

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 2011

## HEALTH PROMOTION

INSIDE

**INTERNATIONAL  
WORKERS'  
MEMORIAL DAY**

**EVENTS DIARY**

**QUIZ 2011  
FINALS AND  
REGIONAL  
RESULTS**



National Irish Safety Organisation

# Update!

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# NISO President Reports

**NISO Update celebrates it's second anniversary in electronic format. Distribution of NISO Update electronically has proved a success with circulation increasing within the member organisations by way of internal networks.**



*Pauric Corrigan, president, National Irish Safety Organisation*

## AGM

Our annual general meeting (AGM), followed by the All-Ireland Safety Quiz final, took place on the 16th of April last in the Clayton Hotel, Galway. Both events were well attended.

Long serving honorary treasurer of the National Irish Safety Organisation (NISO) and chairman of the midland region, Jim Shaw, retired after thirty years involvement with NISO, both at regional and national levels. Jim Shaw had also served a term as the honorary secretary. On behalf of everyone in NISO, we wish Jim a long and happy retirement. Des Brandon from the eastern region committee and a members nominee to the executive committee for many years, is the new honorary treasurer of NISO.

## HSA

The debate on the future of the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) is still in the arena with many groups and individuals within the safety community accepting change has to be made in these turbulent times. The proposed amalgamation of the HSA into the new Business Inspection and Licensing Authority (BILA) is voiced as not being the correct way forward. There are many other statutory bodies that represent safety in the broad context of the word, to name but a few: the

Road Safety Authority, Maritime Safety Directorate and the Irish Aviation Authority.

What is being proposed presently goes against the sentiments of the Barrington Commission report, which states that health and safety should be kept separate from industrial relations. The Government's own Indecon report states quite clearly that poor health and safety was costing the Irish economy 3.6 billion euro per annum. The McCarthy 'An Bord Snip Nua' report suggested merging the HSA with the National Employment Rights Authority (NERA) at an annual saving of 5 million euro. The safety community needs to be clearly consulted on the future of occupational health, safety and welfare so that the correct status is maintained through the excellent work of the HSA, thus being allowed to continue and maintain a presence in the Irish workplace.

## Conference

The NISO annual conference this year will take place on the 7th of October in the Malton Hotel, Killarney. This will be hosted by the southern region committee. The conference, entitled 'Health and Safety in Challenging Times', will include a panel of speakers both national and international.

The closing date has now passed for submissions to the NISO/Northern Ireland Safety Group (NISG) Annual Safety Awards, which will be presented at the gala dinner following the annual conference. NISO held a number of workshops in relation to the safety awards earlier this year. These workshops were well attended and it is my belief that they contributed to the increased number of submissions received.

At this year's safety awards, in conjunction with the Construction Safety Partnership (CSP), a new category of award has been introduced for innovation in construction. This award is aimed at small contractors and sub contractors. To enter the award, a simple application form can be downloaded from the NISO website: [www.niso.ie](http://www.niso.ie).

The closing date for completed application forms to be returned to NISO is Friday, 29th of July. Therefore, if there are any small contractor or sub contractor who has excelled in their approach to health and safety whilst carrying out work on your behalf, then why not take the time to nominate them and complete the application.



# EU Chemicals Chief praises Ireland's approach to Chemical Safety

The executive director of the Helsinki based European Chemicals Agency (ECHA), Mr Geert Dancet, congratulated Ireland for the efficiency and speed that it has introduced the European Union wide REACH Regulation.

Speaking at a meeting of regulators and industry stakeholders hosted by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA), Mr Dancet said, "I would like to thank the Irish authorities for implementing REACH and for their valuable contributions so far. The expertise of their scientific staff has ensured that Ireland has high awareness levels of the aims, obligations and benefits of the REACH Regulation".

Martin O'Halloran, chief executive of the HSA, said that Ireland's approach to introducing REACH involved consultation and collaboration with industry and co-regulators alike. "Prior to the introduction of REACH we began a targeted awareness campaign and we continue to liaise with industry through our helpdesk and inspectorate. By making sure that everyone is aware of their responsibilities we ensure that those who use chemicals are better informed to address the risks to themselves, others and the environment".

The REACH regulation applies to any business manufacturing, importing, selling, buying or using chemical



substances. Everyone from printers to metal fabricators to large chemical manufacturers have obligations. Products as diverse as pharmaceutical components, bleach, textiles and PCs could also be covered depending on the substances involved.

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

## Minister calls for improved safety on farms



Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Richard Bruton, T.D., has called on farmers to make safety a priority during what is a period of heightened activity on farms. He urged all farmers to keep their safety and that of their families in mind at all times.

