

National Irish Safety Organisation

# Update!



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

SUMMER 2010



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## THE ROUTE TO SAFE MAINTENANCE

National Irish Safety Organisation

# Update!

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# NISO President reports strong activities in the first half of 2010

**NISO Update celebrates its first anniversary in electronic format. As anticipated, the electronic format has resulted in a larger circulation internally within member companies and organisations through the ease of its accessibility.**

Our annual general meeting was held on April 17th last at our head office in Calmount, Dublin. It is hoped that the 2011 AGM may be held in conjunction with the NISO national quiz final. At the executive meeting immediately following the AGM, I was re-appointed as president of NISO for my second term of office. In my present term of office at the turn of a new decade for NISO, it is my goal to promote NISO to be the premier organisation for providing and supporting occupational health and safety in the Irish workplace in keeping with the national strategy.

On the 24th of April last, a successful quiz final was held in the Wellington Park Hotel, Belfast, which was hosted by our sister group, the Northern Ireland Safety Group (NISG). I would like to sincerely thank all those who supported and participated in the All Ireland quiz final. This year a new perpetual trophy for the previous entrants was commissioned in memory of the late Kevin Harty R.I.P., Southern Region. The trophy was presented by Kevin's wife Breda and his son Kevin Junior.

Our annual conference this year will take place on the 1st of October in the Radisson Blu Hotel, Athlone, and will be hosted by our Midlands region. Planning for the conference is at an advanced stage. There will be an international panel of speakers, including speakers from the United States of America, Great Britain and both Northern and Republic of Ireland. The theme of this year's conference is, "Maintenance of Health and Safety through Prevention".

Our annual safety awards numbers are on the increase this year. 2009 was a record year for safety awards submissions but the 2010 submissions have surpassed previous years. NISO held a number of workshops in relation to the safety awards submissions earlier this year. These workshops proved highly successful and it is my belief that they contributed to the increasing number of submissions. The forgotten few, those busy adjudicators are now busy as beavers working their way through the submissions. Thanks!

Health and safety legislation may be facing a challenge. At the end of 2009, NISO made a submission on the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes, ("An Bord Snip Nua"), recommendations in relation to the merger of the Health and Safety Authority with the National Employment Rights Authority. To date we have received no response in relation to this.

A workshop was due to take place on June 15th 2010, hosted by the Department of Enterprise Trade and Innovation. This workshop, which was cancelled, was to deal with the 243 million euro administrative costs burden that health and safety regulations impose on Irish business. The source of this information is contained in a Government commissioned report which suggests that it would like to see this burden on industry reduced by 25% by the year end 2012. However, a previous Government report (Indecon report) stated that poor health and safety standards in Irish workplaces cost 3.5 billion euro. NISO believes that the workshop which was due to



*Pauric Corrigan, President, National Irish Safety Organisation*

take place on the 15th of June will be re-convened at a later date. The safety community needs to be alert and debate that any savings proposed or recommended are for all the right reasons. It could be said that in difficult times when corners may be cut, that greater regulation and enforcement is required.

On the 1st of June, the Construction Safety Partnership launched its SMP20 Safety Management Pack for Small Contractors with 20 or Less Employees. The SMP20 provides guidance and methodology for establishing and maintaining an effective management system for small contractors who work for larger contractors and for clients who require the services of smaller contractors. I would encourage all contractors and clients using their services to attend the workshops that will be run by the Construction Safety Partnership over the coming months. Dates are available from the Construction Safety Partnership website [www.csponline.ie](http://www.csponline.ie).

*Pauric Corrigan, President, National Irish Safety Organisation.*



# SMP 20

The Safety Management Pack for Contractors with Twenty or Less Employees (SMP20) has been developed through the Construction Safety Partnership and the various representatives affiliated to the partnership.

The SMP20 will assist the smaller contractor to manage site health and safety. The small contractor sector accounts for the largest number of workplace accidents and fatalities within the construction industry.

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) as part of the Construction Safety Partnership welcomes SMP 20 as the roadmap for small contractors to manage safety and health by providing information, templates, checklists, worked examples and guidance in a structured and user friendly way.

According to Minister for Labour Affairs and Public Service Transformation, Dara Calleary, T.D., "The Safety Management Pack will contribute greatly to the observance of the construction regulations because of the simple and logical way in which the pack is set out".

Gavin Lonergan, head of communications with the Health and Safety Authority, writes in further detail about the SMP20 on page eight of this edition of the NISO Update.



NISO has produced its first poster in the Irish language, the Health and Safety Law Poster.

The poster is entitled **"Sábháilteacht agus Sláinte ag an Obair - Cad ba cheart a bheith ar eolas agat?"**

The poster is available from the sales department of NISO.

## Get a Grip – Stop Slips and Trips

The HSA have produced a short guide to help prevent slips, trips and falls in the workplace.

Every year hundreds of people are injured by slipping, tripping or falling and many are left with painful injuries. Slip, trip and fall accidents account for about one in five of all accidents reported to the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) and are the second highest cause of accidents.

The "Get a Grip – Stop Slips and Trips" short guide provides practical, easy-to-implement safeguards. It has three pages of practical advice and a simple checklist to allow any-sized business to tackle slips and trips.

The short guide is free to download from the HSA website, [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie).

## HSA Safety Alert on Grain Storage Structures

Owners and operators of facilities which have grain storage structures (elevator shafts, bins and silos), are advised by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) to be aware that such structures may be confined spaces due to their enclosed construction.

