

National Irish Safety Organisation

Update!



*NISO is a not-for-profit voluntary body,
dedicated to the promotion of health
and safety in Irish workplaces*

WINTER 2009

INSIDE

CORRIB GAS FIELD

**NISO CONFERENCE
2009**

HELPLINE

**UPCOMING
EVENTS**

SAFETY AND WORKING AT HEIGHT



National Irish Safety Organisation

Update!

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NISO President Reflects on 2009 conference and awards

As 2009 draws near to a close, NISO has in these difficult times held its focus on health and safety with a well attended conference in Castlebar at the end of September last. The number of delegates in attendance was on par with previous years and the feedback on the conference evaluation forms was very positive. The two accident victim speakers, Candace Carnahan and James Gorry, will leave a lasting impression on the conference delegates with accounts of their accidents and having to come to terms with their physical and psychological disability.

Likewise, there were a high number of submissions for our annual safety awards, together with a large number of organisations attending the Gala dinner. The awards were co-presented by Dara Calleary, T.D., Minister for Labour Affairs, David Cooke from the Northern Ireland Safety Group, Dermot Carey from the Construction Industry Federation and Pauric Corrigan the NISO President. The gala awards dinner was attended by three Mayo men who lead the way in health and safety, Minister Dara Calleary, Jim Lyons chairman of the Health and Safety Authority and Pauric Corrigan NISO President. One could say that it was a tribute to the three to hold the awards in Castlebar County Mayo.

Next year the awards will be simplified to reduce some of the duplication that takes place when companies make their submissions and it is hoped to take the awards to the next level giving greater recognition to the recipients.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the companies who made submissions to our awards and look forward to receiving their submissions in 2010. To all who helped in the successful running of

our conference, I would like to extend a sincere thanks.

Dates For 2010

- NISO Annual General Meeting, Saturday 17th April, Head Office Calmount, Dublin.
- All Ireland Safety Quiz Final, Saturday 24th April in Belfast.
- National Safety Awards & Annual Conference, Thursday 30th September & Friday 1st October, hosted by the Midlands Region.

An Board Snip Nua

As reported in the last edition of Update, NISO has made a submission to Dara Calleary, T.D., Minister for Labour Affairs, on the recommendations by the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes to merge the Health and Safety Authority and the National Employment Rights Authority, receipt of which has been acknowledged by the Department.

Regional AGM's

The time of year is quickly approaching when the eight regions hold their Annual General Meetings. Notices will be sent to all members within their respective regions. Members should make a special effort to attend their



*Pauric Corrigan, President,
National Irish Safety Organisation*

regional AGM and become involved in supporting their region. As the regions organise various seminars throughout the year on topical subjects, there may be a subject that one would like a seminar or presentation on. So, come along and support your regional officers and committee.

On behalf of NISO, as President, My Fellow Officers, Executive Members and Staff of Head Office, I would like to wish all our members a safe, healthy and happy Christmas and New Year.

*Pauric Corrigan,
President
National Irish Safety
Organisation.*

Obituary – Benedict Daly

The Executive Committee and staff of the National Irish Safety Organisation (NISO), together with its current and former officers, members and friends were deeply saddened by the recent passing of Benedict Daly.

Benedict Daly was a founder member and first President of NISO from 1963 – 1968. Benedict had a successful career, culminating in being a District Court Judge for seven years before his retirement in 1981.

Benedict married Doreen O'Regan, from Cork, on 20th April, 1954. Both Benedict and Doreen had a very long and happy life together until Doreen's death in 2007.

Benedict had many interests which he took part in upon his retirement. These include joining the local Active Retirement Group in Rathfarnham, painting, French and travelling.

Benedict was always interested in current affairs, history and politics and of course NISO, with whom he had a long history. He was an avid reader of literature and had a considerable library containing anything from the complete works of Shakespeare to the complete works of NISO, as his daughter Mary would say.



Benedict was a true gentleman and many tributes have been paid to him by various people associated with NISO over its 46 year history.

We hope that the work commenced by Benedict and held in such high regard by his successors will continue into the future. Benedict will always be remembered for the care and compassion that he showed in both his career and personal life. He will be remembered for his work and vision in establishing and directing NISO in the manner required.

Benedict is survived by his two daughters, Mary and Anne.

Although Ben will be missed by many of us in NISO, his legacy will set the direction that NISO will take in the years ahead.

Benedict Daly 1918 - 2009

Ted O'Keeffe

20th Anniversary of the Health and Safety Authority

November marked the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Health and Safety Authority and the introduction of modern legislation aimed at protecting workers across all industry sectors.

As a result of the report of the Commission of Inquiry on Safety, Health and Welfare at Work, chaired by Mr. Justice Barrington, the then Minister for Labour, Bertie Ahern T.D., introduced the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act which came into effect on November 1st 1989.

Martin O'Halloran, chief executive of the Health and Safety Authority, believes that this was a significant moment for Irish workplaces. "The 1989 Act created a dedicated Authority with responsibility for safety, health and welfare in all workplaces. The new Act was responsible for a modern philosophy with innovative

practices such as risk assessment and hazard identification introduced as a result."

Looking to the future, the Health and Safety Authority will be launching its new three year strategy in early 2010 and according to Mr. O'Halloran there is still much work to be done. "I believe that the way we approach work has changed for the better but we cannot allow the gains made over the last 20 years to slip regardless of the economic situation. The nature of work itself has changed dramatically since the establishment of the Authority and many new issues have emerged in relation to, for example, occupational illnesses and the safe and sustainable use of chemicals. We have many challenges to face over the coming years."

For further information and to view the work carried out by the Health and Safety Authority, please see www.hsa.ie.



Ireland Top EU Table on Workplace Health and Safety Improvements

Figures released by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) have placed Ireland at the top of an EU table on perceptions of workplace health and safety improvements over the last five years.

83% of Irish respondents to the pan-European research study indicated that workplace health and safety standards were either better or much better compared to five years ago, the highest rating amongst 27 European countries. In relation to the provision of information about workplace safety and health risks, Ireland was in second place with 84% of respondents claiming they were either fairly well or very well informed.

