

Health & Safety newsletter 2010/11

Inside this issue

- Legal action - prohibition notices served on local businesses
- Have your say on health and safety • Myth of the month
- What have we been doing?

Advice leaflets

- Employee induction • Gas safety • Electricity

The Future of Health and Safety

Every week national newspapers criticise 'elf and safety' by printing outrageous headlines such as safety goggles required when playing conkers, hanging baskets banned, pancake races banned. Most of these stories come about because of organisers not understanding how to carry out risk assessments, or not wanting to pay for insurance, or they are worried about getting sued, or using health and safety as an excuse not to allow an activity.

Some people think health and safety is just a joke but the reality is that 544 people were killed in the workplace in 2009/10 and there were approximately 144,000 major and over 3 day injuries plus the estimated 20,000 dying prematurely each year as a result of injury or

illness caused by the work they do.

Some hazards have been stamped out for good, such as Nystagmus - a flickering of the eyes resulting from poor illumination; and hatters are no longer mad now that we know of the risks of mercury poisoning. But there are always new hazards on the horizon. More people now drive as part of their job and work-related road accidents have increased. According to one source it is estimated that 600-800 employees are killed (not counted as death at work) when driving vehicles in the course of their work each year. Ways of working continue to change but the principle of health and safety, as with other good business practice, is here to stay.

Is this your business?

Ladder Safety

This business had an unsuitable ladder. A third of all reported fall-from-height incidents involve ladders and stepladders. On average this accounts for 14 deaths and 1,200 major injuries to workers each year. Many of these injuries are caused by inappropriate or incorrect use of the equipment.

Establish your ladder or stepladder is in a safe condition before use. A quick visual check each working day should be made to confirm there are no visible defects. A periodic detailed inspection should be made in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Ladders that are part of a scaffold system should be inspected every seven days to confirm they are suitable for work use. Only Class 1, or EN 1314 ladders or stepladders can be used for work purposes. Domestic ones (Class III) are not approved for work purposes. Ladders and steps must be maintained and stored in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.



Legal action - learning from other people's mistakes

Café owner prohibited from using roof as a seating area!



An 'enterprising' café owner decided to provide a high-rise terrace for his customers so he placed tables and chairs on to the roof. Customers were expected to use a ladder to access the 'terrace'. There was no guarding to the edge and no load bearing tests had been carried out, (let alone any other permissions being obtained). As soon as we were notified a Health and Safety Officer visited and served a prohibition notice to prevent the roof being used in this way.

The lesson: If you have a good business idea, think through all the angles, including health and safety, before acting on it. A prohibition notice could be the least of your worries!

Hotel fined after handyman injured after sawing off tree branch he was leaning his ladder against

A handyman who was injured after propping his ladder against the tree branch he then sawed off is suing his employers. The handyman had been asked to prune a tree in the grounds of a hotel, but instead of leaning his ladder against the trunk he placed it against the branch he was hacking down. When the branch fell it took the handyman with it, 14ft to the ground below. He broke his heel, damaged his ligaments and had to spend ten days in hospital recovering from surgery on his injuries.

The handyman sued the hotel for failing to carry out a risk assessment on the dangers of pruning. His employer should have given him training on where to place the ladder. The hotel owners were fined £1,000 and ordered to pay £1,000 council costs by Bolton magistrates after pleading guilty to health and safety breaches.

The lesson: Do not assume people know what they should do. It is the employer's responsibility to assess the risks involved in any task and provide adequate instruction and training so that employees do their tasks safely.

The Food Hygiene Rating System comes to Reigate and Banstead

In his review of health and safety, Lord Young recommended the adoption of the Food Standard Agency's Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.

From 1 February 2011 the Scheme will be operating across the Borough with many more Councils joining over the next two years. The Scheme promotes high performing food businesses and enable consumers to make informed choices about where they buy and eat food.

Each food business is given a 'hygiene rating' when it is inspected by an Environmental Health Officer. The hygiene rating shows how closely the business is meeting the requirements of food hygiene law. Good food premises will be proud to display their rating, whilst poor premises will be unable to hide because their details will be available on: www.food.gov.uk/ratings

0 1 2 3 4 5

0 1 2 3 4 5

0 1 2 3 4 5

0 1 2 3 4 5

0 1 2 3 4 5

0 1 2 3 4 5

Have your say

The Better Regulation Executive (BRE) is part of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and leads the regulatory reform agenda across government.

Businesses can have a direct influence on how the regulations that affect them are devised and delivered. All you have to do is submit your proposal to the BRE outlining how a certain regulation can be improved. Suggestions can include cutting the amount of time you spend filling in forms, and ideas on where regulations that overlap or contradict can be rationalised.