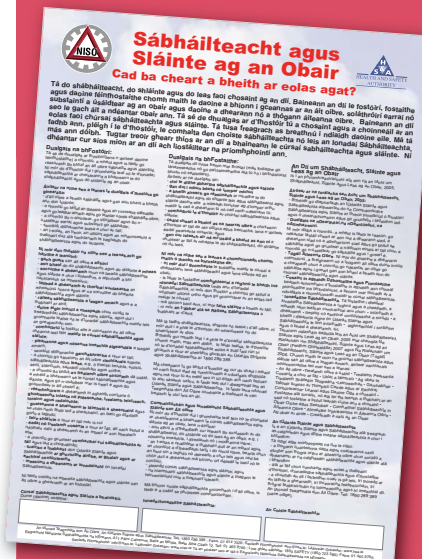
Activities associated with entry to these spaces needs to be assessed as part of the safety management system in line with the Code of Practice for Working in Confined Spaces.

Storage structures for grain have significant hazards associated with them. All operators and owners should ensure that storage structures are sufficiently ventilated

and controls are in place to ensure the safety of personnel entering these structures. Personnel should be adequately trained with appropriate emergency procedures and equipment in place.

Never enter a confined space to rescue a worker who has collapsed unless the proper personal protection equipment is available and you have received the appropriate training on confined space entry.

The HSA Code of Practice for Working in Confined Spaces can be downloaded from the HSA website, [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie).



# Revised Guidance on Signs Regulations

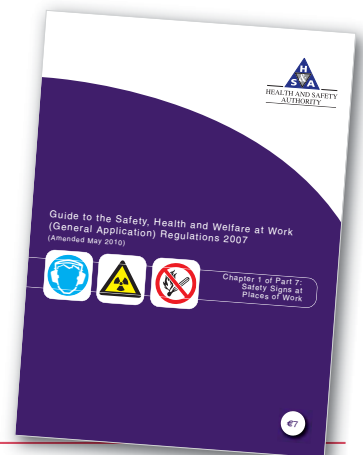
The HSA have revised the Guidelines on the Safety Signs at Places of Work Regulations.

The Guidelines have been amended following a decision of the Board of the Health and Safety Authority in October 2009. The actual 2007 Regulations themselves do not change. Nevertheless, the HSA does not consider it necessary to replace, or physically separate the text and pictogram of any existing safety signs by January 2011.

All the changes to the guidance are highlighted and noted in frames headed 'Amendment 05/2010'. The changes are explained in words and illustrated. The guidance makes it clear that words should not be incorporated into a signboard. If a text explanation is deemed necessary, then it should be incorporated by means of a

supplementary signboard. However, the signboard with associated text can be located together on the same "carrier".

The Guidelines on the Safety Signs at Places of Work Regulations can be downloaded from the HSA website, [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie).



## HSA Safety Alert on the Use of Man-Riding Footboards on Refuse Collection Vehicles (R.C.V.)

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) have issued a safety alert to inform employers and employees about the significant risks associated with the use of Man-riding footboards on Refuse Collection Vehicles (RCV's).

Where footboards on RCV's are not compliant with the requirements of the Irish Standard IS EN1501-1:1998+A2:2009 this may compromise the safety of employees using them. After considering the available alternative options the HSA encourages employers against the use of man-riding footboards on refuse collection vehicles due to the significant risks that arise.

Where an employer decides to continue with the use of Man-riding footboards then Irish Standard IS EN1501-1:1998+A2:2009 applies.

For further information please view the HSA website at [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie).

## 79% of European Managers Concerned by Work-Related Stress



Results from a European workplace health and safety survey show that 79% of European managers are concerned by work-related stress, but less than a third of companies have set procedures to deal with it.

According to EU-OSHA Director Jukka Takala, speaking at the mid-term review conference of the Community Strategy for Health and Safety at Work (2007 - 2012), "The ESENER survey highlights the importance of providing effective support for

enterprises to tackle stress, which will be crucial in ensuring we have the healthy productive workforce needed to boost European economic performance and competitiveness".

ESENER shows that workplaces with employee participation are much more likely to see successful health and safety measures implemented. 84% of companies with formal on-site employee representation have an occupational safety and health (OSH) policy or

action plan, compared to only 71% of companies without formal representation. Measures to deal with psychosocial risks such as violence, stress and bullying are applied about twice as frequently by enterprises consulting their employees than by those designing their measures without the participation of employees.

For further information please view the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work website at [www.osha.europa.eu/en](http://www.osha.europa.eu/en).

# The Route to Safe Maintenance

**Maintenance is a process that affects every area of health and safety. Failure to maintain the work environment and poor standards of maintenance are a major cause of occupational diseases and accidents.**

Many accidents happen during maintenance work, due to lack of maintenance (e.g. slips, trips and falls) or as a result of poor quality maintenance and maintenance management.

Thus, maintenance influences health and safety at work in two ways:

1. Regular maintenance, correctly planned and carried out, is essential to keep equipment, machines and the work environment safe and reliable – eliminates workplace hazards.
2. Maintenance is a high risk activity - it has to be performed in a safe way, with appropriate protection of maintenance workers and other people present in the workplace.

## Maintenance related hazards and risks

Proper maintenance is essential for managing workplace hazards and risks. Yet maintenance itself is a high risk activity. It is estimated that 10-15% of fatal accidents at work, and 15-20% of all accidents, are connected with maintenance. In some sectors, over half of all accidents are maintenance related.

Maintenance workers are much more likely than other employees to be exposed to a wide variety of hazards – chemical, physical, biological and psychosocial. The effects on their health can be acute or chronic, and can include

occupational disease, serious injury or death.