Mr. Martin O'Halloran, chief executive of the Health and Safety Authority, welcomed the figures released by the European Agency but said there is still a huge amount of work to be done in ensuring all workers arrive home safe and sound every day.

The study also indicates that there is widespread concern among European citizens that the current economic crisis could adversely affect health and safety at work, putting at risk the improvements that they report having seen over the last five years. According to the study, 6 out of 10 Europeans expect the global economic downturn to deteriorate working conditions, especially regarding health and safety. This figure is consistent with Irish perceptions.

Concern that only one-third of farmers use Code of Practice

The HSA is concerned at a national survey carried out by Teagasc which shows that almost two thirds of farmers have not completed the Farm Safety Code of Practice.

Speaking at a national farm safety conference, Pat Griffin, senior inspector with the Health and Safety Authority, told delegates "It's quite clear that many farmers are showing little or no regard for the Farm Safety Code of Practice. A copy of the Code was sent to every farmer in the country and there's simply no excuse for such a low compliance rate."

John McNamara, health and safety officer with Teagasc, also made his concern known and stated "this year Teagasc will provide 100 half-day courses around the country to assist farmers to

complete the Farm Safety Code. Teagasc advisers understand the day-to-day difficulties in running a farm and work with farmers in a practical way. However, no one can ignore the fact that farming is a dangerous work activity and farmers must change their attitudes and get out of the 'it will never happen to me' mindset that is all too common."

Minister for Labour Affairs, Dara Calleary, T.D., speaking at the National Ploughing Championships in Co. Kildare, called on farmers to attend the practical half-day training course and stated

"there is strong evidence that attending health and safety training will greatly reduce the likelihood of an accident".

In 2008, twenty-one of the fifty-seven workplace deaths were farm related and so far this year there have been nine deaths in the agriculture, hunting and forestry sector. This in the context that farming employs only 6% of the workforce makes it the most dangerous sector in which to work.

Please view the Teagasc website, www.teagasc.ie, for further information.



HSA Warning On Work At Height

The Health and Safety Authority has issued a warning to workers to take appropriate precautions when working at height.

This warning comes as the Authority reveal that seven workers have been killed as a result of falls so far this year, with the construction industry accounting for five of these deaths. In 2008, three of the fifteen construction related deaths were as a result of falls from height.

A concerned Martin O'Dea, senior inspector with the Health and Safety Authority, said "Compared to last year, there has been a significant increase in deaths as a result of a fall. Most of the accidents have involved falls from roofs and ladders. Unsecured ladders are particularly dangerous and I

would urge workers to organise and plan their work with their safety and health in mind. It's also very important that workers only use equipment that is suitable to the job."

As per the General Application Regulations 2007 guidance document on Work at Height, all employers must carry out a risk assessment for all work at height and put in place arrangements for:

- Eliminating or minimising risks from working at height,
- Safe systems of work for organising and performing work at height,
- Safe systems for selecting suitable work equipment to perform work at height, and,
- Safe systems for protecting people from the consequences of work at height.



Information related to work at height can be downloaded

from the HSA website, www.hsa.ie.

Corrib Gas Field



NISO conference delegates visiting the Corrib Gas Field

Harry Galvin, Secretary of the National Irish Safety Organisation, speaks about the NISO site visit to the Corrib Gas Field.

On the eve of the NISO annual Safety Conference 33 delegates availed of a site visit to the Corrib Gas Field in Co. Mayo. The group's first impression of the site was the remoteness of the location but on entering the site one immediately noticed the hive of activity as the 941 staff on site went about their tasks to complete what is one of the largest construction projects undertaken in recent memory.

Kieran McKenna and his colleagues took time out from their busy schedule to take the delegates on a tour of the site and they also made a presentation outlining the works activity. Their target is to complete the construction works for the plant so that production will commence in August/September 2010. In the interim, the timetable is for hydrocarbons system

testing in November and all mechanical construction except the administration area to be completed in December. The administration area is to be completed by March 2010. The summer will be a busy period with the testing and checking of all systems before production commences.

Peat

Removal of peat commenced in April 2007 and over a 12 week period 340,000 tonnes of peat was removed and relocated to an extinct bog some miles away bringing it back to life.

At peak times there were 1000 people working on the site and when the plant is in production it will employ 130 full time staff who will all live in the local area. Twelve towns in Mayo/Galway will also be connected to Bord Gáis network which up to now were not connected to the Gas network.

In August 2009, the Corrib

Gas Field site achieved 1.6 million man hours worked without a loss time accident. This on a remote construction project is a fine achievement and shows that accident free sites are possible with the correct procedures, and commitment of management and staff.

Safety Programme

Their safety programme includes safety induction training as well as permits to work systems, weekly site safety walkabouts, tool box talks and site stand-downs where all staff are gathered together and reminded of safety issues as they arise. Safety meetings include directors meetings in addition to local meetings with all contractors on site.

The project team on site identified issues relating to both driving on site and driving to and from work. In response to this issue a 'Road Safety Leadership Team' was set up to improve driver safety, the team introduced 'Defensive Driving Training' for their staff and this has

seen a marked improvement in driver safety.

Like the majority of construction sites, scaffolding was everywhere and we were informed that there was 2,600 tonnes of scaffolding erected on the project. As we went around the site we were impressed with the orderly manner in which the works were being undertaken and good housekeeping was very apparent. The delegates were left with a view that the project team had focused on the smaller issues which when not properly dealt with can have a domino effect and may build up to cause the more serious safety issues. By focusing on the smaller issues they can prevent these escalating and can then control the higher risks more readily. This has created the correct attitude with staff who understands that safety on site is viewed as important by the management team and that management lead by example.

NISO Conference 2009



Herbert Mulligan

Herbert Mulligan, Editor of the Health and Safety Review, reports on the NISO Conference 2009.

The true mark of the success of a conference is that for weeks afterwards people talk about what they heard at the conference. Judged against that criterion the National Irish Safety Organisation's 2009 conference was an outstanding success.

When those who were at the conference meet at other safety events, discussion quickly turns to the impact of the presentations by accident victims Candace Carnahan and James Gorry on their audience as they told delegates to the conference of how the day they were injured in workplace accidents had changed their lives forever.

