work equipment and fall protection measures where work is undertaken at or above two metres.

This proposal is the result of representations made by the construction industry, which is seeking to maintain its existing practices by retaining the current 2-metre rule in these new regulations. This may have implications for

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other industries, which is why a short sharp consultation exercise is being undertaken to gather views from construction industry and other stakeholders.

Further details and an electronic reply form can be found on HSE's web site at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/consult/letters/falls.htm>.

HSE launches science and Research Outlook website and newsletter

The HSE announced the launch of its Science and Research Outlook website and online newsletter.

Science and Research Outlook covers the breadth of HSE's science and engineering activities. It provides information on specific research projects and the wider impact of HSE's science and research portfolio on a wide range of issues, from occupational health to the integrity of major plant and equipment, across all industry sectors.

An interactive online resource, Science and Research Outlook comprises an easily searchable database, regularly updated with the latest news and information. Registered users will have access to the following additional features:

- Subscription to the HSE Science and Research Outlook newsletter, published quarterly by email
- Daily email notification of new articles in their areas of interest
- Facility to comment on published articles and provide valuable feedback to HSE on its science and research activities
- Facility to collate and customise a selection of articles and email details to colleagues

The Latest News pages of the website give access to the latest reports on a diverse range of topics, such as: "Nanotechnology – a short way into the technology to dwarf all others", "Improving designs of fairground rides", "Controlling the motions of offshore crane loads" and "Health, safety and legal issues related to body piercing, tattooing and related scarification."

To explore the site and subscribe please visit <http://www.hsesro.com>.

Health and safety guidance

HSE say work is good for you

When you're off sick, returning to work as soon as possible may help you get well. And staying at home longer than you absolutely need to could actually make you worse. These are two recommendations of new guidance published by the HSE.

Long-term sickness absence, defined as four weeks or more, is a significant burden to employers in the private and public sectors. It means mounting sick pay, recruitment costs and high workloads for colleagues. HSE's guidance explains how employers and employees can work together to hasten a successful return to work. Research shows that companies in the UK and USA have made big savings through return to work programmes.

HSE also believe that avoiding long-term sickness absence is good for individuals – work can be an important part of the recovery process. Work is essential to health and well-being; inability to work brings on more health problems, physical and mental. And the longer people are off, the less likely is their return: one in five people off sick for six weeks will remain off work and eventually leave paid employment.

The CBI estimates that 33% of working days lost due to sickness are accounted for by long-term sickness absence (defined as 20 working days or more) at a cost of £3.8 billion a year. Yet it involves only 1 in 20 employees, most of whom do not have serious illness but are suffering from common health problems such as

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depression and anxiety or muscle, joint and back pain. Research shows that overcoming non-medical barriers, such as job design and poor communication between employee and employer, is crucial.

HSE's new guidance, informed by expert research and significant input from employers, practitioners and unions, offers a practical step by step approach to managing sickness absence and getting people back to work quickly. The guidance is aimed at employers and managers across UK business, and is supported by a free leaflet for employees as well as a concise desk aid for smaller businesses.

Action employers should take includes:

- Keep in contact with sick employees.
- Involve employees in planning their return.
- Enable people to resume work on a part-time basis rather than stay away completely.
- Adjust or remove any aspects of the job that make return difficult, or offer an alternative job if necessary.

Action employees should take includes:

- Keep in touch with your employer and ask for news from work to help you feel part of it.
- Talk to your doctor about your job and about going back to work.
- Tell you employer about specific problems that make your return difficult.
- Make an informal visit to your employer to discuss your return to work plan.

Practical alternatives to using stepladders

Eliminating or reducing the risk of falls from stepladders to electricians and other engineering contractors is the aim of new guidance published by the Electrical Contractors' Association (ECA). The guidance is part of the ECA's contribution to the 'European Week for Safety and Health at Work', which this year focuses on construction.

'Practical alternatives to using stepladders' provides information on planning, risk assessment, competency, training and choosing temporary access equipment, and gives advice on the safe use of stepladders, if they are the chosen means of access.

The guidance has been produced by the ECA with support from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Amicus and several leading trade associations, and is available to download free from the ECA website [http://www.eca.co.uk/files/hs/ECA_Practical Alternatives To Using Step Ladders.pdf](http://www.eca.co.uk/files/hs/ECA_Practical%20Alternatives%20To%20Using%20Step%20Ladders.pdf)

Health and safety court round up

Berkshire Environment Agency fined over serious injuries to employee

Berkshire Environment Agency has been fined a total of £16,000 at Reading Magistrates' Court for breaches of health and safety legislation.

The prosecution followed a HSE investigation into an incident in which an employee, Mr Anthony Watkins, suffered severe injuries to his knee.

Mr Watkins was employed by the Environment Agency as a flood defence operative working at Sulhampstead Stream, Padworth on the Englefield Estate near Reading, Berkshire. He was part of a five man team undertaking work which involved working from a rope and harness in a tree removing branches.