## Major disasters due to bad maintenance

**Texas City Refinery disaster** – on March 23rd 2005 at 1:20 pm, the BP Texas city refinery suffered one of the worst industrial disasters in recent U.S. history.

Explosions and fires killed 15 people, injured another 180, alarmed the community and resulted in financial losses exceeding \$1.5 billion.

**Bhopal disaster** – on the nights of the 2nd and 3rd of December 1984, water inadvertently entered the methyl isocyanate (MIC) storage tank where over 40 metric tons of MIC were being stored. The addition of water to the tank caused a runaway chemical reaction resulting in a rapid rise in pressure and temperature. The heat generated by the reaction, the presence of higher than normal concentrations of chloroform and the presence of an iron catalyst produced by the corrosion of the stainless steel tank wall, resulted in a reaction of such momentum, that gases formed could not be contained by safety systems.

The death toll now stands at some 20,000 and more than 100,000 people continue to suffer the effects of exposure to the gas.

**Piper Alpha disaster** – the Piper Alpha oil rig disaster,

which occurred in 1988, remains the worst ever oil rig accident. Of the 226 men on board the platform at the time only 61 survived. Two crewmen on a rescue boat also perished and 30 bodies were never recovered. The pressure safety valve on 'condensate pump A' was removed for maintenance. Paperwork was completed by the engineer prohibiting the pump from being used in the meantime but this was either lost or misplaced. This event laid the foundation for the worst oil rig accident in history up to then.

These events are extreme examples but demonstrate that results can be catastrophic without the proper co-ordination of the maintenance process. Similar stories could be told in every industry sector throughout the EU. Accidents and ill health resulting not from 'Acts of God', but for the reason that health and safety aspects were not considered when maintenance activities were being planned, or because proper maintenance had not been carried out.

## Risk assessment

The sequence of events may not always be easy to trace, but in many cases, accidents and ill health in the workplace happen because adequate risk assessments had not been carried out, or because maintenance has been overlooked.

Given the hazards and risks associated with maintenance,



*Kenneth O'Reilly, representative of MEETA, the Irish Maintenance Society on the European Federation of National Maintenance Societies*

there is a need to:

- Raise awareness of the importance of safe maintenance as well as of the importance of maintenance for safety and health (given the number of accidents/occupational diseases occurring in a work-related context and the human and financial costs of such accidents/diseases).
- Foster a structured approach to safety management in maintenance, where:
  - safety aspects are considered in all phases of maintenance management, starting with the planning of maintenance activities,
  - appropriate risk assessment is carried out and preventive measures are taken,
  - there are clear roles and responsibilities to identify and address the problems,
  - appropriate guidelines are followed and records kept, and,
  - where checks (inspections and tests) are carried out to ensure maintenance is done timely and properly.
- Promote safety management in maintenance to ensure that maintenance is coordinated, scheduled and performed correctly as planned in order that the equipment is left in a safe condition for continued operation.

**Safe Maintenance Campaign**  
The Healthy Workplaces



Campaign 2010 – 2011, organised by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, supports a wide range of activities at national and European level that promote safe maintenance. In Ireland, it is coordinated by the Health and Safety Authority in conjunction with MEETA.

The main objectives of the safe maintenance campaign are:

- Raise awareness of the importance of maintenance for workers' health and safety, of the risks associated with maintenance and the need to carry it out safely.
- Raise awareness of employers' legal and other responsibilities to carry out safe maintenance, and the business case for doing so.

- Promote a simple, structured approach to safety management in maintenance, based on an appropriate risk assessment.

The ultimate aim is to help reduce the number of people being injured or experiencing ill health as a result of inadequate maintenance or lack of maintenance, now and in the future.

## Campaign events

There are a series of events, conferences, seminars and workshops planned throughout Ireland to promote improved health and safety in maintenance.

They will have five objectives:

1. Raising awareness,
2. Providing information,

3. Developing and providing access to resources,
4. Encouraging activities that have an impact on the workplace, and,
5. Identifying and recognising good practice.

There will be Good Practice Awards in occupational health and safety. These awards recognise those organisations that have found innovative ways of making consistent safe maintenance a routine part of their workplace management. European winners will be chosen in two categories: workplaces with 100 or fewer workers, and those with more than 100 workers.

The success of the safe maintenance campaign

depends on the active support and collaboration of a wide range of maintenance stakeholders and campaign partners. It is necessary for businesses and organisations to get the campaign's key messages across to their suppliers, contractors and neighbours and to encourage them to participate in the campaign. Large enterprises in particular have an interest in helping the smaller ones in their supply chains, working together to share experience and expertise.

For further information on the safe maintenance campaign please view the Health and Safety Authority website at [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie) and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work website at [www.osha.europa.eu](http://www.osha.europa.eu).

# Quiz 2010 Finals and Regional Results

## All Ireland Results

### Previous Entrants Category Winners

**1st Place: Endesa Ireland Ltd.** (representing the South Eastern Region)  
Pat McGovern, Tony Murphy, Fergal Weatherhead,

**2nd Place: Covidien** (representing the Midland Region)  
Colette Breheny, Olaf Lally, Michael Lohan, Joan Scully

**3rd Place: Clarochem** (representing the Eastern Region)  
Brian Hall, Annette Lane, Dervilla Ni Almhain, James Oliver

### Novice Category Winners

**1st Place: Helsinn Birex** (representing the Eastern Region)  
Colm DeBurca, Elizabeth Dunne, Ian Leonard, Niall Ryan

**2nd Place: Abbott Diagnostic Finisklin** (representing the North Western Region)  
Adelle Flood, Sinead Gillespie, Darragh McQuaid, Cormac McNulty