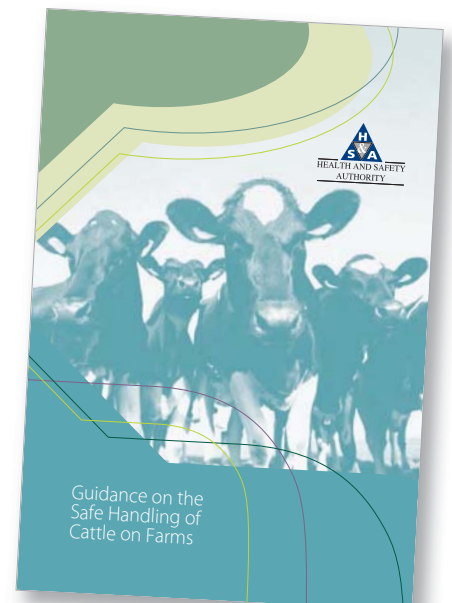
Mr Bruton, T.D., speaking after four people were killed on Irish farms inside an eight-week period, said if the accident rate continues at this pace, 2011 will be yet another year with a tragically high accident rate on farms. Mr Bruton, T.D., said he intends to call farming

interests together in the near future to discuss farm safety and to encourage them to continue to spread the farm safety message.

According to Martin O'Halloran, chief executive of the Health and Safety Authority (HSA), "roughly 50% of all farm deaths involve farm vehicles or machinery and unguarded PTO shafts are still the cause of many deaths on farms. The next most dangerous area is livestock-handling (HSA has recently published *Safe Handling of Cattle on Farms*), with livestock attacks

accounting for 15% of farm deaths over the last 10 years and the third most common cause of death on a farm is drowning (14%), with open slurry pits particularly dangerous where children are present. These are the areas that our inspectors will be looking at first when they visit a farm".

For further information and to download documents on safety in agriculture, please visit the HSA website: [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie).



## HSA Annual Output Statement

A new report from the Health and Safety Authority (HSA), the *Annual Output Statement 2010*, gives details of the Authority's income and expenditure for 2009 and 2010. The report also shows how the Authority deployed its staff. The figures for 2009 are confirmed, while the 2010 figures are described as estimates.

The Authority's income for 2009 was €22,888,000. In 2010 it was €22,209,000. The bulk of the income came from the Government grant: €21,959,000, with just €250,000 coming from other activities. Other activities include publications, seminars and fees.

The Authority's budget is divided across four programme areas. The four areas are compliance, prevention, chemicals and corporate. In 2010, the Authority employed 193 people (listed as 192.9) and there were 25 persons in receipt of pensions, up from 23 in 2009.

In 2010, the Authority spent half of its grant - €11,055,000 - on the compliance

(enforcement) division: €6,722,000 on pay and €4,208,000 on non-pay items. The report estimates that the Authority carried out 15,000 inspections in 2010. 100 staff (100.3) were employed in this division. The prevention services division, with 41 staff (40.8), cost an estimated €4,993,000 to run in 2010. Pay accounted for €3,037,000 of this sum, with non-pay items accounting for €1,900,000.

The chemicals policy division which employed 22 people (21.8), cost €3,644,000 to run. Of this €2,216,000 went on pay and €1,387,000 on non-pay items. The report estimates that 465 inspections were carried out in this division.

The corporate services division accounted for 30 staff (30.4) and cost €2,514,000 to run. €1,529,000 was spent on pay and €929,000 on non-pay items.

The *Annual Output Statement 2010* is available from the HSA website: [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie).

## NISO AGM

Delivering the presidential address at the National Irish Safety Organisation (NISO) annual general meeting (AGM), NISO president Pauric Corrigan said that while the continuing downturn is affecting the Irish economy, NISO is continuing to recruit new members. Last year 86 new members joined the organisation and the total number of members was just 11 down on the previous year.

Mr Corrigan said the financial position continued to improve. NISO recorded a surplus of €99,380 in 2010, compared to €92,724 in 2009. The organisation is also reducing the mortgage on its headquarters premises at the rate of €15,000 per quarter.

Mr Corrigan expressed special thanks

to the former Minister for Labour Affairs, Dara Calleary, T.D., for a €15,000 grant to support the development of a FETAC Level 4 health and safety course. The new course is aimed at newly recruited persons and those seeking employment. The course is intended to reduce the burden on employers to train staff on health and safety when taking up employment.

Mr Corrigan paid a special tribute to Jim Shaw, who, after over 30 years involvement with NISO, many of them on the national executive, announced his retirement. Jim Shaw had been both honorary secretary and honorary treasurer of NISO and had given years of dedicated service to the organisation.

## HSA Prevention of Sharps Injuries in Healthcare

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) has introduced an information sheet highlighting control measures required in the healthcare setting to prevent sharps injuries occurring.

