

Partnership on Health And Safety in Scotland

HSE Scotland Director's report

Issue

1. To update members on developments in Scotland since their last meeting.
2. HSE has dealt with seven MPs', four MSPs' and one MEP's letters during the period; as well as 29 Freedom of Information requests and 175 requests under the Data Protection Act (up to mid-February).
3. There have been 4 fatalities in Scotland since the last PHASS meeting. The information at Annex 1 is not for publication, as it has not yet been verified. Some of the incidents may not have been be work-related.

Educational and promotional work

4. In February, Scottish fish farmers came together in Oban to attend the UK's first aquaculture and maritime safety awareness event. Through practical demonstrations it aimed to remind fish farmers of good practice and provide an opportunity for the industry to get together and share their experiences. Qualified instructors and experienced personnel from a range of organisations demonstrated how to avoid the most common causes of accidents and ill health arising in aquaculture and other marine activities. These include: boat stability and cranes; safe entry into confined spaces; fork lift truck/transport issues; lifejackets; life rafts and flares; cold shock.
5. The campaign on safe farming continues. HSE and the National Farmers' Union Scotland (NFUS) have joined forces to remind farmers across Scotland of the dangers they face in their daily work. Last year in Scotland, nine agricultural workers lost their lives at work and 2,364 were seriously injured. "Make the promise. Come Home Safe" is a hard-hitting campaign targeting farmers and their families, including grandparents and children, with the individual stories behind the statistics and the devastation caused to bereaved families.
6. During the period, HSE also held a Safety Awareness event in Portree on the Isle of Skye. Short, practical demonstrations by LANTRA trainers, who are themselves farmers, were the key feature of the event. Together with health professionals, they gave practical advice on aspects of work on farms and crofts that are most likely to involve risk of serious injury, ill-health, or fatal accidents: manual handling, animal handling, tractor and child safety and the use of quad bikes (ATV's). Visitors heard not only about the problems, but also about straightforward, economical solutions to help keep everyone in farming safe. HSE staff were on hand to answer any questions and give tailored advice.
7. The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Chief Inspector of Construction, Stephen Williams gave the keynote address to the construction industry in Scotland at a major conference in Glasgow organised by the Scottish Construction Forum (SCF) and HSE. It aimed to give delegates the opportunity to learn how their firms can contribute to the success of the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. The "Aiming High - Landing Safely" seminar highlighted health and safety best practice in the run up to the London 2012 Olympics and how the lessons learned will help raise the bar for the Glasgow 2014 Games and beyond. The event also reminded firms of the wider health and safety issues

that affect the construction industry. Mr Williams told delegates that in these difficult economic times it was more important than ever for those with influence within the industry to come together and discuss and debate health and safety issues.

8. Inspectors and HSAOs have addressed Local Safety Group meetings. Local Safety Groups in Scotland are affiliated to the Scottish Chamber of Safety (SCOS) which is in turn part of the Safety Groups UK initiative with whom HSE has a partnership agreement.

9. HSAOs have continued their targeting of proactive visits to small businesses.

Proactive inspection

10. Scotland and Construction Division inspectors are involved in HSE's initiative in the property refurbishment industry which got off to a good start at the beginning of March. In Scotland last year there were 11 fatalities in the construction sector and 1479 injuries. In support of HSE's Shattered Lives and Hidden Killer campaigns, HSE inspectors are targeting a high volume of inspections at principal contractors in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Inverness, Stirling and the Borders to see how they are managing: working at height safely; good order on site; and the risks associated with exposure to asbestos

11. Inspectors in Scotland have continued to inspect a target number of premises under the benchmarking project which selects duty holders to visit at random from external sources eg business directories (rather than existing HSE information). The aim is to set a benchmark for the standards expected by visiting the full spectrum of good to poor performers. (Much HSE inspection normally targets poor performers about known hazards.) Inaccurate information in business directories is proving a problem in reaching the target number of premises for inspection. Plans are in hand to look at alternative sources of data through data-sharing agreements with Local Authorities.

12. Some joint visits have taken place to nuclear licensed sites with the Nuclear Safety Directorate as part of the handover of conventional health and safety inspection at such sites to mainstream HSE inspectors.