**3rd Place: Elan** (representing the Midland Region)



*Endesa Ireland Ltd, All Ireland Previous Entrants Category Winner*

Sarah Clarke, Ciaran Cuddihy, Teresa Fox, Ian Kelleher



*Helsinn Birex, All Ireland Novice Category Winner*

Endesa Ireland [South Eastern Region]  
ESB Rosbrien [Mid Western Region]  
NACCO Materials Handling Group [Northern Ireland]

## Regional Results

### Previous Entrants Competition

Abbott Ireland Finisklin [North Western Region]  
Abbott Ireland Cootehill [North Eastern Region]  
Clarochem Ireland Limited [Eastern Region]  
Cold Chon (Galway) Ltd. [Western Region]  
Covidien Athlone [Midland Region]

### Novices Competition

Abbott Ireland Cootehill [North Eastern Region]  
Abbott Ireland Finisklin [North Western Region]  
Ballina Beverages [Western Region]  
Elan [Midland Region]  
Gilbert Ash [Northern Ireland]  
Helsinn Birex Pharmaceuticals [Eastern Region]

# From the Top of the Ladder to the Bottom

That's a statement we've all heard from time to time in our lives but for some people it holds more meaning than others. I often sit and think about how easily your life can change and how quickly that fall from the top can be.



James Gorry

I've seen many people take this fall but I never thought I'd be one of them. "Oh that'll never happen to me", think how often you've said that to yourself. Well maybe my story will make you think twice and be more careful.

## Career ladder

While I was at the top of this career ladder I had my own company, a construction firm where I was a hand's on managing director, owner and foreman. This was thankfully during the Celtic Tiger era so business was booming. We carried out many jobs for a vast amount of major clients throughout Ireland. But something else great was happening during these years, not on a building site but at my home.

I have been married for 36 years and have three daughters and a son. I've been fortunate to see my children start their adult lives during the years I had my company. My son became an apprentice brick layer and eventually came to work with me. One of my daughters got a degree in business and moved to Germany and France, my other daughter got a great job with the

HSE and my eldest daughter got married and had a son. Our family was, and still is, a very closely knit unit, but it doesn't take much to see if these family ties can be easily severed.

## The fall

It's been nearly five years now since our family bond was put to the test. On the 15th of October 2005, I unfortunately had my metaphorical and physical fall from the top of this ladder. When you've been working all day and it's time to pack up and head home you quite often can forget the littlest things. For me it was something as simple as the keys of my van, I had left them up on the roof that we had just finished working on. It's a strange feeling to say, "I'll be back in a minute lads, I'm just going to get my keys" and then...you wake up in a hospital bed.

Four or five months is a long time when you have to lie in one place and not be allowed move or do anything. These few months and the months that followed are what really made my family and I what we are today. When you're lying there thinking to yourself. Trying to replay the incident in your head over and over, wondering how it happened, and then the doubt starts to creep in. Will I be able to cope? Will my family be able to cope? How will we get through

this? How's my life ever going to be the same? All these questions went through my head and I'm sure that for anyone who has suffered a similar fate, these questions will be all too familiar.

## My family

I am, as strange as it might be to some people, a very lucky man. Most people would look at me and ask how? But when you're as close to death as I was, you would understand just how lucky I am. I am lucky for a number of reasons, still being here to tell my story is very high on the list but for me, my family is top of that list. My family has helped me an untold amount of times during the last five years. Take my son for example, he had just got a visa to go out and work in Australia for a year, but within his first two weeks out there my accident happened. To his credit, he was on the first flight back home to see what he could do to help me and the family.

Looking back over the last five years, looking at how my life has changed, I can happily say that I am a very happy man and have a new purpose in life. My new purpose is to help people and make sure they stay safe so their life isn't dramatically transformed in an instant. For anyone who looks at me and thinks I lost it all, I'm living proof how you can get back up that ladder.

## SEMINAR: An Accident at Work: What you need to do next

**Speakers:** James Gorry, motivational speaker

Harry Galvin, Health and Safety Consultant and NISO Hon. Secretary

**Venue:** The Gresham Hotel, 23 Upper O'Connell Street, Dublin 1

**Date:** Thursday 2 September 2010

**Registration:** 13:30 hrs. Start at 14:00 hrs to 16:00 hrs

**To Book:** [www.niso.ie/events](http://www.niso.ie/events) or contact Nathalie Delmotte on 01 465 9760

# Update from the Health and Safety Authority

Gavin Lonergan, Head of Communications with the Health and Safety Authority, writes about the Authority's new safety and health roadmap for small construction contractors

## Introduction

SMP20, the new safety management pack for contractors with 20 or less employees recently launched by Dara Calleary, T.D., Minister for Labour Affairs and Public Service Transformation, provides a practical means of creating, implementing and monitoring an effective safety management system on construction sites. By way of providing information, templates, checklists, worked examples and guidance, the document brings the user through the safety management process in a practical and user friendly way.

## Why SMP20?

The SMP20 pack is aimed at companies with 20 or less employees. Through the social partners in the Construction Safety Partnership (CSP), it was identified that this group of employers in particular required assistance in managing site health and safety that would lead to a reduction in accidents, while not overburdening them with cost or beaurocracy.

The statistics paint a very clear picture. In the past 3 years in the construction sector, 76% of the 43 fatal accidents occurred in construction firms with less than 20 workers. In 2009 alone, all 10 fatal accidents in construction involved contractors with 20 or less employees. It is therefore vital that these companies are helped to improve their health and safety management systems in an effective and practical manner.