*Prevention of Sharps Injuries in Healthcare* advises that sharps injuries may result in the transmission of blood viruses such as human immune deficiency virus (HIV) or hepatitis B or C. The main legislation covering the risk of exposure to sharps at work is the SHWW Act 2005 and Biological Agents Regulations 1994 and 1998. The information sheet also outlines the importance of carrying out a risk assessment in the workplace and lists some basic preventative measures such as 'hand washing after each patient contact'.

*Prevention of Sharps Injuries in Healthcare* can be downloaded from the HSA website: [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie).



# Workplace Health Promotion in Ireland



Dr Richard Wynne, director, Work Research Centre

## What is workplace health promotion (WHP)?

Health promotion is an approach to dealing with health issues which originated in Canada and the US in the late 1970s. It emerged as a response to the rising costs of health care and the then focus on treatment and care rather than prevention and promotion, and was part of the new public health approach. Health promotion quickly moved into the workplace in the US, where it was taken up by larger companies as a means of helping to control health care insurance costs as well as promoting the health of workers. In essence, it sought to bring public health concerns about lifestyle and disease into the workplace setting. WHP programmes of this type focused on individual risk factors such as diet, smoking and obesity related to the major killer diseases such as heart disease and cancer.

WHP was slower to take hold in Europe, in part because it was not usual for employers to carry the costs of health care insurance for

employees. In addition, a stronger tradition of occupational health and safety in Europe implied a more structural and collectivist approach to workplace health issues. Accordingly, WHP in Europe is more concerned with the environment in which health is promoted and not solely with what the individual may do.

## The European approach to WHP

In 1996, the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion (ENWHP) was formed with members from each of the then EU Member States. ENWHP initially developed the Luxembourg Declaration, which set out the philosophy and approach to be taken to WHP in Europe. It states: 'Workplace health promotion is the combined efforts of employers, employees and society to improve the health and wellbeing of people at work. This can be achieved through a combination of:

- Improving work organisation and the work environment.
- Promoting active participation.
- Encouraging personal development'.

Since providing this definition (and aspiration), the ENWHP has gone on to undertake a series of projects that are designed to demonstrate how WHP works in a variety of settings, e.g. large workplaces, SMEs and public administrations. It

has also showed projects that address a range of common health issues including cardiovascular health and most recently mental health. The current initiative of the ENWHP is concerned with retaining and reintegrating ill or injured workers to the workplace.

## The benefits of WHP

There has been much research into the benefits of WHP. It has consistently been found that return on investment is of the order of 3-5:1. Moreover, there are health benefits; depending on the nature of the health intervention, improvements have been demonstrated in terms of cardiovascular health, fitness, weight reduction and mental health and wellbeing. There are also improvements in workplace health indicators such as reduced accident rates and lower workplace stress.

## WHP in Ireland

The practice of WHP in Ireland has been influenced by developments in both the US and Europe. It is possible to see the US lifestyle risk factor based approaches in many of the US multinationals and elsewhere. The Irish Heart Foundation and the Irish Cancer Society also provide WHP interventions that fall within this approach.

The European approach is also taken in Ireland, though it is somewhat less common. Nonetheless, there have been initiatives in the health services and local

government sectors which illustrate the benefits of comprehensive approaches to WHP.

However, the level of support for organisations wishing to undertake WHP has been dwindling in recent times. This may be traced back to the early part of this century, when the Department of Health was unable to develop a policy in the area and to provide the dedicated WHP staff within the health boards with a clear mandate to act. In addition, attempts to develop a coherent collaboration between public health authorities and health and safety agencies have proved difficult.

In order for WHP to further develop, there is a need to address this low level of official support for the approach. At this time of economic uncertainty which is leading to increased health risks for both employees and unemployed people, there is a greater need than ever to promote the health of the workforce of Ireland.

Useful references for WHP include:

- The European Network for Workplace Health Promotion: [www.enwhp.org](http://www.enwhp.org).
- The European Mental Health Promotion Network: [www.mentalhealthpromotion.net](http://www.mentalhealthpromotion.net).



# Quiz 2011 Finals and Regional Results

## All Ireland Results

### Previous Entrants Category Winners



*Covidien, All Ireland Previous Entrants Category Winner*

**1st Place: Covidien** (Midland region winner)  
Gary Casey, Michael Lohan, Deirdre Mullins, James O'Grady

**2nd Place: Nacco Materials Handling Group** (Northern Ireland winner)  
James Hughes, Darren Johnston, Rafitz Khamish, Michaela McCall

**3rd Place: Abbott Ireland Diagnostics Division** (North West region winner)  
Alan Gallagher, Jude Mapp, Ronan McKiernan, Carol McMahon

### Novice Category Winners



*Abbott Ireland Diagnostics Division, All Ireland Novice Category Winner*

**1st Place: Abbott Ireland Diagnostics Division** (North West region winner)  
Mark Carry, Orla Moore, Ciaran O'Donnell, Conor Sheridan