Personal impact of accidents

Candace Carnahan, a young Canadian woman told delegates how as a student she took a summer job in local paper mill. Telling how the accident happened, she explained that she "worked around a conveyor belt system", which people walked over. Because they did it, she did it.

Then one day as she walked on the belt her foot got caught and went down. She fell over sideways. She screamed and the belt stopped – stopped by a

colleague who heard her screaming. She was awake and recalls "everybody turning green". She was stuck in the machine for half an hour, while rescuers got her "mangled foot out of the belt". After being disentangled from the machine she was taken to the local hospital and her foot was bandaged. It was only when she was taken to another hospital that she realised her accident was very serious. There her leg was "amputated from below the knee".

The consequences of the accident are she said, that "I will never walk again on my own two legs". Putting to the conference the question, what went wrong, she answers "I was working in a place that had an unsafe work culture". What is needed, she says, is a culture change, a change of attitudes". She concluded "accidents and fatalities are 100% preventable".

James Gorry's story was equally harrowing. Gorry, an experienced middle aged builder, who took safety seriously – as he put it "I was applying all the health and safety rules" – explained that he does not really know what happened. He has been told that he got back up on a roof to do a final inspection. He is told he tripped over the valley gutter.

What he also knows is that three weeks later his wife told him he was in Tallaght Hospital, where he spent three months. He was in intensive care, he wore an American collar, he had two punctured lungs and he was paralysed from the waist down.

Then he was sent to Rehab in Dun Laoghaire, where he spent eight months coming

to terms with the fact that he would never walk again. The biggest problem "was the psychological impact". Eventually Rehab got him out of the bed but not on his feet. As he told the NISO conference, he "will never stand up, sit down or walk again".

Setting the agenda

While for years to come people who were at the conference will speak about the presentations by Candace Carnahan and James Gorry, delegates came away from the better informed to tackle the issues of work-related transport accidents, the forthcoming swine flu pandemic and prepared for the cost cutting challenges posed by the current economic difficulties. In many ways the conference – in keeping with the conference title *Driving Safety and Health* – set the agenda for health and safety practitioners work for the coming years.

Speaking at the NISO/NISG Awards ceremony on the eve of the conference, the Minister for Labour Affairs, Dara Calleary, T.D., highlighted the role played by the EU in the development of Irish health and safety legislation. "EU membership", the Minister said, "has given worker health and safety priority status".

The following morning the opening speaker of the conference Frank Cunneen, who was chairman of the HSA for six years, recalled that the origins of NISO lay in the Factories Advisory Council which was founded in 1959. Then in 1963 the Council adopted the title of the NISO. NISO was located in the old Department of Labour when it was established and then moved

with the HSA, which was established following the enactment of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989. Recalling the development of Ireland and health and safety in Ireland since the 1989 Act, Cunneen spoke about the initiatives NISO took in publishing guidance literature, piloting safety week and launching the national awards.

From the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, Brenda O'Brien spoke about the emerging risks. Psychosocial risks are, she said, "the number one concern for the Agency". Among the causes of psychosocial problems are atomise enterprise structures, teleworking, mobile working, the global workplace and 24/7 availability. Also the fact that we have a longer working life, but no longer have a job for life, is, she added, a source of stress.

An immediate problem facing organisations is the swine flu. Dr Anthony Breslin from the HSE said that by the end of October and in early November we can expect an increase in swine flu cases. Businesses should, he warned plan for at least a "10% rate of absence

Transport safety

One of the issues at the top of the health and safety agenda is driving for a living.

The practical issues were addressed by senior HSA inspector Deirdre Sinnott, who spoke about managing work-related vehicle risk. She pointed out that over the last six years 145 people had been killed in workplace transport accidents and 25 in work-related accidents on the roads. The challenges are, she said, managing workplace transport safety and work-related road safety.

This involves consideration of the vehicle, the driver and the workplace or the journey.

Speaking after Deidre Sinnott, Sgt Jim McAllister of the Road Traffic Unit of An Garda Síochána said employers who have workers who drive for a living need to ask a number of questions, including: what policies do we have for the wearing of seat belts; what are our

policies in respect of people who do not comply with speed limits; what do we know of the vehicle our worker is driving and what do we know about the driver?

Cost cutting

The effects of the recession were addressed by the CIF's head of safety, Dermot Carey who spoke about the impact of cutting costs from the employers' perspective and

ICTU's Esther Lynch, who spoke of the employee's perspective.

Citing a survey he had carried out amongst safety advisors in the construction industry, Carey mentioned concerns about the loss of trained staff, less concentration on safety, under cutting and poorly maintained equipment. Expressing particular

concern about costs, he called on the Government to use the National Training Fund to support training

On the issue of cost cutting, Lynch told delegates that that the issue is the "cost of safety versus the cost of lives". It is, she added, "too important an issue to let the bean counters take charge".

Safety Award Winners 2009

NISO wish to congratulate all organisations who received a Safety Award this year for their achievements in the area of Health & Safety.



PSE Kinsale Energy, Supreme Award winners of 2009

PSE Kinsale Energy was presented with the highest honour, the Supreme Safety Award. The winner of the Supreme Safety Award is an organisation which can show consistency in safety performance over a number of years, and an outstanding contribution to occupational health and safety throughout the current year.