The effective use of SMP20 will allow a contractor to understand the safety and health responsibilities he has, to risk assess his work and to implement and monitor effective controls. By implementing the SMP20 system, accidents will be reduced as the employer will have assessed plant equipment, training requirements, safe systems of work, etc. and implemented effective controls. Furthermore a system of monitoring and checking these controls will be in place so the risks to employees and others will be greatly reduced into the future.

The employer's legal duties under Section 19 and Section 20 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 and under Section 16 of the SHWW (Construction) Regulations 2006 can be complied with by means of the SMP20 safety management system. The pack demonstrates clearly the employer's duties under these sections of legislation and offers guidance, templates and worked examples of how to comply. With the proactive engagement of a contractor to complete and, if necessary, add to the relevant sections then their legal obligations with regard to risk assessment, safety statement and safety plan can be complied with.

It is worth noting, however, that this document on its own, that is without the relevant sections completed, does not satisfy the requirements of Section 19 and 20 of the Act and Regulation 16 of the Construction Regs. Each user must engage with the document and

work through it, completing the relevant sections, risk assessments, etc. so that it satisfies the legislation. The pack does explain clearly how to do this giving detailed examples and also templates for the user to use.

At €40, the cost of SMP20 to the employer is relatively small and will be available through a wide range of workshops throughout the country over the coming months. Because of the 'hands on' involvement of the contractor in the completion of the document, the end product should be more specific to the work it covers and also the contractor will learn more about safety through his active engagement with the process.

## How it Works

The document is split into 4 steps:

**Step 1 - Basic Information:** This allows the user to create a health and safety policy statement, to identify key roles and responsibilities, to identify training and competency requirements for employees, etc. It also provides relevant information on a variety of issues including safety representatives, welfare requirements, plant and machinery safety, accident reporting and work at a height.

**Step 2 - Risk assessments & Method Statements:** Risk Assessment is the key element to any effective safety management system. For any place of work to be safely managed it is essential that all hazards are identified, the risks





assessed and effective control measures identified and implemented. Step 2 educates the user on risk assessment giving examples of completed forms and a choice of template forms that can be used.

**Step 3 – Work Information:** This deals with on-site duties of the contractors and provides numerous checklists and guidance so that the contractor can monitor compliance. As many small contractors often undertake the role of Project Supervisor Construction Stage (PSCS), there is also a section here to fully explain the requirements of this role and to show how SMP20 can help comply with the PSCS duties and with the requirement for a Safety Plan.

**Step 4 – Appendices:** This consists of eight subsections which allow for effective management of all health and safety related documentation and paperwork. Statutory inspection forms, training registers, insurance details, accident reports, completed risk assessments, method statements, SSWP's and PSCS information can all be stored in this section.

### Conclusion

The SMP20 document has been produced by the social partners through CSP with the purpose of helping employers of 20 or less in the construction sector to establish and maintain an effective safety management system in a practical and cost effective manner.

In order for this document to be effective the contractor must invest time in reading the document and completing the relevant sections. The success of the safety management system will depend on the user's committed and proactive engagement with the pack. It is an extremely valuable tool for the contractor and one the HSA would encourage contractors to use.

The pack will be available from a series of nationwide workshops due to be held in Athlone, Castlebar, Cork, Donegal, Dublin, Dundalk, Galway, Kilkenny, Limerick, Meath, Tipperary and Waterford in the coming months. Anyone interested in attending a workshop should email [smp20@csponline.ie](mailto:smp20@csponline.ie).

# IOSH Ireland focuses on farming health and safety in response to the high number of fatalities in the agricultural sector

There have been 24 workplace fatalities to the 21st June 2010 in Ireland, and of those, 12 have occurred in the agricultural industry, according to figures from the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) website.



Bruce Phillips, Chair IOSH Ireland

These statistics are the latest example of a worrying trend. In August 2008, the HSA released a statement expressing concern that 30% of workplace fatalities in that year had occurred in the farming sector, and in the same year agriculture overtook construction to become the industry with the highest rate of fatalities in Ireland. It has retained that awful distinction ever since.

## Making the case

Every workplace fatality is a tragedy, but the high level of farming-related deaths requires a concerted response to find out what can be done to make the industry safer.

All the agencies that have a role to play in improving safety need to step up to the mark. Initiatives such as the HSA's online risk assessment tool ([www.farmsafely.com](http://www.farmsafely.com)) are excellent developments, but more needs to be done to increase safety levels and lower the number of fatalities.

Safety resources that have been ploughed into the construction industry over the past decade now need to be invested in the farming sector to reduce fatalities and injuries. Over the last five years the construction industry has had notable success in significantly reducing their

fatality rates and this is something that the agricultural sector should seek to emulate. It has been argued that the construction industry's success in reducing the number of workplace fatalities should be attributed to the economic recession and the consequent decline in construction activity. However, this argument doesn't stack up, according to figures published in the specialist magazine *Health and Safety Review*. During a discussion on this topic, the magazine pointed out that while the Central Statistics Office (CSO) estimated the decline in unemployment to be 8.8% between 2008 and 2009, and the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) estimated that economic activity measured by gross domestic product (GDP) had fallen by 7.5% in the same period, workplace fatalities fell by 24%.

The agricultural industry must try to imitate this drop in the number of workplace fatalities.

## Making our mark

Recently the IOSH Ireland Branch South Eastern District held a free seminar on 'Farm health and safety from an international perspective' in conjunction with Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority.

The seminar, which took place on Tuesday 11th of May at Kildalton College, Piltown, was the first event of its kind and hosted speakers including Pat Griffin, a senior inspector with the HSA, who outlined the challenges facing the industry. Other speakers included Dr. David Knowles from the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service (ADAS) Group, and Aoife Osborne of the HSA and a Walsh Fellow in Occupational Health.

