

Client Update



Health and Safety, Quality and Environmental Management

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Britain records its lowest-ever number of worker deaths

The number of people killed at work in Britain fell to a record low of 151 in 2009/2010 – down from 178 the previous year, and 31 per cent lower than the average figure for the last five years.

In what could be seen as a message to the new government and its advisor Lord Young, who is currently carrying out a review of health and safety, HSE chair Judith Hackitt said the reduction means “continuing to strive to drive these numbers down further – not getting complacent about what we’ve collectively achieved, and recognising the new challenges as we emerge from the recession”.

The provisional figures cover the period between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2010 and reveal that agriculture was the most dangerous industry. It recorded a massive 52-per-cent increase in fatalities, with 38 workers losing their lives on farms last year compared with the record low of 25 deaths in 2008/09.

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Alan Ritchie, general secretary of construction union UCATT, said: “The reduction in construction deaths is good news. Yet it must never be forgotten that each death is an individual tragedy.”

Manufacturing improved also, with 24 fatalities in 2009/2010 compared with 33 the previous year. In the services sector, 42 workers died – 20 fewer than in 2008/09, and 30 fewer than the five-year average of 72. Steve Pointer, head of health and safety policy at EEF, the manufacturers’ organisation, commented: “We are encouraged that the number of fatalities in manufacturing fell to an all time low of 24. Many directors, managers, employee representatives and health and safety advisors throughout manufacturing deserve credit for their sustained hard work in difficult economic times.

“These figures are welcome but there is no room for complacency. As the industry continues to recover from recession, good, practical management of risk is even more important.”

While the HSE emphasised the contribution of “good practice, leadership and employee engagement” in the record low figures it



was also pragmatic about the reasons for the improved performance, acknowledging that the recession has resulted in lower levels of activity in some sectors and a decrease in the number of new, inexperienced recruits.

“The challenge for everyone concerned about safety is to ensure that the number of deaths in construction continues to be reduced as the industry recovers and activity increases. Rather than looking to reduce safety provisions the Government should be ensuring workers are safe by increasing the number of inspections and enforcement activity.”

More information on the statistics can be found at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/fatals.htm> Source: SHP June 30th

Guidance - Scaffolding deadline approaching

From 1 January 2011 the HSE will no longer acknowledge the British Standard BS5973:1993 as a recognised standard for the design of tube-and-fitting scaffolding structures.

The withdrawal of the document will mean that, from next year, all scaffolds will need to be built in accordance with the European standard BS EN12811-1:2003. BSI decided to withdraw BS5973:1993 as it contains conflicting information with the 2003 European standard. Among the differences between the standards is that the BS EN12811-1 provides:

- A broader in scope than BS5973;
- Coverage for the whole of the UK (BS5973 is not valid in Scotland);
- Scaffold designs that comply with European standard and the Work

at Height Regulations 2005.

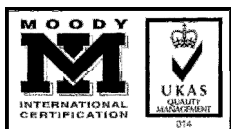
The NASC describes the 2003 standard as a performance document, which doesn’t give any detailed advice on safe systems of work for erecting, altering, or dismantling scaffolds when erected using tubes and fittings. The organisation has, however, attempted to fill this gap by publishing a good-practice guide for scaffolding with tubes and fittings, called TG20:08.

It envisages that all its members will be working to the new guidance, in full, by no later than the end of 2010.

For more information on scaffolding guidance, including TG20:08, visit www.nasc.org.uk Source: SHP 13th July

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Cameron fulfils pledge to address health and safety regulation



Lord Young of Graffham has been officially appointed as advisor to the prime minister on health and safety law and practice. The 78-year-old peer will undertake a Whitehall-wide review of the operation of health and safety laws and the growth of the "compensation culture".

Lord Young was originally tasked by David Cameron at the end of last year to carry out a review of what the now-prime minister calls the UK's "over-the-top health and safety culture". He gave a rather controversial speech at this year's IOSH Conference in Glasgow, where he told delegates health and safety is viewed "at best, as an object of ridicule and, at worst, a bureaucratic nightmare".

The former Secretary of State for both employment and trade and industry under Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s is expected to report to David Cameron either just before the summer recess, or immediately after.

Commenting on the appointment, the prime minister said: "I'm very pleased that Lord Young has agreed to lead this important review. The rise of the compensation culture over the last ten years is a real concern, as is the way health and safety rules are sometimes applied. We need a sensible new approach that makes clear these laws are intended to protect people, not overwhelm businesses with red tape. I look forward to receiving Lord Young's recommendations on how we can best achieve that."

Lord Young himself added: "Health and safety regulation is essential in many industries but may well have been applied too generally and have become an unnecessary burden on firms, but also community organisations and public services. I hope my review will reintroduce an element of common sense and focus the regulation where it is most needed. We need a system that is proportionate and not bureaucratic."

This view was not shared by the TUC, who slammed the review general secretary, Brendan Barber said: "an attempt to undermine the already limited protection that workers have by focusing on the needs of business". Businesses are re-

sponsible for a working culture that injures a quarter of a million workers every year, and makes a further half a million employees ill. The review should be investigating this instead, so rather than focusing solely on the 'needs of business', the Government should protect workers by increasing inspections and enforcement action against employers who put their staff at risk by ignoring existing laws, as well as introducing a legal duty on directors to protect their workers." The union body also expressed surprise at the Government's focus on the so-called compensation culture. Barber pointed out: "As successive reports show, there is no such thing, and claims have been falling over the past ten years."

IOSH, which has had detailed discussions with Lord Young as part of his review, welcomed the focus on educating people about what's really required. Said policy and technical director, Richard Jones: "We welcome any debate that helps to dispel the negative myth that health and safety is all about banning things. The health and safety profession is in the business of protecting people from serious harm, not about trivia or burdening businesses with bureaucratic red tape."

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