Supreme Award

- PSE Kinsale Energy

Platinum Awards

- Baxter Healthcare Irish Manufacturing Operations
- Helsinn Birex Pharmaceuticals
- Swords Laboratories

President's Awards

- Sierra Communications (large size organisation)
- F K Lowry Piling (medium size organisation)

- Pairc an Chrocaigh (small size organisation)
- RPS Consulting Engineers (construction)
- Walls Construction (new entrant)

Sectoral Awards

- Cuisine De France (food/drink)
- Galway County Council (local authority)
- Masonite Ireland (other manufacturing)
- GE Healthcare – Cork (chemical/pharmaceutical)

- Abbott Ireland Diagnostics Division (medical devices)
- Mount Carmel Hospital (medical services)
- Dublin Airport Authority – Dublin (transport)
- Superquinn (retail/wholesale)
- Veolia Environmental Services (services)
- Masonite (other manufacturing)
- Xerox Technology (electronic)

Regional Awards

- Lagan Construction (overall)



Kirby Group Engineering, Regional Award winner (Mid West)



RPS Consulting Engineers, President's Award (Construction)



Pairc an Chrocaigh, President's Award (Small Size Organisation)

Regional Awards cont'd

- Schrader Electronics (Northern Ireland)
- Laing O'Rourke Utilities Ireland (East)
- Cavanagh Foundries (Midlands)
- Maveric Contractors (West)
- SIAC Roofing & Cladding (South)
- Obelisk Group (North East)
- Cold Chon (Galway) Sligo (North West)
- Kirby Group Engineering (Mid West)
- Milltown Engineering (South East)

Construction

- Mercury Engineering (building services)
- Farrans Construction (civil engineering)
- Michael McNamara & Company (industrial/commercial)
- Lagan Asphalt/Lagan Road Markings (specialist contractor)
- Paddy Burke Builders (house building)

New Entry Awards

- Covidien (large size organisation)
- St Joseph's Hospital (medium size organisation)
- IPL (Innovative Products) Group (small size organisation)

Distinction

- Abbott Ireland Diagnostics Division
- Allergan Pharmaceuticals Ireland
- Clarochem Ireland
- Cold Chon Galway (Chemoran)
- Designer Group Engineering Contractors
- Diageo Global Supply

- Diamond Innovations Irish Operations
- Fingal County Council – County Hall
- Fingal County Council – Estuary Recycling Centre
- Greenstar
- Hertel Ireland
- Integrated Utility Services
- JRE Group Engineer & Contractors
- McInreney Homes/Contracting
- Naas General Hospital
- Oran Pre-Cast
- Patrick Lynch (Electrical Engineers & Contractors)
- PM Group
- Roadbridge
- Roscommon County Council
- Schering-Plough (Avondale)
- WYG Ireland

Highly Commended

- BAM Building
- BAM Civil
- Bristol Myers Squibb Cruiserath
- Cagney Contract Cleaning
- Commission for Communications Regulation
- H A O'Neil
- Irish Asphalt
- Irish Bulk Liquid Storage
- James Elliott Construction
- Kirby Group Engineering Alstom/Aghada CCGT Project
- Lagan Cement
- Leisure World Cork
- Microsoft Corporation
- P Elliott & Co
- Pierse Contracting
- Road Maintenance Services

- T Bourke & Co
- Tech Group
- Wyeth Newbridge

Certificate of Merit

- Abbott Ireland Vascular Division
- B/E Aerospace (UK)
- Collen Construction
- Cordil Construction
- Eli Lilly SA – Biotechnology Manufacturing
- Griffin Brothers Contracting
- GSH Ireland
- Hegarty Demolition
- Johan Collins Mechanical Services
- Kilcawley Construction
- KN Networks Services
- Lagan Bitumen
- Lagan Tile
- LM Developments
- Lynch Group
- Management & Construction
- O'Connor Sutton Cronin
- O'Sheas Electrical
- Padhraic Moneley Civil Engineers & Contractors
- PEPSI Co Ireland
- Rotary M&E Services Ireland
- Sky Partner Handling
- Skyway
- Society of St Vincent de Paul (Dublin region)
- Univar Ireland

President's Award (Roll of Honour)

- Benedict Daly
- Michael Henry

Recognition of Special Services

- Trevor Montgomery

Safety and Working at Height

We are all aware of the consequences of falls from height and from an early age we learn to avoid the hazardous areas from where we may fall.

Some people never get over a fear of heights and go through life avoiding situations that involve an uncomfortable height. For those of us that may have to work at height we must pay respect to the phenomenon known as “Gravity”.

Gravity is a force of attraction between objects. It is a critical hazard that industry has to face in its day to day operations. Gravity cannot be isolated, segregated or reduced and cannot be touched, heard or seen. On the positive side, gravity keeps us well and truly on firm ground.

Falls from height account for approximately 50% of all fatalities in the Construction Sector, and is a leading cause of severe injuries across most sectors.

The definition of work at height should be amended in company safety documentation and safety training to take into account the requirements of the European Council Directive 2001/45/EC. The resulting legislation being the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) (Amendment) Regulations 2007 Part 4. Work At Height.

What is classed as work at height?

The definition I use is: “Work in any place including access / egress, from which a person could fall a distance liable to cause personal

injury” this would include falls into chambers, pits etc. below ground level. It does not include permanent Staircases in a building.

What is a Safe place of work when dealing with work at height?

A safe place of work can be described as a location where you don't need to use or add any additional equipment to remove the risk of a fall from height. If you are required to add or use additional equipment to address the risk of a fall from height, then, by definition, it is not a safe place of work.

In providing a safe place of work, collective control measures (i.e. Edge Protection) must always take priority over personal control measures (i.e. Safety Harness and Lanyards). Collective measures protect more than one person at any one time and require no action by the user to work effectively. The risk of a fall is eliminated and therefore a rescue plan, rescue equipment and trained rescue personnel are not required.

Obviously, the design stage is where collective measures would be most efficiently incorporated into any structure. In my experience this is not always the case. I receive calls from employers regularly asking for solutions to work at height issues. These range from flat roof buildings with no effective protection to safe access for machinery maintenance and inside buildings. Each situation has its own particular hazards which must be addressed to enable the creation of a safe place of work.

The first question is can we

eliminate the need to work at height? Not always an easy option, however, it is possible. An example, implemented recently by a client, was where an existing ten metre fixed access ladder with a cage was replaced with a staircase leading to a railed platform. This staircase means work at height hazards no longer exist for staff working on the ten metre high platform. This solution was prompted by the review of the company's work at height risk assessment.

Where collective measures are not possible, restraint systems can be used. This system prevents the user reaching a fall hazard zone. Therefore, no fall is possible which eliminates the requirement for rescue. The anchorage requirements for restraint systems are not as onerous as those for fall arrest system.

