

CONSTRUCTION INFONET - ISSUE 07.06 NEWS AND INITIATIVES

BETTER BACKS CAMPAIGN 2006

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Local Authority partners are to continue their joint national campaign to tackle work related back pain. *Better Backs* will build on the success of last year's *Backs!* campaign and also extend its scope. From October, *Better Backs* will include workplace inspections, advertising and events. The campaign aims to reduce incidence of back pain caused or made worse by work, its impact, and the number of working days lost due to back pain.

The campaign focuses on the holistic approach needed to manage back pain. It will promote sensible workplace precautions that reduce risk and emphasise the positive benefits of staying active with back pain. It will encourage employers and employees to work together to help those affected recover and return to normal activities including work. HSE is keen to involve the voluntary sector, trades unions and employee's representatives, trade associations, professional bodies and businesses. Funding is available to run campaign events. The HSE website will contain [further details](#).

RISK ASSESSMENT GUIDE REVAMPED

HSE has issued a revamped risk assessment guide featuring examples that spell out, in plain English, what is - and what is not - expected. Launching the guidance, HSE's Deputy Chief Executive, Jonathan Rees, said: risk assessment "should be a practical way of protecting people from real harm and suffering, not a bureaucratic back-covering covering exercise." The 11-page booklet is available free online at: www.hse.gov.uk/risk. See press release for [further details](#).

OLYMPICS 2012

Olympics Minister, Tessa Jowell, has signed the *2012 Construction Commitments* on behalf of the Government. The Commitments provide a strong health and safety message for those considering tendering for Olympic construction contracts and recognises that health and safety is integral to the success of any project. Health and safety is one of the six key principles within the document and is a common theme throughout the Commitment. See press release for [further details](#)

HEIGHT AWARE FEEDBACK

During June and July many *Height Aware* events and practical demonstrations have taken place throughout the UK to raise awareness of falls from height. The events have been very well attended and received. These were undertaken in partnership with many contractors and construction industry suppliers of plant and equipment. There were many innovative and cost effective ways to promote safe work at height demonstrated at the *Height Aware* events across the country. Please see the HSE falls from height web pages for [further details](#).

INSPECTIONS REVEAL POOR STANDARDS ON SMALLER CONTRACTOR SITES

HSE inspectors stopped work on several sites during a local inspection initiative in the Humber region because safety standards were not being met. The focus of the initiative was on smaller contractors, typically engaged in refurbishment and maintenance work. Inspectors concentrated on less complex jobs, both industrial and domestic, rather than larger construction projects.

On most sites visited, work had to be stopped because people were at risk of falling and sustaining serious injuries. Recurring problems encountered were: use of incomplete scaffolding and; failure to provide scaffolding at all when required. On some sites employees were at risk of falling through fragile material such as roof lights and suspended ceilings. See press release for [further details](#)

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CHILD SAFETY

The summer holidays are approaching and HSE has issued a Child Safety reminder to the construction industry and parents highlighting the dangers faced by children playing on or near building sites. Between 2001 and 05, 3 children died and 235 were injured during construction work. In most cases simple precautions would have prevented the accidents ever happening. See press release for [further details](#).

A recent incident involved a child swinging on a rope hanging from a tree on a construction site. The child fell from the rope and landed on protruding concrete rebar. Workers had noticed the rope previously; realised local children used it as a swing for much of the summer, but had done nothing about it. Practical advice for contractors includes:

- watch out for signs that children may be accessing the site;
- leave site tidy with hazards minimised where possible eg block off ladders etc, secure plant, stack bricks and blocks safely;
- secure the site when finishing work.

RECENT COURT CASES

Case 1 - A builder was fined £3000 after a member of the public sustained head and back injuries after falling head first into an unfenced excavation. The Fire Service were called and it took two hours for him to be winched to safety. The HSE investigating inspector said: "This was an accident that could have been avoided by better communication and use of safety barriers." See press release for [further details](#).

Case 2 - A developer and company director were fined £15,000 and £2,000 respectively for unsafe handling of asbestos during demolition. The company was also ordered to pay costs of £20,000, whilst the director was ordered to pay £2,000. Asbestos was removed without a licence and demolition was carried out at the asbestos contaminated site. See press release for [further details](#).

Case 3 - A housing developer was fined £19,000 with £5,400 costs following a site inspection which revealed: men were working from an unguarded scaffold; an unsafe electrical installation; and a site that was generally in a condition that could be described as hazardous. The prosecution was brought not just because of working conditions found but also because of the failure to respond to earlier advice and enforcement action brought by HSE and advice given by the company adviser on health and safety. See press release for [further details](#).

TRAINING FOR DESIGNERS

Safety in Design (SiD) and CITB ConstructionSkills have developed a new Health & Safety course to heighten designers' awareness of their roles and responsibilities for health & safety in their day-to-day work. The SiD website provides [further details](#).

I hope you find this information helpful.

Philip Poynter
Construction Infonet Editor
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