



Health and Safety Newsletter Update August 2005

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

Health and safety news

How does your business measure up?
HSC/E publishes statistics of fatal injuries for 2004/2005

Health and safety guidance

Work is essential for good health

Health and safety court round up

Inadequately anchored scaffolding collapsed on to busy street
Three parties prosecuted over fatal fall

Contact us

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

Philip Jones 07973 735161 / Gordon Allan 07973 736967 Or email: info@vehs.co.uk

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

Keeping you up to date

Health and safety news

How does your business measure up?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recently launched its Corporate Health and Safety Performance Indicator (CHaSPI) and unveiled a third round of case studies highlighting the vital role that directors play in health and safety.

The HSE conference took place today at the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Launching the index, Lord Hunt said:

"There are still too many accidents at work and too many staff off sick. We need to convince chief executives in boardrooms across the country that managing absence and health and safety makes good business sense. This tool will help businesses to manage and track their key health and safety indicators and will enable them to compare their performance against other businesses. The easier we make it for everyone, the better the chance we have of raising standards."

CHaSPI (<http://www.chaspi.info-exchange.com/>) is a web-based tool to assist large organisations with over 250 employees (both public and private) to:

- get a measure of the effectiveness of their internal controls over health and safety
- to benchmark their performance against
 - their own targets and
 - the performance of their peers.

It works by asking a series of questions on, for example, health and safety management, occupational health risk management and sickness absence rates. A score out of ten is then calculated. Overall results are made publicly available.

Using CHaSPI's is voluntary. The intention is that it's usefulness to organisations and their stakeholders is what will drive it forward - encouraging and helping organisations to improve their health and safety, going beyond the legal minimum.

The nine case studies highlight the benefits that director leadership brings both to the health and safety of the employees and to the business. They are aimed not only at large organisations, but at small and medium sized enterprises (SME's) as well.

The case studies are drawn from private companies and public bodies across a range of different sectors.

The director leadership case studies build on the Health and Safety Commission's (HSC) guidance, *Directors' responsibilities for Health and Safety*, published in 2001 and the business benefits case studies published by HSC/E in 2004. While HSE's evidence shows a high degree of awareness of the HSC guidance among directors it is clear that around a third of organisations do not have board level arrangements in place for directing health and safety. HSC/E undertook to build on the guidance by providing accessible and persuasive case studies that bring home the benefits of director leadership.

The case studies being published supplement the director leadership case studies published by HSE in February and May 2005.

HSC/E publishes statistics of fatal injuries for 2004/2005

The HSC today publishes the latest detailed statistics on fatal injuries in HSE and local authority (LA) enforced sectors in 2004/05 – Statistics of Fatal Injuries 2004/2005. The document can be found at: www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/overall/fatI0405.pdf

Fatal Injuries to Workers

The figures show that the number of fatally injured workers decreased by 7% to 220 in 2004/05 from 236 in 2003/04. The rate of fatal injury also decreased by 7% to 0.75 per hundred thousand workers, from 0.81. This is the lowest rate on record. There was a general downward trend in the rate in the 1990s, however it has risen twice since then, in 2000/01 and in 2003/04.

In May 2004, nine fatal injuries occurred following a single incident at a plastics factory in Scotland.

In 2001, the most recent year for which comparable data are available, the rate of fatal injury to workers in Great Britain is one of the lowest among European Union member states.

In 2004/05, 114 (52%) of worker fatalities occurred in the two industries of construction (72) and agriculture (42).

Falling from a height continues to be the most common kind of accident, accounting for 24% of fatal injuries to workers in 2004/05. The number of fatal injuries of this kind decreased in 2004/05 from 68 to 53. Being struck by a moving or falling object, and being struck by a moving vehicle, are the next most common kinds of fatal injury.

Industries

In **agriculture**, the number of fatal injuries to workers decreased to 42 in 2004/05 from 44 in 2003/04 (21 of the 2003/04 deaths occurred at Morecambe Bay). The rate of fatal injury to workers also decreased from 11.3 per hundred thousand workers in 2003/04 to 10.4 in 2004/05, although this rate has fluctuated in recent years with no discernible trend.

In **construction** in 2004/05, there were 72 fatal injuries to workers – an increase of 1 in 2003/04. However, due to a rise in employment, the rate of fatal injury to construction workers fell by 3%, to 3.5 per hundred thousand workers, and continued the downward trend of the past four years. This is the lowest level seen in the last 13 years.

In **manufacturing**, the number of fatal injuries to workers rose from 30 in 2003/04, to 41 in 2004/05 (which include the plastics factory incident), reversing the recent downward trend. The rate of fatal injury to workers rose from 0.9 to 1.2 per hundred thousand workers.

In **service industries** in 2004/05, there were 63 fatal injuries to workers, a decrease from 81 in 2003/04. The rate of fatal injury also fell, from 0.35 per hundred thousand workers to 0.27 in 2004/05. This reverses the increasing trend of the previous three years. The services sector comprises a wide range of activities and whilst the numbers of fatal injuries fluctuate year on year in many industries, increases have occurred in sewage and refuse disposal (from 1 in 2003/04 to 10 in 2004/05) and fire service activities (from an average 1 per year recently, to 5 in 2004/05). Motor vehicle sale and repair has seen a reduction from an average 8 fatalities per year to 3 in 2004/05.