**2nd Place: Thermo King** (Western region winner)  
Martin Casserly, Barry Cullen, Dessie Pratt, Gerry Quinn

**3rd Place: TLI** (Mid Western region winner)  
Mary Barrett, Mairead Fitzmaurice, Ian Hasell, Brendan O'Driscoll



*Liam O'Carroll, pro, NISO western region; Pauric Corrigan, president, NISO; Ciaran Cannon, T.D*

### Other participating teams were:

#### PREVIOUS ENTRANTS CATEGORY TEAMS

**Abbott Ireland Nutrition Division** (North Eastern region winner)  
Benny Igoe, Noel Quinn, Rose Rogers

**Brothers of Charity Services Four Seasons** (Western region winner)  
Enda Collins, Noel Connolly, Liz Joyce, Paula Mullery

**Endesa Ireland** (South Eastern region winner)  
J.J Murphy, Tony Murphy, Siobhan Redmond, Larry Shannon

**Helsinn Birex Pharmaceuticals** (Eastern region winner)  
Elizabeth Brett, Colm De Burca, Ian Leonard, Niall Ryan

#### NOVICE CATEGORY TEAMS

**Abbott Ireland Nutrition Division** (North Eastern region winner)  
Tony Brady, Mary O'Shea, Claire Rooney

**Elan Drug Technologies** (Midland region winner)  
Denis Carroll, Kathryn Downey, Lorraine Rafferty, Aoife Taaffe

**Helsinn Birex Pharmaceuticals** (Eastern region winner)  
Robert Cuthbert, Jennifer Egan, Stephen Fennel, Sandie Fitzgibbon

**McCue Interior Fitout Solutions** (Northern Ireland winner)  
Christine Adlington, Paul Goodwin, Nadine McNabb, Richard Wilk

# Chris McCormack, lecturer, Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT), writes about the experience and benefits of the NISO Introduction to Occupational Safety and Health course



Chris McCormack, lecturer, Dept. of Life and Physical Sciences at AIT

Every year up and down the country, professionals from all backgrounds get involved in the NISO Introduction to Occupational Safety and Health course. Professionals provide and receive the course giving it a unique flavour; this melting pot of acumen is enriching for both the student and the lecturer. Lecturers come from all areas of industry and some teach within the third level system, this standard is guaranteed as all those involved are vetted by the National Irish Safety Organisation (NISO).

Experience tells us that the course attracts hardworking types who are vocationally aligned to the objectives of the course. They arrive to register with a certain amount of trepidation – they question their suitability as the course has a reputation of being a challenging course. Those of us involved know the bigger picture; the course is tedious, it requires dedication for the 15 weeks duration. We advise participants to be savvy from day one, that it is a great investment and will pay generous dividends. Participants are briefed on the first day in study techniques; for many it is their first contact with

education in many years and this can be a difficult step back onto the learning curve.

## Introductions

The first evening is important as introductions take place and the class get their bearings. The tone is informal and comfortable, as class sizes are generally quite manageable. Participants range from the self-employed sole trader to civil servants, the unemployed (who pay a concessionary rate), partakers in continuous professional development (CPD) and even some retired persons involved in voluntary work. There is no recipe, but invariably the mix is an interesting one. These candidates all have one thing in common; a deep respect for work and for the improvement of working conditions, and this respect brings out the most noble of human qualities.

As a course co-ordinator and lecturer, the only thing

guaranteed on a first night of the course is this calibre of human excellence. Classes are so uplifting as the participants always pull their weight, they are inquisitive and lively and they give back their life experience to the lecturer, which is enriching, indeed a treat.

## Certificates

The exertion required by the course is duly rewarded; each participant gets back the effort they put in. About a month after the exam, the presentation of certificates takes place around the country. Our president will normally be there and if possible a decision-maker of local relevance will present the awards. The participants are invited to bring their partners, parents and children – and they turn up in their finest to celebrate their success. Regional NISO committees prepare ‘a sup and a nibble’ and answer graduate queries about the

next step of their development. Some graduates will continue into a third level course, some will join a regional committee and some just need to contemplate their success for a while before making further moves.

We meet course participants at later stages in their careers as the OSH profession comes together for both NISO and non-NISO calendar events. The consensus is always a positive one; the NISO Introduction to Occupational Safety and Health course is a valuable addition to any CV and opens pathways into this professional group at whichever level the receiver wishes to enter.

For further information on the NISO Introduction to Occupational Safety and Health course, please visit the NISO website: [www.niso.ie](http://www.niso.ie).



Pauric Corrigan, president, NISO, pictured with graduates and lecturers at AIT



# 'Taking Care of Business', a major new initiative for the Health and Safety Authority (HSA)

Mary Dorgan of the HSA writes about BeSMART and the HSA's new 'Taking Care of Business' initiative to help small business owners/managers meet their workplace health and safety obligations and save money.



