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Welcome to the new look Health and Safety Newsletter!

Welcome to the first issue of the revamped Health and Safety Newsletter for 2006! We hope you like the new format of the newsletter and that you will find the articles interesting and thought provoking. Please take a few moments to look through it and also circulate it to your staff – there may be something they have always wanted to know inside.

The aim of this letter is to get in touch with as many of the businesses that we deal with as possible, particularly those that may not get to see an Inspector very often. We have tried to flag up issues that are relevant to a wide audience, from the fact that it is just too cold at work sometimes, to the threat that many small retailers may face from violence against staff. We also want to let you know what we are up to and how we can help you, so please check out ‘Ask the EHO’, and our directory of useful information sources. There is also another opportunity to receive lone worker training from the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, which was extremely well received when it first ran last October. Finally, I would really welcome feedback on what you think of the newsletter and any suggestions for future articles. I hope you enjoy it, and a Happy New Year to all our readers.

*Katie Jackson
Senior Environmental Health Officer & Editor.*

Health & Safety Team Update - ‘Watch your Step’ Campaign

In October and November 2005, the Health and Safety Team took part in the national ‘Watch Your Step’ campaign, which looked specifically at slips and trips in high risk areas such as retail, catering and leisure. We sent out self-assessment questionnaires and information packs to around 80 premises, and then completed 10 in depth follow up visits at selected sites. This included using a gadget called a ‘surface roughness meter’ to measure the slip resistance of some of the floor surfaces. The results were fed into special software, to produce a risk category of low, medium, high, or significant. Premises were then given advice on ways to improve their control of slip and trip risks.

If you would like more information on managing slip and trip risks, or would like us to measure the slip resistance of your floor, please contact us (details on back page). You can also get information from www.hse.gov.uk/slips/index.htm



Slips and Trips – No Joking Matter

In our last edition we told you how we would be focusing on our five main priority topics during inspections and investigations. In the second of our series of topics, we look at the tricky issue of slips and trips.



Slips and trips are often seen as a joke – you only have to think of ‘You’ve Been Framed’ to see that falling over is funny! In reality, they are the most common cause of major injuries at work, and account for a third of all reported major injuries. Slips and trips cost employers over £512 million a year, with only a small proportion being covered by insurance.

Perhaps you’re thinking that slips and trips aren’t an issue in your workplace, or that they aren’t really very serious. But with 95% of these injuries resulting in broken bones – that’s broken arms, legs, hips and skulls – you can see that it’s no joke. Many people also think that there’s nothing they can do to reduce the risks, and that these accidents are inevitable, but that is not the case.

As with most health and safety subjects, there are some very simple things you can do to control the risks. For example;

- Stop the floor getting wet or contaminated in the first place.
- Keep water or contaminants away from walkways.
- Quickly clean up any spillages or contamination that does get onto the floor.
- Ensure that the existing floor surface itself has enough grip.
- Replace the floor surface with one that has better grip.
- Make sure steps and slopes have good foot and hand holds and have no sudden changes.
- Make sure that things like poor lighting or glare don’t prevent people seeing where they are walking.
- In icy conditions, put down grit or salt on outside paths and routeways.
- Consider if the work could be arranged differently to remove some of the risks.
- Consider vulnerable people such as the young and the old or people who may be inexperienced or have some impairment.
- Have good supervision, instruction and training to promote safe personal behaviour.
- Select suitable footwear for the conditions, work and individual.

Lone Worker Training Courses for Local Businesses Presented by The Suzy Lamplugh Trust

Following the success of our Lone Worker training course in October 2005, the Health and Safety Team are pleased to offer another opportunity to receive this excellent training from the Suzy Lamplugh Trust. The Suzy Lamplugh Trust have long been recognised as the UK’s leading authority in personal safety. The training will be held at the Town Hall on Monday 20th March 2006. The course will begin at 9.30 a.m. and finish at approximately 4.30 p.m.



If you are interested please complete the enclosed booking form and send it with a cheque payable to Reigate and Banstead Borough Council to Mrs Lisa Stevens, Licensing Administrator, Environmental Health Services, Town Hall, Castlefield Road, Reigate, RH2 0SH. The cost per delegate is £80 and includes refreshments and a buffet lunch. Parking is available at Bancroft Road 5 minutes walk away at a cost of £3.20 per day. There is a no smoking policy within the Council and a good understanding of the English language is needed for this course.

Violence and Abuse



It is a sad fact that many staff are facing the threat of violence and abuse as they go about their jobs. Research by the British Retail Consortium shows that physical attacks on shop staff and the threat of violence rose dramatically between 2002 and 2003. It also seems that it is

increasingly common for customers to verbally abuse retail staff. Work related violence is any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work, and is an important health and safety consideration that should be included in risk assessments.