Fall arrest systems

Where restraint is not possible, fall arrest systems can be used. However, as mentioned previously collective measures must always be given priority over personnel protective measures and PPE must only be used as a last resort when collective measures are deemed insufficient in protecting an employee. Fall arrest systems only operate when a worker has fallen from a height. They are designed to arrest a fall before the user reaches the nearest point of impact which may not necessarily be the ground. Pipe racks and cable trays etc. may be used below the working area. These pose a serious hazard to the user; therefore the importance of clearance from the point of impact



Des Brandon

cannot be overstated. Swing falls and suspension trauma must always be addressed at the training stage.

When Fall Protection PPE is used, you must ensure the user is properly trained in the correct use, inspection and fitting of the equipment. A rescue plan must be in place, this must include an appropriate rescue kit and trained rescue team. All equipment must be inspected by a competent person at regular intervals and pre use inspections must be carried out by the user.

This also applies to the anchorage points.

- Remove all faulty equipment from site.
- Do not use any equipment that fails a pre use inspection.
- Never allow D.I.Y repairs to equipment.

For further information on work at height, please see the work at height regulations available from the Health and Safety Authority website, www.hsa.ie.

*Des Brandon.
Managing Director of T
Brandon Agencies Ltd.
Member of European
Standards Committee
(CEN) for Fall Protection
Equipment.*

Update from the Health and Safety Authority

Gavin Lonergan, Head of Communications with the Health and Safety Authority, writes about the new Manual Handling and People Handling Instruction training standards.

New manual handling and people handling instruction training standards have recently been developed by the HSA in conjunction with FETAC (Further Education and Training Awards Council). The development of these new standards is only one element of a proposed new manual handling training system to be rolled out over the next two years.

Background

A review of manual handling training in Ireland, which included a survey of training providers and a public consultation process, concluded that there was a need for new training standards and a system or process to quality assure training providers who deliver manual handling or people handling instructor training programmes.

The review identified variations in the consistency of manual handling training and the skills of those who delivered training. It also highlighted a need for clear manual handling instruction standards and a system or process for registration of training providers.

In June 2006 a Manual Handling Training Advisory Group chaired by Frank Power, Projects Manager was established by the HSA. Since then the group has worked in conjunction with FETAC on the development of the new Manual Handling Instruction Standards.

Main Elements of New Standards

When the Manual Handling Training Advisory Group was set up, it was primarily focused on the development of standards. However, as the work of the group evolved it became clear that there were a number of elements in the development of a new manual handling training system including:

- Development of two new FETAC Level 6 Special Purpose Certificates for Manual Handling Instruction and People Handling Instruction.
- Agreement on a policy on the need for FETAC Registration for Training Providers who currently deliver Instructor Training Programmes.
- Agreement on a validation process to be used by FETAC to determine if new Instructor training programmes submitted are consistent with the requirements of the relevant Level 6 standard.
- Agreement on a process for Recognition of Prior Learning for existing Instructors.

Development of New Standards

Under the new system, it will be expected that all new manual handling or people handling instructors will attain a FETAC level 6 Specific Purpose Award. The training programmes for these FETAC Level 6 awards can only be delivered by a FETAC-registered training provider.

Registration of Training Providers

Registered training providers are responsible for delivering courses based on FETAC standards and for providing fair and consistent assessment of learners. As part of the new system,

training providers who want to develop a FETAC Level 6 Instruction training programme will need to apply to become quality assured FETAC-registered training providers. The FETAC website at www.fetac.ie outlined the process required to become a registered provider.

Training Programme Validation

As part of the validation process, the FETAC-registered training provider will have to submit an application that includes outline details of the proposed training programme and assessment methodology. FETAC will assess the programme by cross-referencing it to the relevant Level 6 standard and, if everything is in order, FETAC will grant approval and the training provider can then offer the programme to new candidates.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

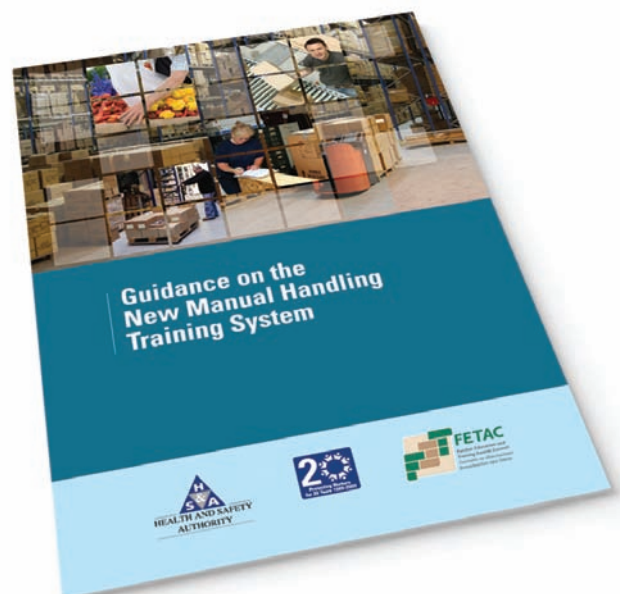
RPL is the process by which prior learning is given a value. RPL will be offered to people across all workplaces who currently provide manual handling or people handling instruction.

Timeframe

It is expected that the new standards will be approved before the end of this year. In the first half of 2010 the Manual Handling Training Advisory Group will work closely with FETAC to finalise arrangements for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process. It will take time for everyone to understand the different elements of the new system and the Advisory Group is conscious of this fact and will make every effort to manage the implementation of this new system in an organised fashion.

There will be a phased in transition period of two years where the HSA will recognise both new FETAC Instructors and existing Instructors. This is to allow training organisations become registered with FETAC and to allow existing Manual Handling Instructors go through the RPL process. By 2012 it would be expected that all Manual or People Handling Instructors will have a FETAC level 6 Award in Manual or People Handling Instruction.

For further information visit www.hsa.ie or www.fetac.ie.



Going from strength to strength

IOSH Ireland is making the voice of health and safety professionals heard, and there's plenty more to look forward to.

Health and safety can be a lonely business. Many organisations have only one health and safety practitioner, and geographical location alone can make it difficult to share experiences and discuss ideas with other professionals. But in the work of these practitioners, the safety of employees is at stake, and it's crucial that they can get together and share best practice with each other.

