

Revitalising Health & Safety – The National Targets

20% reduction in rate of work related ill health (10% by 2004)

10% reduction in rate of fatalities and major injuries (5% by 2004)

30% reduction in rate of working days lost (15% by 2004)

'Revitalising Health & Safety' (RHS) - is a 10-year strategy to improve health and safety at work, launched jointly by the Government and Health and Safety Commission on 7 June 2000.

The targets are for the health and safety system as a whole, not just for HSC or HSE. Everyone engaged in work, be they trade associations, employers, trades unions and workers need to think what they can do to deliver them.

Clear Water 2010 is the name of the water industry's ten-year occupational health programme which promotes and implements the Government strategy 'Securing Health Together (SH2)'. SH2 was launched in July 2000 to address the occupational health aspects of the RHS initiative.

Significant effort has gone into the Clear Water 2010 project to analyse the reasons behind work related ill health in the industry. This has resulted in the identification of five key occupational health issues for the industry to address.

These are:

- Musculo-skeletal disorders (including work-related upper limb disorders)
- Hand-arm vibration syndrome
- Stress
- Work related infections
- Noise induced hearing loss

All of these cause significant misery to the lives of those affected and impact heavily on business efficiency. It is our aim through Clear Water 2010 to reach very challenging targets for reducing ill health at work. We will make progress by sharing best practice throughout the industry and ensuring that our activities reflect our commitment to protect the health of employees and contractors.

"When we have eradicated work-related ill health from the water industry, then we will take a bow, but not before"

Bob Baty - Chief Executive of South West Water on behalf of the Council of Water UK.



Occupational health embraces an enormous spectrum of strategic, preventive and reactive activities. Whilst not overlooking the importance of health protection across this spectrum, the Programme Management Group, with advice from Medical Practitioners working within the industry, decided to concentrate on the five types of work-related illnesses that cause most absence in the sector.

The Clear Water 2010 Programme Management Group set the targets and agreed the priorities, but it has been up to individual member companies to implement projects within their own organisations. 45 projects from water companies are described on Water UK's dedicated Clear Water 2010 website, and the programme is committed to sector-focused publications for stress (already published and now being updated), musculo-skeletal disorders (in preparation) and exposure to pathogens (an update to the Occasional Guidance Note which pre-dated Clear Water 2010). In addition, 5 bulletins have been prepared to assist busy Front Line Managers throughout the industry to rapidly absorb risk assessment and control information relating to asthma, hand-arm vibration syndrome, noise, stress and manual handling. Nevertheless, the function of Clear Water 2010 programme management has not been to dictate activities to water companies but rather to encourage, publicise success, devise innovative programme strategies, and report trends.

Targets

Water companies via the Council of Water UK, which represents chief executives and directors throughout the sector, are committed to achieving specific targets relating to occupational health by 31 December 2010. These are:

- **Target 1:** a 20% reduction in cases of work-related illness
- **Target 2:** improved rehabilitation and recovery
- **Target 3:** a 30% reduction in days lost due to work related illness

Furthermore, reflecting Government strategy, we committed to meeting half these gains within four of the ten years, i.e. by 31 December 2004.

Mid Point Results

Reduction in the number of cases of work-related ill health - This target requires the water industry to reduce the number of instances of occupational ill health by 20% by 31 December 2010, and to make half that gain by the mid point.

The table opposite demonstrates a steep *rise* in work related ill health cases in 2002 following identification of the baseline in 2001. This was expected. It is almost certainly the result of increased publicity and therefore of greater reporting. The presumably more genuine effects of the industry's occupational health activities appear to kick in during 2003, but are followed by an apparent disappointing deterioration in performance in 2004.

Reduction in Days Lost due to Work-Related Ill Health - This target is crucial. From the Frank Davies Project right through until the present time the water industry has championed and helped to prove the axiom that "Good Health Is Good Business". Therefore, the most meaningful targets and reports relate to calculations showing days lost, and the associated operating costs. The programme has identified that in the four years since inception, at least 11,117 sickness cases have occurred through work-related stress, MSD and gastro-enteritis. Furthermore, the Clear Water 2010 Programme Management Group, accept that this is only a proportion (47%) of the full range of work-related ill health encountered within the industry.

The trend analysis we have been able to determine for this mid point report demonstrates that we have made an inroad into these financial losses by reducing the overall number of days lost but that as the table above illustrates, we have not met our mid point target.

We should continue to focus our intervention strategies on those illnesses which are work-related because this is where we can have most influence in reducing our operating costs and helping to create a Healthier Nation. For the first time we know with confidence that financial losses within the water industry due to work-related ill health are very significant. Progress has been made in reduction of these losses during the first 4 years of the 10 year initiative, although we have not met our mid point target.

For further Information on the Clear water 2010 Programme please contact the Programme Manager Rob Gwyther on rgwyther@southwestwater.co.uk or the Programme Management Group Secretary Marilyn Southern on marilyn.southern@bwhwater.co.uk.

Water UK is the industry association that represents all UK water and wastewater service suppliers at national and European level. We provide a positive framework for the water industry to engage with government, regulators, stakeholder organisations and the public. We actively seek to develop policy and improve understanding in areas that involve the industry, its customers & stakeholders.

Table
ALL - TARGET 1 (CASE REDUCTION BY 20 PERCENT)



The calculated trend however suggests we may achieve our end point target regarding the number of ill health cases, although this forecast needs to be treated with caution.

Table
ALL - TARGET 3 (DAYS LOST REDUCTION BY 30 PERCENT)