The speakers highlighted topics such as the high levels of ill health in the farming community, much of which is inadequately documented. The event was also designed

to enable the Irish rural industries sector to forge ties internationally in order to share experiences and best practice.

Norita Robinson, IOSH's Ireland Development Manager, said: "I'm particularly concerned about this issue because I'm from a farming background myself. Farming accidents are a major problem – agriculture has a far higher fatality rate than any other economic sector in Ireland. I hope this event helped to increase the awareness of health and safety issues in the farming industry, as well as educating people about how they can make their work safer."

## Healthier working

The IOSH Ireland Conference, which will be held on Wednesday 23rd of June at the Radisson Blu Hotel and Spa in Galway, will broaden the discussion from reducing fatalities to making work healthier.

This year's theme is occupational health, and topics to be covered include best practice in delivering workplace occupational health, how to deal effectively with stress and musculoskeletal disorders, and how a healthier workforce can improve your business.

"This is a must-attend conference for professionals to keep in touch with cutting edge developments in safety", said Bruce Phillips, chair of the Ireland branch.

The conference will feature leading politicians and academics as well as expert health and safety practitioners. Speakers will include Minister for Labour Affairs and Public Service Transformation, Dara Calleary, T.D., Professor of Occupational and Environmental Medicine at Manchester University, Raymond Agius, and IOSH President, John Holden.

The event will also be an opportunity to network and to gather information about important health and safety developments.



# NATIONAL IRISH SAFETY ORGANISATION

## 47<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE MAINTENANCE OF HEALTH & SAFETY THROUGH PREVENTION RADISSON BLU ATHLONE

1

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## IRELAND'S PREMIER HEALTH AND SAFETY EVENT

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**DAVID NORRIS**<sub>SENATOR</sub>

**BRAD WITT**<sub>SPERIAN HEARING PROTECTION (USA)</sub>

**DAVID JOYCE**<sub>CWU (UK)</sub>

**DR MICHAEL GILLEN**<sub>PHARMACHEMICAL IRELAND</sub>

**DR MICHAEL PATERSON**<sub>CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST (NI)</sub>

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# Frank Barry, member of the ICTU health and safety committee and a partner in the EU project on nanocap, gives a short introduction to nanotechnology

The purpose of this article is to raise the awareness of workers and health and safety specialists to the uses and applications of nanomaterials in the workplace. The article will provide a small amount of information on nanotechnologies and some of the definitions of nanomaterials that are around and being developed today.

Firstly, nano-science is not new. Scientific researchers have been studying the atomic properties of matter for as long as we can remember. However nanomaterials, such as nanocrystals, nanosize catalysts, and magnetic nanoparticles have been studied for generations for a wide range of applications. Some of the nanotools that are being used in laboratories are not that recent either, for instance, the atomic force microscope (AFM) and the scanning tunnelling microscope (STM) techniques were first introduced to scientists in the early 1980s.

What are new are the methods of investigation by scientists of nanomaterials. It is they who have identified the exceptional properties of matter at the nano-scale level, which can be used to build new materials, systems and devices and surface coatings with properties of matter, capabilities and functions that cannot be used with conventional materials

For these reasons, nanoscience and nanotechnology shouldn't be seen as entirely new, it is a work that builds on the existing foundations of chemistry and physics that are well established in innovation today.

## Nanometer

A nanometer (nm) is 10 to the minus 9, or to describe it another way, a nanometer is a billionth of a meter. Nanotechnology manipulates matter at the atomic or macromolecular level to create and control objects on the nano-scale with the objective of generating new materials, devices and systems that have new properties and functions because of their extremely small size.

The word nanomaterial is a term used to explain an intentionally made

nanomaterial. A nanomaterial is an object that has at least one dimension in the nanometer scale. Nanomaterials are categorised according to their dimensions.

## What makes nano special?

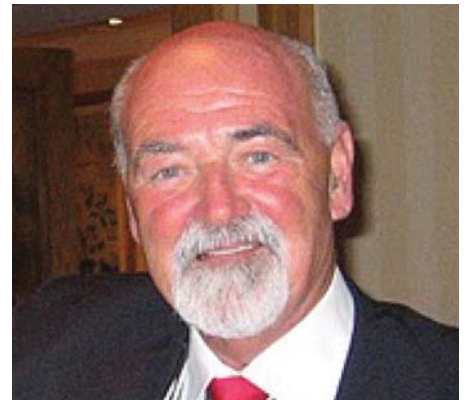
There are various reasons for making this statement. One of the most important is, at the nanoscale, the properties of matter change. This is a direct consequence of the small size of nanomaterials, physically explained as quantum effects. The effects of this is that a material (e.g., a metal), when in nanosize form, can assume properties which are very different from those when the same material is in bulk form. For instance, bulk silver is non toxic, whereas silver particles are capable of killing viruses upon contact. The second exceptional property of nanomaterials is that they can be fabricated atom by atom, with a process called bottom up. Finally, nanomaterials have an increased surface to volume compared to bulk materials.

## Engine of the next industrial revolution

Nanotechnologies have far reaching development and application potential, especially in the fields of biotechnologies and medicine, diagnostic, treatment and prevention, information and communication technologies, miniaturisation energy, more efficient energy storage, conversion and production, agriculture and the environment, soil, water and air clean up, etc.

## Employment potential

It is estimated by Governments around the world and the EU commission, that in terms of employment, nanotechnology development is likely to require an additional two to ten million workers across the world by 2014. Many of these are likely to be created in Europe, mainly in start up companies and SMEs.