The incident occurred on 8 April 2002, while Mr Watkins was working in a tree, cutting a large branch, which subsequently split from the tree and struck his knee. He was prevented from falling by his safety harness and was rescued by colleagues. He was then air lifted to hospital and was unable to return to work for over a year.

The Environment Agency was fined £4,000 after pleading guilty to breaching Regulation 3(1)(a) of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, and fined £12,000 for breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

The Environment Agency was also ordered to pay costs of £4,739.

Female worker crushed by reversing forklift truck

A pet-food production company has been fined £6000 for failing to monitor and supervise forklift truck movements in the packing area of its Blackburn factory.

Pets Choice appeared before the town's magistrates on 27 September 2004 and pleaded guilty to breaching s2(1) of the HSWA 1974 for failing to ensure the safety of employee, Barbara Rostron. Mrs Rostron, 46, was working a night shift on 30 October last year in an area of the company's premises known as the Gainsborough packing area when she was struck by a reversing forklift truck.

The court heard that the driver had reversed up to Mrs Rostron and a colleague in order to have a short conversation with them. Mrs Rostron was crushed between the truck and a steel packing table (pictured above). She sustained a fractured pelvis, damage to internal organs, and a broken left leg and spent some four months in hospital. A colleague, Brenda Ray, sustained a minor foot injury in the same incident.

Prosecuting HSE inspector Joanne Nicholls told SHP that an ineffective barrier meant to prevent lift trucks from entering the Gainsborough area had not been detected and rectified. She explained: "The barrier left an opening, which was wide enough to allow lift-truck access into an area where lift trucks were meant to be prohibited. The company also failed to adequately instruct relevant employees on the purpose of the barrier. This was compounded by inadequate supervision and monitoring by management, which allowed lift-trucks to breach the barrier during production."

In mitigation, Pets Choice said it was not a case where a risk had been identified and then nothing had been done about it just to save money, because a barrier had been installed. It added that it had since made the post of health and safety officer full time and five other members of staff had received health and safety training.

Lack of access ladder on scaffold led to fall

A man on work experience suffered fractured ribs when he fell from a tower scaffold, Durham magistrates heard on 27 September. Alpha Energy Services Ltd was fined £3000 after the court was told that there was no access ladder on the scaffold, and the working platform and edge protection was incomplete.

David Young was using the scaffold to maintain a fluorescent light fitting at a factory unit in Cold Hesledon Industrial Estate, Seaham, County Durham, which Alpha was refurbishing. He climbed up the internal bracing of the scaffold and fell 4.5 metres when the bar he pulled on came away.

The HSE served a prohibition notice on the scaffold to the two directors of the company, Christopher Warrener and Alan Turner, when it investigated the accident in December 2003.

Pleading guilty to a breach of section 3(1) of the HSWA the company said that it had co-operated with the HSE, had not undertaken any work at height since the accident and showed audited accounts to the court on its ability to pay a fine as the company had only been trading six months when the accident happened. It was also ordered to pay costs of £1398.

Prosecuting inspector John Moran told SHP that this had been an unnecessary accident as the company could have followed a HSE guidance note on tower scaffolds and hired an alternative scaffold.

Roof fall victim's employer received three previous warnings of danger

A demolition company that was issued with three prohibition notices by the HSE relating to work at height has been fined £4000 plus costs after one of its employees fell eight metres to the ground through a fragile roof.

Dorset-based Ferndown Demolition and Salvage was handed the fine by Bournemouth magistrates on 24 September, when it pleaded guilty to breaching reg. 7 of the Construction (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1996 by failing to take suitable and sufficient steps to prevent people from falling through fragile material.

The magistrates heard that on 19 September 2002 Ferndown employee Graeme Smith was working on the asbestos cement roof of a former garden store, which was being demolished by the company. He was removing the roof sheets and carrying them down the roof to drop them into a skip below when he fell through a roof-light. As a result, he suffered a fractured pelvis, three broken ribs and a punctured lung.

Prosecuting inspector Jane Beckmann told the court that although a method statement and risk assessment had been prepared for the work, stipulating that the roof and roof-lights were to be removed from below using mobile elevating work platforms and tower scaffolds, it was decided that this process was too slow. With the knowledge of the company's management, it was decided that some workers would go up on the roof and work from 'youngman boards', passing the roof sheets to a worker on a scissor lift immediately below. No edge protection, nets, or harnesses were used.

An aggravating factor in the case was that Ferndown had previously been issued with prohibition notices relating to unsafe work at height on three separate occasions – the most recent being issued by Mrs Beckmann herself, in June 2000, to stop site work over two metres because of a risk of falling through an asbestos cement roof.

In mitigation, the company reported the incident to the HSE without delay and undertook an internal investigation. It fully cooperated with the HSE investigation and has since reviewed its working procedures.

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