Attacks on staff tend to either be linked to theft, and so be premeditated, or an irate customer venting their frustrations. These need slightly different approaches. Staff working at night may be seen as easy targets, with opening and closing times presenting the greatest risk, particularly if these are late at night. Simple precautions such as ensuring access is well lit, and making sure staff don't have to open or close up on their own can help to protect staff. Employers should also make sure staff can get home safely and that key holders are not left vulnerable by having to enter premises alone. Small outlets should not be put off by thinking that any changes will necessarily cost them a lot of money. There may be a lot that can be done in terms of layout, position of counter and providing a safe area for staff to be secure from the public.

For more information on work related violence, including real case studies featuring a family run convenience store and a pizza delivery outlet, please visit www.hse.gov.uk/violence/index.htm.

Practical Ways to Avoid Retail Violence

- Provide a counter that acts as a barrier to physical contact between staff and customers.
- Lock doors to 'staff only' areas and ensure that only staff have (and use) keys.
- Install security and access key/card/code systems.
- Provide a 'safe area' for staff in case of emergency.
- Reduce cash held on site by encouraging electronic forms of payment and emptying tills regularly.
- Don't cash up or count money in public view, and have a safe procedure for banking and/or cash collection.
- Promote the fact that harassment and bullying will not be tolerated.
- Give clear guidelines on what is acceptable behaviour and what is not.
- Give training on security measures and how to handle difficult situations with customers.
- Make use of CCTV, mirrors, duress alarms and beepers to announce entry and exit.
- Display notices to show that you use CCTV, keep only a minimal amount of cash on the premises and have a time delay device on the safe that staff cannot override.
- Encourage staff to report incidents, including descriptions of offenders.

A Lone Worker : By definition, a lone worker is anyone who works alone, without a colleague or colleagues. Typical examples of lone workers can include sales reps, employees in the retail trade particularly those working in off licences, garage assistants, night-shift workers, cleaners, etc. or social workers, whose work mainly involves visiting clients in their own homes.

Even within the voluntary sector, there are a high proportion of lone workers who carry out home visits, work alone in charity shops or collect money in the street.

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Ask the EHO! 'How cold is too cold at work?'

The question 'how cold is my workplace allowed to get?' is often asked, especially at this time of year, when winter is at its worst. 

The legal requirements for workplaces are set out in the Workplace (Health, Safety & Welfare) Regulations 1992, and Regulation 7 covers working temperatures. This requires that the working temperature inside buildings must be 'reasonable'. As a guide, the temperature in workrooms should normally be at least 16°C. However, if most of the work involves strenuous physical effort then a minimum of 13°C will be acceptable. The term 'thermal comfort' is used to describe how people feel in terms of being too hot or too cold.

There are some simple things that can be done to help improve people's thermal comfort when working in the cold.

- Provide adequate workplace heating e.g. portable heaters.
- Reduce exposure to cold areas where possible e.g. keep doors shut when not being used.
- Reduce drafts. 
- Provide insulated floor coverings or special footwear, if staff have to stand for long periods on cold floors.
- Provide appropriate protective clothing for cold environments, and modify formal dress or uniform requirements.
- Introduce systems of work to limit exposure e.g. flexible working patterns, job rotation.
- Allow sufficient breaks to enable workers to get hot drinks or to warm up in heated areas.

If you feel that your workplace is too cold, it is important that you report any problems to your management or workplace representative. If you don't say that you think something is wrong, it is unlikely to improve!

You can find further information on thermal comfort at www.hse.gov.uk/temperature.thermal/index.htm. Look out for 'how hot is my workplace allowed to get?' in a future issue.

Where can I get health & safety information? (FOR FREE!)

Many businesses may have questions about health and safety at work, but not know where to turn. You may be concerned about the value of the advice you receive, particularly from companies that are actually trying to sell you something.

Be reassured that help is at hand. Your local health and safety team here at Reigate & Banstead Council are available to answer your questions, and can provide many useful leaflets and even videos on loan. As well as being on the end of a phone, you can also e-mail us on hsadvice@reigate-banstead.gov.uk. Full contact details for all the team are shown to the left. And of course, we can visit if needed, and point you in the right direction.

Some people still worry that they will get in trouble if they admit to not knowing something. So if you don't fancy asking us, you can always ring the HSE Infoline. This is a confidential 'ask the expert' service,

run by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the national government body that enforces health and safety at work in the non-service sector industries. HSE Infoline can be contacted from 8am – 6pm Monday to Friday on 0845 345 0055 or via e-mail on hse.infoline@natbrit.com. Calls are charged at local rate.

The HSE website is also a mine of useful information – it's where we go to look up everything that we do. You will see that throughout the newsletter we have referred you to this site for further information, as it really does have so much to offer. Case studies from real businesses illustrate practical ways of managing health and safety, while the information links allow you to download free leaflets and guidance sheets.

Don't miss out on this amazing resource – visit www.hse.gov.uk and see what you can learn.