Frank Barry

## Health and safety issues

Today, products with nanomaterials present are being placed on the market without knowing whether nanomaterials are being released from them and what their potential impacts on human health and the environment may be. Workers are being exposed to these new materials although it is unknown whether the safety procedures that are in place are adequate or the protection measures applied are sufficient to protect the worker.

There is, however, a growing body of scientific evidence to suggest that some manufactured nanomaterials harbour new and unusual dangers. This is due to smaller particles having a greater-active surface area per unit mass than larger particles. Their toxicity may also increase. This raises the concerns about the potential risks to workers health and the environment.

*Frank Barry is a member of the ICTU Health and Safety Committee, a health and safety specialist, a member of the ETUI workers representative committee on chemicals and the Luxemburg ad hoc Advisory Committee on chemicals.*

# Help on stress and violence in healthcare

Brian O'Connor answers members' queries.

## Question 1

**A member of staff has recently reported that they are suffering from a stress related illness due to work activities. As an employer, do I have a legal responsibility towards this person? Also, what preventative measures can I take to avoid stress?**

## Answer 1

People get confused about the difference between pressure and stress. We all experience pressure regularly which can motivate us to perform at our best. It is when we experience too much pressure and feel unable to cope that stress can result.

Section 8 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 imposes a specific

duty on employers to manage and conduct their activities to prevent any improper conduct or behaviour likely to put the safety, health and welfare of employees at risk. Section 13 of the 2005 Act imposes a corresponding duty on an employee not to engage in improper conduct or behaviour that is likely to endanger his or her own safety, health and welfare at work or that of any other person. There are also obligations on employers and employees in Common Law in terms of a duty of care to protect others from avoidable harm as well as legal obligations under Industrial Relations legislation.

As an employer, you are required by law to assess the risk of stress related ill health

arising from work activities and take action to control that risk - this should be included in your safety statement. A control measure where stress is concerned will mainly involve procedures such as a return to work policy, improved training and development activities, etc.

The Health and Safety Executive designed Management Standards for work-related stress. The Standards refer to six areas of work that can lead to stress if not properly managed. The six areas include:

**Demands** – includes issues such as workload, work pattern and the work environment.



Brian O'Connor, NISO

**Control** – how much input the person has in the way they do their work.  
**Support** – includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.

**Role** – whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.

**Change** – how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

**Relationships** – includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

The following steps have been introduced by the Health and Safety Executive to help employers manage the causes of work-related stress.

- Step 1. Before you start – commitment is required from senior management, from staff and from their representatives.
- Step 2. Identify the risk – any risk from the six areas of work, referred to above, that can have a negative impact on employee health if not properly managed must be identified. These





areas should be incorporated or made reference to in the organisations stress policy documents.

- Step 3. Decide who might be harmed and how – gather and analyse data to help understand the organisation's current situation. Data includes annual staff surveys, sickness absence data, staff turnover rates, exit interviews, number of referrals to occupational health support and information from existing staff forums.
- Step 4. Evaluate the risks – use the results from step 1 and 2 to identify priority areas. Ensure employees and their representatives are involved in discussions as they are often the ones closest to the issues and best placed to suggest improvements.
- Step 5. Record your findings – action plans

must be developed, implemented and communicated to employees.

- Step 6. Monitor and review – monitor the actions in the plan to ensure they are having the desired effect in the appropriate timescale. Should also reflect on what you have found out and how you can improve in the future.

For further information on work related stress please view the Health and Safety Authority website at [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie) and the Health and Safety Executive website at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk).

**Question 2**  
I work in the healthcare sector where assaults seem to happen regularly. Assaults range from minor such as verbal abuse to more serious such as kicking and punching. Is there any action that we as employees or our

**employer can take to prevent these occurrences?**

## Answer 2

Employers are obliged under the Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 to identify the hazards in a workplace, assess the risks to staff and put in place appropriate control measures, this applies to the issue of violence at work as much as any other danger in the workplace.

Control measures include training and instruction in areas such as identifying and calming down potentially violent situations, distraction techniques, non verbal communication and instruction about use of panic buttons. Other controls include:

- Statements concerning the policy towards persons who show aggression to staff should be posted prominently,
- Reception area should be

fitted with a protective barrier/glass panel,

- Plant pots should be plastic,
- TV and tables should be fixed and chairs should be of a design which minimises their use as weapons,
- Where CCTV is used it should be prominent and visible to clients as it acts as a deterrent.
- All incidents of assault in the workplace should be recorded and documented; the Health and Safety Authority must be notified if such incidents result in an employee being absent from work for more than three days or unable to perform their normal work for more than three days.

For further information on violence in the healthcare sector please view the Health and Safety Authority website at [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie) and in particular the HSA's document titled, 'Prevention of Violence in Healthcare'.



# In the Spirit of the Phoenix

The Irish entrepreneurial spirit may possibly be part of our genetic make-up, but most certainly would seem to be linked to our historical experience. The legend of the Phoenix has definitely had an imprint on our collective psyche!



Chris McCormack, Hon. Secretary,  
NISO Midland

When trying to assess the effects of the current economical downturn on the region, it immediately becomes obvious that the midland region is no different to any other Irish region. The well established family-run small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) are struggling to survive; most of them will survive as they have lived through repeated recessions and are skilled at living through changing fortunes. These businesses form the economic framework of our regional towns, they are stable long-term employers, who invest in local development.