Mary Dorgan, assistant chief executive, HSA

'Taking Care of Business' is a new focus by the HSA on the health and safety needs of small businesses. Health and safety legislation applies to all businesses regardless of size but the HSA recognises that small business owners/managers face quite a different set of issues compared to their larger counterparts. In a typical small business, the owner/manager often has responsibility for a whole range of functions – finance, HR, sales and marketing, etc. – health and safety may or may not feature on the list. The key objective of the HSA is to make sure it does feature!

## Nationwide consultation

Many small business owners and managers wonder about their obligations under health

and safety legislation. There can be confusion as to what they need to do and concern at the thought of a health and safety inspector visiting their workplace.

Throughout the latter half of last year, the HSA undertook a nationwide consultation process with small businesses and the feedback from that process was used to inform this new initiative. One of the common issues we heard was that small business owners and managers do not know where to start when it comes to assessing the level of risk in their business. Many do not even realise that workplace health and safety legislation applies to them. A common view was that health and safety was for 'big factories or construction sites', i.e. it was not relevant to ordinary small businesses.

This was obviously very concerning as all workplaces, regardless of size or whether or not they operate in what are traditionally seen as high risk sectors, are obliged to ensure their workers and anyone else who could be

affected by workplace activity are protected.

## Workplace accident

It is important to stress that the 'Taking Care of Business' initiative is not about meeting legal obligations or ensuring that paperwork is in order. There is a solid business case supporting the effective management of workplace health and safety in small businesses. A workplace accident can have a disproportionate impact on small businesses compared to larger organisations.

Small businesses often rely on one or two key employees and the impact following the loss of a key employee due to prolonged absence after a workplace accident can be devastating. This is on top of potential additional costs in the form of higher insurance premiums or compensation payments for example. To put it frankly, a serious accident could be the straw that breaks the camel's back for a small business struggling to survive in the current economic climate.

The HSA has a number of

important objectives for the 'Taking Care of Business' initiative including:

- *To increase awareness amongst small businesses of the importance of effective workplace health and safety management.* If small businesses do not realise how important the management of workplace health and safety is, they will never devote any effort to it.
- *To simplify the process of making workplaces safer and healthier and consequently to reduce the time taken and the costs involved in this process.* Small businesses do not need complicated solutions and they can certainly do without any additional costs.
- *To support the needs of small businesses in a very practical manner.* Small business owners tend to be very practical and pragmatic, anything the HSA develops needs to tick that box.

## Time to BeSMART

One of the key elements of the 'Taking Care of Business' initiative is BeSMART, the new online risk assessment tool





developed by the HSA for about 70 different small business types, including small shops and

convenience stores. Risk assessment is the foundation of any effective health and safety management system. Without carrying out this first step of identifying where the risk of workplace accidents lie, it is impossible to manage that risk in any sort of effective way. BeSMART is free, easy to use and available 24/7. It will help small businesses identify the risk in the workplace and, most importantly, help the small business owner/manager put in place precautions to make sure the level of risk is minimised.

Uptake of the new BeSMART tool has been very strong to date and feedback from business and stakeholders very positive. But this is

only the beginning of a long-term drive by the HSA to make sure that as many small businesses as possible are aware of BeSMART and using it to assist them in making sure their workplaces are as safe as possible. With reduced potential for accidents and lower costs for the business, BeSMART is a win win initiative for everyone.

Queries on the 'Taking Care of Business' initiative, BeSMART tool or any workplace health and safety related matter should be directed to the HSA's contact centre at 1890 289 389 or visit [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie). BeSMART can be accessed free of charge at <http://besmart.hsa.ie>.

## FORUM – INSTITUTION OF OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

# The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) mark International Workers' Memorial Day

IOSH Ireland branch marked Workers' Memorial Day on the 28th of April by planting a tree in Saint Anne's Park, Dublin, out of symbolic respect for those who have lost their lives in the workplace. The liquidambar styraciflua – a deciduous tree with five-pointed, star-shaped leaves and spiked fruit – was planted at midday.

International Workers' Memorial Day remembers those who are killed at, or by work. It is also designed to strengthen people's resolve to reduce risks and protect people from injury in the workplace.

Declan Gibney, IOSH Ireland branch chair, said, "Last year, 48 people in Ireland lost their lives while at work and 17,900 people had an injury that

meant they had to have three or more days off. Some people say these things will always happen and it's just part and parcel of life. We believe the vast majority can be avoided.

We are urging people to spend a few moments today thinking about their workplace, and whether they or their colleagues are taking unnecessary risks with their safety or health. It is also a good time to get across to bosses and staff the importance of health and safety, especially in these financially constrained times".

According to Gibney, "Businesses need to take their responsibilities seriously in order to keep their staff safe. That means holding proper



health and safety training and managing the risks they create".