Organisations like the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) play a vital role here – and there's ample evidence of that in Ireland. Since it was founded, IOSH Ireland has grown from a handful of members to almost 2,000. It now covers five districts and five specialist sectors so that every member has a local group where they can help to make the voice of Ireland's health and safety community heard. The past few months have given us a lot to be proud of, and there's also plenty to look forward to as we continue to raise the profile of health and safety and share good practice.

Making a mark

Ireland's health and safety practitioners are truly making their mark, with two IOSH Ireland members receiving significant honours over the past few months.

Herbert Mulligan received IOSH's highest award when he was named Safety Person of the Year at Dublin's Merrion Hotel in October. A Chartered member of IOSH, Herbert is founder and editor

of leading Irish health and safety journal, *Health and Safety Review*, as well as being a tireless champion of the profession on the lecturing and speaking circuit.

In September, Martin O'Halloran, chief executive of the Health and Safety Authority and one of Ireland's first ever health and safety professionals, was made an Honorary Vice-President of IOSH.

"I am very pleased to be honoured by such a well regarded international organisation," said Martin. "I remain committed to the improvement of health and safety performance in Irish workplaces and to contribute to the setting of international standards."

Sharing ideas

That commitment is clearly shown in the events IOSH Ireland is organising over the coming months. Martin O'Halloran will be among the speakers at 'Work in progress!', the 14th annual conference of IOSH Ireland's Southern District in Cork on 18 November. The conference will explore important developments in workplace health and safety, including protecting vulnerable employees, workplace transport, getting your point across in safety training, fire safety and drug testing.

This is the type of event that can be invaluable to safety practitioners, transport and fleet managers and safety representatives – in fact, to anyone interested in health, safety and welfare. It promises to be a great event, and all are welcome.

IOSH Ireland members can

also look forward to a series of CPD workshops. Western District members can take part in the event in Limerick on 25 November, which includes three workshop sessions, each limited to 20 participants. Sligo plays host to a CPD workshop for the North Western District on 26 November.

The year seems to be flying by, and the 2010 IOSH Ireland Branch Annual Conference is on the horizon. The conference will be held on 23 June 2010 in the Radisson Hotel, Galway, a great location with easy travel access both by road and rail.

Add your voice

There's an old saying that every one of us has a novel inside them – well, it's also true that every health and safety practitioner has a wealth of experiences that can highlight upcoming issues and support their fellow practitioners.

IOSH Ireland is looking for health and safety professionals who want to add their experience and expertise to the wealth of information and support available. We'd like to hear from IOSH members and other practitioners who would be interested in speaking at forthcoming Ireland Branch, District and Group events, including the 2010 Ireland Branch Annual Conference. If you're interested, contact Larry Shannon at info@shannonhealthandsafety.com.

Making connections

Anyone looking at the IOSH website lately will have noticed that it's been transformed. IOSH Ireland has a great new webpage on the site, with pages for each



Bruce Phillips, Chair IOSH Ireland



of its districts and groups. It's a place to find out all the latest news and events from Ireland, and over the coming months we'll be including more features and interviews with Irish members. More good news comes from IOSH's Connect e-bulletin, which will be including more Irish news for IOSH Ireland members in the coming year.

Over the coming months we'll continue to share news and resources, and connect members through workshops and events. There's a lot to look forward to as Ireland's health and safety community continues to go from strength to strength.

SIPTU's Safety and Health Adviser, Sylvester Cronin, writes about the Politics of Risk Assessment



Sylvester Cronin

The 1st November 2009 marked the 20th year of the introduction of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989.

The significance of the enactment of this legislation was that for the first time in Ireland we had occupational safety and health legislation that applied and was designed to protect 100% of workers in Irish workplaces. Prior to this only 20% (approx.) of workers were covered, mainly in factories, construction, mines & quarries, etc.

The same date above also marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) where the inspectorate moved out of the Department of Labour. This again was a significant development and the Board of the Authority was tripartite in nature, following the progressive model of the then European Community.

Trade Unions believed that the occasion should have been commemorated, tempered with the knowledge that workers continue to be killed, maimed and loose

their health because of work-related reasons at needlessly high numbers in Irish workplaces as a result of preventable accidents and incidents. In the past 20 years more than 1,200 workers have been killed needlessly inside Irish workplaces as a result of preventable accidents, which represent the total of our official statistics for fatalities.

Some international bodies, such as the ILO and European Agency for Safety and Health at Work have estimated, that the overall levels of worker-deaths are many multiples more, when work-related illnesses and diseases are taken account of. These estimated figures are in the public domain for a number of years now.

For 2001 the ILO estimated in the report *"Decent Work – Safe Work"* that the total work-related mortality for Ireland was 1,298. For 2003, the European Agency for Occupational Safety and Health produced figures, again for Ireland that indicated that the work-related mortality was 1,413.

If these figures are fairly representative of the real situation in relation to occupational safety and health we are possibly looking at a total of somewhere in excess of 21,000 work-related deaths in Ireland over the last 20 years.

It is interesting to note that from the period 2001 to 2003 the working population increased by 3% whereas the estimated numbers of work-related mortality increased

by 9%. This should have set alarm bells ringing in Ireland, but it seems that such dire estimates are ignored as there is no consequential public debate at all. Workers in Ireland surely deserve better.

At a time when economic competitiveness is crucial for a whole host of reasons we seem to be completely ignoring the significant loss of productivity due to poor safety and health standards at the level of the workplace. It is broadly estimated that the cost of poor safety and health is costing the Irish economy around €3.6 billion, which is equivalent to just over 2.5% of national income".

(Reference; *"Report on Economic Impact of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Legislation"* (Indecon Report, August 2006) A modest saving in this area could be hugely beneficial to our overstrained economy and save a lot of the current strife that is causing so many workers so much pain.