## Health and safety management

Health and safety management, for many, has been a victim of the recession. Some of our most ambitious business gurus advise 'minimum expenditure on training' and the cutting down on 'non-essentials such as consultancy'. This is the equivalent of ordaining minimum nutrition during a famine, it can only lead to

certain death. The wise, however, have maintained their training budget at similar levels to previous times of plenty. They know that as the economy improves they will be on the starting line waiting for the bell. The very savvy have gone one step further, returning to college to upskill, a definite win-win move, particularly if these courses are part-time and permit the student to continue working. Self-sufficiency in knowledge is a good choice! Many mature students have returned to safety, health and welfare at work courses because they recognise that in our economic recovery, only compliant organisations will be in the race. Of all the investments to make during a recession, surely health and safety must be a sound one! It will give guaranteed dividends when the economy turns, at an individual and organisational level.

## Certificate course – the seed of success

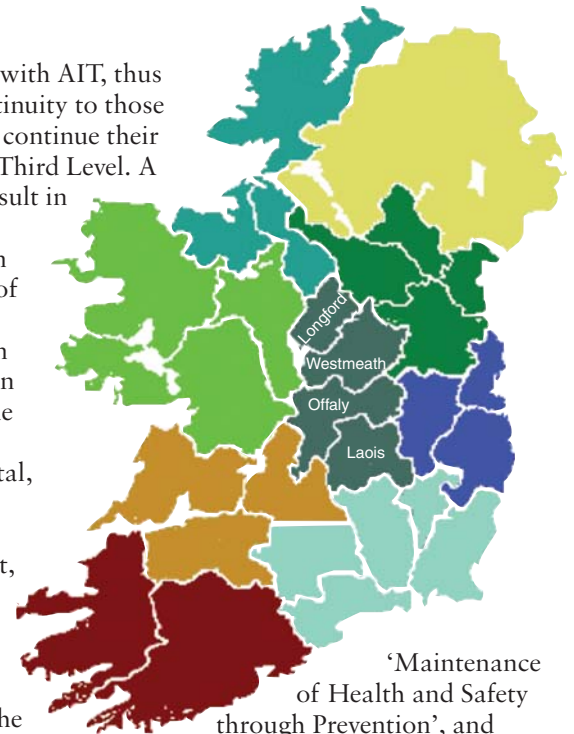
For NISO Midland Region, the recession has made us take a long, hard look at what we provide. The eternal Certificate course in Occupational Safety and Health is offered around the region, via Athlone Institute of Technology, Longford VEC and Tullamore College at break-even price. Our half day seminars in specialist areas are deemed by the user to be "of a high standard and great value for money". We have cemented our

relationship with AIT, thus giving a continuity to those who wish to continue their studies into Third Level. A successful result in the NISO Certificate in OSH is one of the factors considered in the admission process to the B.Sc in Environmental, Health and Safety Management, along with Recognition of Prior Learning as outlined in the college's procedures for mature access. An M.Sc is also taught.

Within the region, we maintain a lively rapport with our members, many of whom we now know individually and who turn up year on year to our activities. Our Regional Quiz launches many individuals into a professional life in health and safety. This is the real spirit and strength of NISO, a network of local people who maintain contact over the course of their professional lives.

## NISO conference

We are currently planning the upcoming NISO conference which will take place at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Athlone on the 1st of October. The conference will focus on the



'Maintenance of Health and Safety through Prevention', and will host a range of international speakers. Those who attend NISO activities do not need to be qualified in any particular discipline, just interested in the promotion of health and safety in the workplace. In the era we are living through, we hope to be in line with our regional economy's recovery programme. And, of course, as with the planning of any NISO activity; protagonism is given to our members and their needs – NISO, after all, belongs to you!

The Midland Regional committee would like to thank our members for their characteristic support and loyalty. As with many issues, this has not changed over the years! Keep in touch, you know where we are!

[midland@niso.ie](mailto:midland@niso.ie)

# National Irish Safety Organisation Events Diary



Please keep an eye on our website [www.niso.ie](http://www.niso.ie) for forthcoming courses in 2010.

## 1. Courses in NISO Training Centre, Ballymount, Dublin 12

**Safety Representative Course**, L22487,  
FETAC Level 5 (Course length: 3 days)  
June 28th, 29th, 30th / August 23rd, 24th,  
25th

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

**Manual Handling Instructor & Assessor  
Refresher Course** (Course length: 2 days)  
August 17th and 18th

**Basic Manual Handling Course** (Course  
Length: Half day)  
July 9th

**Safe Pass Course** (Course Length: 1 day)  
July 2nd / July 9th / July 16th / July 23rd

**Occupational First Aid Course**, FETAC  
Level 5  
(Course Length: 3 days)  
July 5th, 6th, 7th / September 13th, 14th,  
15th

**Occupational First Aid Refresher/Re-  
Certification Course**, FETAC Level 5  
(Course Length: 1 day)  
July 7th / September 15th

## VDU/DSE Assessors Course

(Course Length: 1 day)  
July 19th / September 20th

## Safety & Health at Work, D20165, FETAC Level 5

(Course length: 40 hours)  
Commencing Tuesday 12th October and  
running for 10 weeks on Tuesdays from  
2pm – 6pm

## NISO Occupational Safety and Health Certificate, in the regions

Courses commencing in September or  
October 2010, dates and venues to be  
confirmed

## 2. Seminars in the regions Dublin: An Accident at Work: What you need to do next

September 2nd, The Gresham Hotel,  
Dublin, 13.30hrs

## 3. NISO National Health and Safety Conference

### NISO and NISG Health and Safety Awards Ceremony

### Trade Exhibition: Safety Products and Services

October 1st, Radisson Blu, Athlone,  
Co. Westmeath.



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