"From an IOSH point of view, over the next 12 months we'll be pushing harder than ever to reach the smallest businesses with a message that proportionate, pragmatic health and safety saves lives", he added.

# Carl Anders, health and safety executive at IBEC, discusses the planning for sensible risk management



Carl Anders, health and safety executive, IBEC

It is an old cliché of fail to plan, plan to fail, but in the context of health and safety and in particular your arrangements for managing health and safety, there is no truer statement.

Naturally, the resulting failure could be catastrophic and involve injury or harm to employees or others, but more common is a failure in administrative arrangements. So why would these be of a concern, after all, it is just words and documentation. The biggest issue with small administrative failures is that they can lead to an overly complicated and even overly bureaucratic, burdensome system which ultimately causes both management and employees to lose faith and trust in health and safety principles.

## Legislative perspective

The shift from the old Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act of 1989 to the current 2005 version was much more significant than people imagine. Not just in terms of personal liability for managers, but the strong focus on managing health and safety and the subtle changes in the legislation that occurred in order to facilitate this change in focus.

The biggest change was in the nature and extent of a safety statement. Under the 1989 provision, while most employers had moved to a more management based document, generally, the document was just as its title suggests: a statement of what you are doing on health and safety.

With the addition of a duty to 'manage and conduct' work to safeguard health and safety, immediately this document moved from a simple descriptive document to something reflecting the organisation's systems for management. In effect, it became an operational manual for health and safety.

The immediate opinion on this may be that the safety statement has shifted from a simple document to something much more

detailed and complicated. This simply is not the case. The legislative move towards a system that reflects your risks and your operations is a very sensible one for all employers. Sensible as long as employers put the initial planning in to adapting the document to their needs.

There are numerous operational incentives to having a system that reflects your specific business needs, resources and undertaking, but there are also very significant (and subtle) legislative provisions that really make the initial planning of managing health and safety absolutely critical.

In effect, once a safety statement (and therefore the risk assessments) is approved by senior management, the company must operate to the standards it has detailed in this document. Once approved, the employer is stating that this system, the arrangements that are described and the additional control measures are all reasonably practicable. You therefore have no reasonable argument to not follow your own standards.

## Adapt safety management systems

One major critical means

of ensuring a system is adequate is to resist the temptation to mirror absolutely all information and guidance. Remember, it is just that: guidance. It offers some clarity, it offers a sense of direction, but it is not there to provide all the answers, it cannot suit all employers in all cases.

Your company will already have in place systems for management, allocating resources, communication, consultation, supervision, monitoring, reviewing, etc. The key question is why create something entirely new and separate just for health and safety? If all these factors operate well already for all other business functions, why create a totally independent system? Adapt, as much as is possible, the management of health and safety to the existing arrangements, do not try to create something new or try and adapt everything else to health and safety.

This will require a large initial review. You will have to look at what the law requires, any interpretation of this and then what aspects of your current operations can absorb that function and role. All safety management systems, whether devised as standards or guidance,



follow the principles of general good operational management, so there will be many areas that will cross over and slot into existing functions. There is no need to duplicate these roles and arrangements.

Following this review, not only is it easier to put together a safety statement, but it is a much more efficient and representative document.

### **Consult with everyone involved**

It is now well established that the management of health and safety is led from the top down. This must be reflected in the safety statement where we assign duties and roles to the management function. However, it is important to also remember that as employees of an organisation, they have the right to be consulted too.

Ensure that where duties and tasks are assigned to

different job functions at all levels, that there is a period of consultation. This isn't just to satisfy the legislative requirement to consult, but to ensure that the details within the document are reasonably practicable and can be achieved.

Whether it is employees providing feedback on a policy and how they can introduce the new work methods into their existing operations, or managers looking at daily or weekly inspections; if there are reasonable grounds to justify adapting the arrangements to something more reasonably practicable, consultation will identify this.

### **Focus on risk assessment**

As with ensuring you complete thorough review of current management arrangements, risk assessment provides the most powerful tool to both securing health and safety

and ensuring appropriate management of health and safety.

Putting the time and effort into a detailed and constructive risk assessment and into a process of involvement and consultation across all levels of the company will result in more accurate and reflective assessments. This will then provide more accurate and reflective control measures.

### **Conclusion**

The term 'reasonably practicable' is often misunderstood, but it is a critical part of making health and safety regulation as reasonable as possible. But in order to achieve that level of due care and provide a system that is representative of the business, the initial planning phase is fundamental.

Ensure that as well as looking at the detail in the

legislation, you also review the current management systems within the organisation and identify where there are common areas that can absorb health and safety arrangements.

Ensure that risk assessments are given the time and attention they need, not just to identify hazards and evaluate risk, but to truly reflect on what control measures attain good risk management and means that employees and managers can still meet operational requirements.