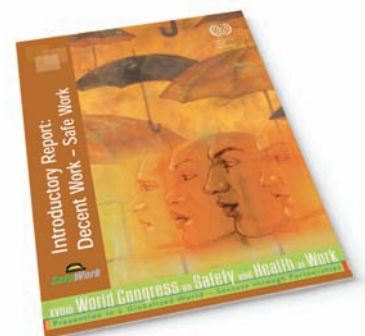
In the year 2007 there were 1.9m workdays lost due to work-related accidents, diseases and illnesses. This was three-hundred and twenty-two (322) times higher than the days lost through industrial strikes.

As any good safety and health practitioner will tell you the cornerstone of preventing these massive work-related deaths, accidents, diseases, illnesses, etc is to have effective risk assessments, as is the legal obligation in Ireland and

throughout the European Union. Of course an effective risk assessment must be in writing, as is the legal requirement, otherwise how can anyone refer to it to ensure its effectiveness, how can it be reviewed, even in the continuous improvement cycle that so many businesses depend on for growth and prosperity?

It is almost self-evident that all employers are not carrying out their legal obligations. Instead within the EU there are efforts, afoot, to reduce this legal obligation to carry out 'life and limb' saving written risk assessments. There is no case, business, social or moral, to reduce the requirements for written risk assessments, judging by the unacceptably number of workers being killed from work-related factors when everything is taken account of.

Workers must be aware that developments are taking place to do away with the requirement to have written risk assessments in SMEs'. Will it stop there? It is my belief that workers should stand up for their rights and demand that such deteriorations in requirements to have written risk assessment must not be allowed to take place.



Help on VDU/DSE assessments, pregnant employees and lone working

Brian O'Connor answers members' queries.



Question 1

I am the employer of an office which employs ten staff. Most of the work carried out in the office is in front of a computer screen. Can you please tell me if (a) I must carry out a VDU/DSE risk assessment, and, (b) it is sufficient to provide employees with a checklist so they can carry out an assessment of themselves?

Answer 1

(a) An employer must carry out an analysis of the employee's workstation if the employee:

- (i) has no choice but to use the VDU to carry out his / her work,
- (ii) normally uses the VDU for continuous periods of more than one hour, or,
- (iii) generally uses the VDU on a daily basis.

This analysis must be documented and must be carried out by a competent person. The analysis must take account of schedule 4 to the General Application Regulations 2007 and includes requirements on equipment, environment and employee / computer interface.

Employees who are entitled to an analysis of their workstation as above, must also:

- be trained in the use of their workstation and be given information about health and safety factors,
- have periodic breaks or changes of routine, away from VDUs,
- be informed by their employer that they are entitled to an appropriate eye and eyesight test (or may opt for either) before working with VDUs and at regular intervals; if at any time working with VDUs an employee experiences visual difficulties he or she has a similar entitlement.

If, as a result of the eye test, the employee requires particular lenses for VDU work then the costs of minimum requirement frames and lenses must be borne by the employer. However, if the employee already wears glasses to correct a visual defect and these glasses are adequate also for VDU work then the employer is not liable as regards meeting the cost.

(b) A checklist may be used to give the person carrying

out the analysis an initial idea of the risks involved with each workstation. However, a checklist is not sufficient to allow employees complete a physical analysis of their own workstation. This analysis must be completed by a competent person. A person is deemed to be competent if he / she possesses sufficient training, experience and knowledge appropriate to the nature of the work to be undertaken. A copy of the completed analysis should be given to the employee for their records and for further follow up where required. This is to ensure that all outstanding actions are addressed.

For further information on this topic please view the Guide to the General Application Regulations 2007, Chapter 5 of Part 2: Display Screen Equipment.

Question 2

I own a large supermarket and one of my employees has just informed me that she is pregnant. Am I required to take any action to fulfill my safety, health and welfare requirements?

Answer 2

As an employer you must assess the specific risks posed to the pregnant employee and ensure she is not exposed to physical agents such as ionising radiation or vibration, chemical agents which may cause cancer and anything else in the workplace referred to in Part A of Schedule 8 of the General Application Regulations 2007, that will damage either her own safety



Brian O'Connor, NISO

or health or that of her developing child. The nature, degree and duration of the exposure to any agent, process or working condition must also be determined.

The employer must appoint a competent person to carry out this assessment. A competent person is defined in the Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, Section 2 of Part 1 as, "For the purpose of the relevant statutory provisions, a person is deemed to be a competent person where, having regard to the task he or she is required to perform and taking account of the size or hazards (or both of them) of the undertaking or establishment in which he or she undertakes work, the person possesses sufficient training, experience and knowledge appropriate to the nature of the work to be undertaken".

The employer must assess any risk to safety or health likely to arise from exposure of a pregnant employee to an agent or working condition listed in Part B of Schedule 8 of the General Application Regulations 2007, this includes work with pressurisation chambers, rubella, toxoplasma, lead and lead substances and underground mine work. Night work must also be considered when carrying out the risk assessment, if the pregnant employee has a



medical certificate stating she should not perform any night work due to health and safety reasons then the employer must remove her from night work by either transferring her to day duties or granting her leave.

If the risk assessment identifies a risk to the pregnant employee, then the employer must take the following practical steps to avoid the risk:

1. Adjust the working conditions and/or hours of work. For example, if the pregnant employee is a cleaner and it is a cleaning product that poses a risk, it may be possible to replace this cleaning product with one which will not harm the pregnant employee or her developing child. If step one does not remove the risk then follow step two.
2. Provide suitable alternative work. For example, if the pregnant employee's role is to stack shelves on the shop floor and the handling of loads is posing a risk, the employer may

consider moving the pregnant employee to the check out area. If step two is not possible or does not remove the risk then follow step 3.

3. The employer should assist the employee in receiving health and safety leave under section 18 of the Maternity Protection Act 1994.

The employer, as well as having specific responsibilities for pregnant employees, also has specific responsibilities towards post natal and breastfeeding employees. For further information please view the Guide to the General Application Regulations 2007, Chapter 2 of Part 6: Protection of Pregnant, Post Natal and Breastfeeding Employees.

Question 3

I work in a joinery and use machinery such as a rip saw, overhead router and edge bander. My employer and another employee are usually away in the van all day fitting work tops, etc...

which are prepared in the workshop. This means I am left in the workshop on my own; taking account of the risks involved with the machinery is it safe for one person to be left working in this environment?