In **extractive and utility supply industries** in 2004/05, there were 2 fatal injuries to workers, compared with 10 in 2003/04 and 3 in 2002/03. In 2004/05, the rate of fatal injury is 1.1 per hundred thousand workers, compared with 5.4 in 2003/04. The rate of fatal injury in this industry is more susceptible to fluctuation due to the small number of fatalities involved.

For the combined three year period of 2002/03 to 2004/05, the industries with the highest rate of fatal injury to employees include the recycling of waste and scrap (18.6 per hundred thousand employees); and the mining of coal, lignite and peat extraction (10.2).

Fatal Injuries to Members of the Public

The number of members of the public fatally injured in 2004/05 is 361, of which 244 resulted from acts of suicide or trespass on railways. For 2003/04, the corresponding figures were 374 and 243 respectively. In 2004/05, of the 87 non railway fatal injuries, 71 were in the services industry, of which 47 occurred in health and social work. The corresponding figures for 2003/04 were 79 and 45 respectively. There were also 8 fatalities in construction in 2004/05.

Keeping you up to date

Health and safety guidance

Work is essential for good health

HSE has launched a new guide for safety and other trade union representatives, offering practical advice on long-term sickness absence and return to work issues. The HSC in a new strategy for Workplace Health and Safety have recognised the need to strengthen the role of health and safety in getting people back to work. HSE has published advice to help trade union officials to implement solutions to reduce sickness absence in the work place.

Each week one million workers take time off work because of sickness. Most return to work within days, however around 17 000 people are off work for longer. Almost one in five people who are off longer than 6 weeks leaves work permanently.

The guide outlines six key actions that union representatives can take, in partnership with employers, to reduce sickness absence and help sick employees to successfully return to work.

Actions trades union representatives can take with their employers include:

- Helping to identify measures to improve worker health
- Suggesting the development of workplace policies for managing sickness absence
- Helping to keep workers who are off sick in contact with work
- Helping to plan adjustments to enable return to work
- Supporting and empowering sick workers to return to work
- Helping to promote understanding of ill health and disability at work
-

Recent research for HSE has shown that consulting safety representatives on health and safety helps to improve working environments. Work is essential for good health and well-being and the longer people are off work, the less likely is their return the research concluded.

The leaflet "Working together to prevent sickness absence becoming job loss" can be found at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/web02.pdf. The leaflet offers practical advice for safety and trade union representatives.

Health and safety court round up

Inadequately anchored scaffolding collapsed on to busy street

A Tyne and Wear firm erected scaffolding eight and a half metres above ground level in front of a high-street shop without securing it properly to the building, Gosforth magistrates recently heard.

The company installed the structure outside a branch of Wine Rack in a busy suburb of Newcastle-on-Tyne, so that painters could refurbish a dormer window on the building. The court heard that the shop had a motorised roller shutter door with a pronounced lip. On 12 September 2004, as a shop assistant powered the door up, it caught on the scaffolding, causing it to collapse across a parked car and the whole width of the road.

The company said in mitigation that since the incident it had improved its supervision systems, and had spent money on training and equipment to prevent a recurrence. It now undertakes individual risk assessments for each job, while the director responsible has undertaken further health and safety training.

The company was fined £12,000 after pleading guilty to a breach of s3(1) of HSWA 1974 in failing to ensure the safety of non-employees. It was also ordered to pay the HSE's full costs of £1705 over a period of three years.

Three parties prosecuted over fatal fall

A man died during the construction of a stairwell in a shopping centre in Londonderry when a hollow-core floor slab failed to carry the weight of a staircase, leading to the collapse of eight staircases. Three contractors all pleaded guilty to a variety of charges:

* Principal contractor McLaughlin & Harvey – a breach of reg.16(1)(B) of the Construction, Design and Management Regulations (NI) 1995 in not ensuring that workers complied with rules in the health and safety plan. It was also charged with a breach of reg.5 of the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations (NI) 2000, in failing to implement a risk assessment, and fined £5000 on each charge;

* Sub-contractor Foylespan Floors – a breach of reg.3 of the MHSW Regulations (NI) 2000 in failing to prepare a risk assessment. It was also charged with contravening article 7(1)(a) of HSWA (NI) Order 1978 in failing to ensure the design of pre-cast floor slabs was safe. It was fined £5000 on each charge;

* Sub-contracted labourer Patrick Murphy – a breach of reg.3 of the MHSW Regulations (NI) 2000. He was fined £2500. No costs were applied for.

Londonderry Crown Court heard on 16 June that hollow-core floor slabs were being placed at Foyleside Shopping Centre during an extension. On 3 September 2002, the employee had been standing on a staircase that collapsed when the floor slab failed, causing him to sustain fatal injuries after a fall of 17.5 metres.

Note:

Whilst care is taken in the production of this document, you should seek confirmation from us or other suitably qualified people before taking, or failing to take, any specific course of action. We cannot accept responsibility for action taken, or not taken, based on the contents to our documentation alone.