Enforcement action and investigation

13. Tricon Construction Ltd, Dundee were fined £10,000 at Dundee Sheriff Court in January after pleading guilty to a charges under section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. This was a serious incident in which two men fell through a gap between the fourth floor and the lift shaft wall. One man fell over ten metres while his colleague fell two metres. The pair avoided a falling concrete lintel, which weighed 110 kilogrammes but both still suffered serious injuries in the incident. The men were working to cap the lift shaft and were manoeuvring concrete lintels using scaffold as a means of access. Part of this scaffold was unstable and tipped when the workers stood on it causing the men to fall down the outside of the lift shaft. The access scaffold had not been correctly erected and there was a gap of between 0.5 and 1.0 metres between the existing floor and the wall of the lift shaft.

14. Dean Entertainments Ltd, a Fife company and its director, were fined together a total of £35,000 for exposing staff to asbestos at Dunfermline Sheriff Court in December after both pleading guilty to charges under section 3(1) and section 37(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act respectively. This followed a serious incident in which at least 15 tradesmen were exposed to airborne asbestos fibres over almost two months during a

major refurbishment of the former Ballroom nightclub in 2005. Work continued on the project despite concerns being raised by the tradesmen about the possible presence of asbestos within the building. Work was stopped by HSE after they were contacted directly by one of the site workers.

15. Several reports have been passed to the Procurator Fiscal recently, some following fatalities. On-going investigations include: an incident involving a fall from height to a migrant worker; incidents in schools involving staff and pupils; an amputation involving woodworking machinery; a serious leg injury in heavy engineering.

16. Quite a few Notices have been served including one on the Royal Mail for workplace transport issues. Royal Mail Group plc (comprising of Parcelforce, Royal Mail and the Post Office) are participating in the Large Organisations Partnership Pilot (LOPP), which implements a Group-wide Improvement Plan dealing with strategic goals for improvement (e.g. targets for reducing ill health, days lost etc). Scotland has a Co-ordinating Inspector for Royal Mail operations here.

17. The HSE Vale of Leven investigation into the C difficile outbreak continues. Outbreaks in other Health Board areas continue to prompt calls for HSE involvement which HSE has to manage carefully. Health Secretary Nicola Sturgeon has announced a new Care Environment Inspectorate to inspect hospitals to check standards of cleanliness and infection prevention in the fight against healthcare acquired infections such as MRSA and C difficile. It will be headed by a chief inspector, to be appointed in April. The public will be able to report concerns direct to the inspectorate. With an annual budget of £1 million it will make at least one planned and one unannounced visit to every acute hospital in a three-year cycle, with extra visits if needed. The inspections will focus on infection control, cleanliness, the fabric of the building, and arrangements for visitors. HSE will be meeting the Scottish Government to develop our relationship with this new body and to offer HSE expertise.

Working with others

18. HSE has met trade union representative in the water industry, undertaken a review of reporting arrangements in Education Departments, supported events in the cleaning sector and care homes

Health and Safety Strategy in Scotland

19. Over 150 representatives from Scotland's business, public and voluntary sectors came together on 29th January in Glasgow to help shape the future of health and safety in Scotland's workplaces. As the last of seven consultation events held across the UK, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) sought the views of Scottish stakeholders on a new strategy: 'The Health and Safety of Great Britain \ Be Part of the Solution'. The consultation closed on 3rd March and there is some initial feedback on the HSE website. In the light of all the workshops – which over 700 people attended - and after analysing over 200 written responses, the HSE Board will publish the final version of the Strategy in early summer.

20. HSE Board Chair, Judith Hackitt and HSE Director, Scotland, Paul Stollard met Shona Robison MSP, Scottish Minister for Public Health in March.

21. The Scottish Government, Health and Well-being Division appointed a second HSE member of staff, Trevor Johnson, on secondment in January.

22. Rita Donaghy has visited Scotland as part of her review fatal injuries in the construction industry commissioned by Health and Safety Minister James Purnell. She is also due to meet Jim Mather MSP, Scottish Minister with responsibility for construction.

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