Answer 3

As per the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, the employer must undertake a risk assessment of the workplace. The risk assessment will investigate the hazards present, the risks involved with these hazards, the maximum severity posed, the frequency of exposure and the probability that the hazard could cause harm, controls already in place and additional controls required. The employer will use this risk assessment to assess if the employee is at a significantly higher risk when working alone.

Possible measures to minimise the risk to lone workers include:

- a mode of communication such as a mobile phone,
- periodic checks,
- automatic warning devices

- such as a panic alarm,
- instruction and training,
- use of personal protective equipment,
- health surveillance, and,
- safe systems of work.

Questions the employer must ask when assessing if it is safe for the employee to work alone are:

- Can one person control the risks of the job?
- Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone?
- Is the person competent to work alone?
- Is there additional training required?
- How can the person be supervised?

If the risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the lone worker to carry out his/her work safely then the employer must provide alternative arrangements which could include employing another person.

For further information on lone working please consult the Health and Safety Authority website, www.hsa.ie.

NISO Mid West Region

Twice a year for the past thirteen years NISO Mid West Region has run a twelve week Foundation Certificate course in Occupational Safety and Health.

Over this period NISO has successfully awarded over 2,000 students and take great pride that this is still ongoing. NISO Mid West Region has developed in-house courses for various organisations and welcomes any companies wishing to receive training in this manner.

At the recent Annual NISO and NISG Safety Awards presentation, Trevor Montgomery, Vice-Chairman of the Mid West Region was presented with an award to acknowledge his efforts, hard work and perseverance in securing HETAC accreditation for NISO run courses in Limerick Institute of Technology. The course was developed in response to demand from previous participants of courses and industry to develop a third level Safety and Health course.

There has been a significant level of demand from Industry for HETAC and FETAC accredited courses over the last two years and this demand is set to increase to the extent that the majority of courses provided by NISO will be accredited. Trevor Montgomery worked closely with Ms Michelle McKeon Bennett, Head of Science in Limerick Institute of Technology, to work through the HETAC requirements. The Higher Certificate in Science (Occupational Safety and Health) (HETAC

Level 6) has been approved by an external panel to run at Limerick Institute of Technology and the course will commence in January 2010. It is proposed that the course will operate fulltime by day and part-time by night. The Mid West Region is planning to conduct a workshop in the winter in relation to the Higher Certificate.

The Mid West Region have a number of courses approved by LIT for their Lifelong Learning programme. These courses include:

- Occupational Health & Safety
- Basic Manual Handling Course
- Certificate of Competence in Workplace Noise Assessment
- Health & Safety for the Non-Safety Specialist
- Risk Assessment & Safety Statement Course
- Safety Representative Course

Please email Niamh Mooney, Secretary NISO Mid West Region on midwest@niso.ie for further information regarding in-house training or the workshop in relation to the Higher Certificate.



Trevor Montgomery receiving recognition from NISO President, Paucic Corrigan, and NISO Vice-President, Bill Kelly, for his work involving the HETAC course

National Irish Safety Organisation Upcoming Events – www.niso.ie



Courses in NISO Training Centre, Ballymount, Dublin 12

Please keep an eye on our website www.niso.ie for forthcoming courses and dates in 2010.

Safety Representative Course (Course length: 3 days)

Manual Handling Instructor & Assessor Course (Course length: 5 days, 3 days on week 1 and 2 days on week 2)

Manual Handling Instructor & Assessor Refresher Course
(Course length: 2 days)

Basic Manual Handling Course
(Course Length: Half day)

Safe Pass Course (Course Length: 1 day) December 11th

Occupational First Aid Course FETAC Level 5 (Course Length: 3 days)

Occupational First Aid Refresher/Re-Certification Course FETAC Level 5 (Course Length: 1 day)

VDU/DSE Assessors Course
(Course Length: 1.5 days)

NISO Safety & Health at Work FETAC Level 5 (Course length: 40 hours)

NISO Occupational Safety and Health Certificate (in the regions)

- Limerick Institute of Technology, 19 January 2010, midwest@niso.ie
- Institute of Technology Tralee, 27 January 2010, south@niso.ie

- Cork Institute of Technology, 28 January 2010, south@niso.ie

- GMIT Galway Campus 9 February 2010, shaughnessy@eircom.net

- Athlone Institute of Technology, Date in 2010 TBC, for more information please contact sreidy@ait.ie

Higher Certificate in Science (Occupational Safety & Health) (HETAC Level 6)

Limerick IT, starting in January 2010. A workshop will be organised this winter prior to the course starting. For more information, please contact Niamh Mooney on 061 483 260, or email midwest@niso.ie.

Regional AGMs

Midwest region

15 December 2009 at 20:00 hrs in the Greenhills Hotel, Limerick. For more information please contact midwest@niso.ie

Midland region

17 December 2009 at 20:00 hrs in the Creggan Court Hotel, Athlone. For more information please contact midland@niso.ie

North Western region

18 January 2010 at 20:00 hrs in the Mill Park Hotel, Donegal. For more information please contact northwest@niso.ie

South Eastern region

Date to be confirmed, for more information please contact southeast@niso.ie

NISO National AGM

17 April 2009, NISO Training Centre, Ballymount, Dublin 12

NISO / NISG Health and Safety Awards Submission

Date to be confirmed

NISO/NISG All Ireland Health and Safety Quiz

24 April 2009, Belfast

NISO National Health and Safety Conference and Awards Ceremony

30 September and 1st October, Midland Region

Southern Region AGM

Held on 24 November 2009 in the Oriel House Hotel, Ballincollig Co. Cork. For more information please contact south@niso.ie

Eastern Region

Held on 3 December 2009 in the Citywest Hotel, Saggart, Co Dublin. For more information please contact east@niso.ie

Western Region

Held on 7 December 2009 in the Oranmore Lodge Hotel, Oranmore, Co. Galway. For more information please contact west@niso.ie

North Eastern region

Held on 11 December 2009 in the Fairways Hotel, Dundalk, Co Louth. For more information please contact northeast@niso.ie



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