Consult with everyone who is involved. Listen to what they have to say. Discuss any perceived clashes with health and safety and operational needs sensibly. Be prepared to adapt or change a system where there are reasonable grounds to do so.

## **Sponsorship and Advertising Opportunities are available**

For further information, please contact Ted O'Keeffe.

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

or

phone 01 465 9760

NATIONAL IRISH SAFETY ORGANISATION

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IN CHALLENGING TIMES  
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# Help on work at height, working near water and display screen equipment

Brian O'Connor answers members' queries.

## Question 1

**I am employed to carry out inspections of various sites (non-construction). I am a non-employee of these sites and working at height is a common hazard in my work. The main form of access to such areas is via ladder. Is it a requirement that persons must undergo training to use ladders? Also, many of the sites provide very little or no edge protection. Should there be any provisions in place to protect non-employees on these sites?**

## Answer 1

The simple answer to both your questions is yes. As a non-employee carrying out inspections on various sites, the employer of each site has a duty to manage and conduct his/her undertaking in such a way as to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that in the course of the work being

carried on, individuals at the place of work (not being his or her employees) are not exposed to risks to their safety, health or welfare (section 12 of the SHWW Act 2005).

This means the employer of each site that you visit must have all the necessary precautions in place to ensure the safety, health and welfare of persons not being his or her employees at the place of work. Also, the employers of these sites must ensure that you receive instructions relating to any risks to your safety, health and welfare in that place of work as necessary or appropriate.

Regarding your question on the use of ladders. Your employer must provide information, instruction, training and supervision necessary to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the

safety, health, and welfare at work of his or her employees (section 8 of the SHWW Act 2005). As per the information sheet on *Using Ladders Safely*, 'Training is a key element to the safe use of ladders. Employers must ensure that employees are provided with training and information in relation to safe ladder use. Ladder users must be competent in their use. They must know how to check it, carry it, erect it, use it, and move it all in a safe manner'.

For further information on working at height and working with ladders, please view the *Guide to the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 – Part 4: Working at Height*, and the information sheet *Using Ladders Safely*. Both publications are available from the Health and Safety Authority website: [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie).



Brian O'Connor, health and safety specialist, National Irish Safety Organisation

## Question 2

**I am a contractor (not the main contractor) involved in the construction of a bridge where we are working in close proximity to a river. We were informed at induction training that drowning is the main risk on the site. I have never been involved with such a project before and wonder what precautions I as a contractor should be taking?**

## Answer 2

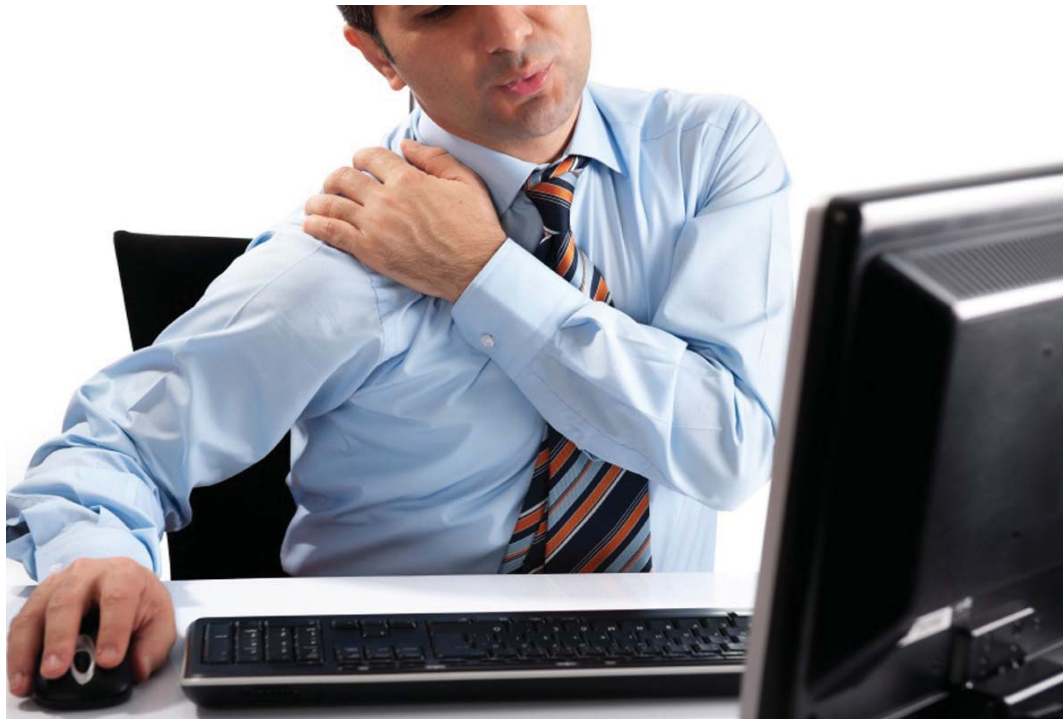
As per section 86 of the SHWW (Construction) Regulations 2006, a contractor responsible for a construction site shall ensure that where, on or adjacent to the site, there is water into which a person, in the course of his or her work, is liable to fall with risk of drowning - suitable rescue equipment is provided and kept in an efficient state, ready for use, arrangements are made for the prompt rescue of any such person who is in danger of drowning, and, personal flotation devices conforming to European



Norm (EN) or equivalent standards, as appropriate, are provided and worn at all times on the site.