The BRE, which leads the government's better regulation agenda, is keen to hear your views. It will respond to all suggestions and look for ways to make them a reality. By submitting a suggestion you will be providing the government with valuable information which may make a difference to the way you, and others, are affected by regulation. More details on how to submit your ideas can be found on the businesslink website: www.businesslink.gov.uk (search for BRE).

There have been several suggestions such as defining what a 'significant risk' is. Most businesses are concerned about keeping up with the regulations for health and safety. Government sponsored 'Businesslink' has over 50 free online tools to help company owners and managers deal with regulation. Start-up companies and small businesses can find basic information on how to comply with health, safety and environmental regulations at: www.safestartup.org/.

Flexible warranting

A number of counties in the south-east region have adopted flexible warranting and it is now a well established approach. It allows authorised officers to take enforcement action in any of the participating council areas and Health and Safety Executive (HSE) enforced premises. Surrey local authorities are working towards adopting this method.

What does this mean to you? Under certain circumstances a health and safety inspector from another council could carry out an inspection in this Borough. It also allows us to deal with certain situations in premises normally enforced exclusively by the HSE. The idea is to help us provide better and more immediate protection to those at work or the public who may be affected, and be able to help one another in times of greatest need.

Myth: If you run an office-based business you need a health and safety consultant

The reality

You probably already deal with most business issues yourself and health and safety should be no different. If you run a low-risk, office-based business then health and safety is something you can manage without needing to buy in expert help. After all, you should know your business better than anyone else.



New 20 minute Risk Assessment Tool for Offices

In response to Lord Young's report recommending simplifying health and safety for businesses, the HSE has developed a new tool for businesses when conducting a risk assessment. For example, it allows those working in low-risk office-based environments to do a risk assessment quickly and easily. Go to www.hse.gov.uk/risk/office.htm.

It enables a business to produce a tailored assessment by selecting the hazards relevant to it and thinking about how to control them. Simplified risk assessment tools are being prepared for other low-risk work places.

Food & Safety Team Contact details

General Enquiries

Nicky Woolley
(Food Safety)
01737 276417
Sharon Smart
(Health & Safety)
01737 276414

Food & Safety Team Manager

Alex Lisle
01737 276412

Principal EHO - Health & Safety

Katie Jackson
01737 276309

EHO - North Area

Russell Jenner
01737 276415

EHO - Central Area

Kirk Holmes
01737 276365

EHO - South Area

Lisa Wareham
01737 276416

Health & Safety Officer

Tracey Hobson
01737 276117

What have we been doing?

In addition to comprehensive inspections of certain high risk businesses we also do topic-based inspections: projects that focus on certain topics in certain businesses as follows...

Duty to Manage Asbestos in Residential Care Homes

A total of 43 care homes in the Borough were visited to help them comply with the Control of Asbestos Regulations. Like other businesses, many care homes did not realise they had a duty to identify asbestos in their buildings and ensure its safe management.

Asbestos was used extensively as a building material in the UK from the 1950s through to the mid-1980s. It was used for a variety of purposes and was ideal for fireproofing and insulation. Care homes are often established in older premises and therefore more likely to have some asbestos containing materials present.

Any building built or refurbished before 2000 (houses, factories, offices, schools, hospitals etc) can contain asbestos. All commercial buildings must have identified any asbestos so that if anyone, including contractors, carries out any works they will know what to avoid. For more information on how to comply with the asbestos requirement go to: www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/.

Manual Handling in Pubs

A total of 26 pubs have been visited and given advice on manual handling. Musculoskeletal disorders are the most common occupational disease in Great Britain, affecting 1 million people a year. They include problems such as low back pain, joint injuries and repetitive strain injuries of various sorts. Visits focused on manual handling risks, e.g. taking deliveries of drinks into cellars, moving goods around the premises. Shown here are the owner and staff of the Skimmington Castle, Reigate Heath.



Surrey Estates Management Initiative (SEMI)

This is the largest joint Surrey project with six councils and the HSE taking part this year. The aim is to improve the management of asbestos and reduce workplace transport risks in businesses on selected Surrey industrial estates.

Unannounced visits are made to all premises on an industrial estate, to find out which businesses are operating and what they do. This allows the council and the HSE to update their databases and prioritise businesses by risk depending on what each one does.

Advice is given to businesses and 2-3 months later a follow-up inspection of the higher-risk businesses is carried out by council and HSE Inspectors. Where there is non-compliance, formal notices are served.

In 2009/10 we ran SEMI for the first time and achieved 223 visits. On one of the recent visits, a business remarked that the time just spent had saved him £6,000, as he had been under the mistaken impression that he needed to hire a health and safety consultant to write his risk assessments. A few minutes and some simple guidance material showed him that it is usually far more appropriate for companies to take responsibility for their own risk assessment, and much more straight-forward than he had thought.