As a contractor, you must identify the hazards presented on the site and carry out a risk assessment. This will help to assess the level of risk posed by each hazard. You must take account of the safety and health plan when carrying out the risk assessment and when deciding on controls. The safety and health plan, which will contain arrangements for controlling significant site risks, must be brought to your attention by the project supervisor for the construction stage (PSCS). A contractor must bring to the attention of his/her employees any rules applicable to them contained in the safety and health plan.

Based on the identification of hazards and risk assessment, you must prepare a written safety statement that will include plans and procedures to be followed, protective and preventative measures and the duties of personnel on site. A copy of this safety statement must be provided to the PSCS. It is very important that the safety statement and its contents are brought to the attention of employees. Where there are specific tasks being performed at the place of work that pose a serious risk to safety, health or welfare, an employer shall bring to the attention of those affected by that risk relevant extracts of the safety statement setting out—the risk identified, the risk assessment, and, the protective and preventive measures taken in accordance with the relevant statutory provisions in relation to that risk (section 20 of the SHWW Act 2005).



It is very important that employees receive training on the plans and procedures to be followed on the site and training on any equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE) that is used during the work.

**Question 3**  
**I work in an office and recently I have started to experience pain in my upper back during the day. The majority of the day I am positioned at my workstation, which comprises of a desk, chair and a computer. I think that perhaps the chair that I am using is causing the back pain. Can you please let me know if there are any health and safety requirements for a chair?**

**Answer 3**  
 As per schedule 4 of the SHWW (General Application) Regulations 2007, the following are the minimum requirements for a work chair at a workstation (workstation is defined in regulation 70 of the SHWW (General Application) Regulations 2007):

- The work chair shall be

stable and allow the user easy freedom of movement and a comfortable position.

- The seat shall be adjustable in height.
- The seat back shall be adjustable in both height and tilt.
- A footrest shall be made available to any user who requires one.

The back pain you are experiencing may be due to a number of factors rather than any single cause. Holding a part of the body rigid for a long time such as the back may cause discomfort in the muscles, bones and tendons. However, if this pain is causing you a great deal of discomfort then I suggest you contact a registered medical practitioner who will be able to provide an accurate diagnosis, and may also propose necessary protective or preventative measures.

A competent person must carry out an analysis of your workstation in order to evaluate possible risks that may give rise to visual or physical difficulties or to

mental stress. As an employee at the workstation, you should be given the opportunity to comment in the course of the analysis. This documented analysis should include:

- An overview of your tasks at the workstation.
- Evidence that the minimum requirements for all display screen equipment (as specified in schedule 4 of the SHWW (General Application) Regulations 2007) were taken into account as part of the analysis.
- Details of issues that need to be followed up.
- Details of an action plan to address outstanding issues.

For further information on this topic, please view the *Guide to the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 – Chapter 5 of Part 2: Display Screen Equipment*. This document is available from the Health and Safety Authority website: [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie).

*Brian O'Connor*  
 BSc OSH, MSc EHS



# New Irish legislation and information guides

## March 2011 - June 2011



Ted O'Keeffe, operations manager,  
National Irish Safety Organisation

### Legislation

#### The Chemicals (Asbestos Articles) Regulations 2011

The Chemicals (Asbestos Articles) Regulations 2011, which came into operation on the 31st of May 2011, specify how the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) may issue a certificate to exempt an asbestos-containing article, or category of such articles, from the prohibition on the placing on the market of an asbestos-containing article provided for by Article 67 and Annex XVII of the EU REACH Regulation 1907/2006.

The regulations set down the procedures for applying for an exemption certificate and the process by which the HSA will make its decision to grant or refuse such a certificate application. There is also a procedure whereby the HSA can revoke any decision to grant an exemption certificate and an appeals procedure whereby decisions of the HSA under these regulations can be appealed to an appeals officer.

#### Road Traffic Act 2011

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Leo Varadkar, T.D., has confirmed that major new road safety measures came into force on the 1st of June 2011 for mandatory breath testing.

From this date, Gardaí are required to conduct a preliminary breath test where they believe a driver has consumed alcohol, or at the scene of a crash where someone has been injured and requires medical attention. The new measures have been brought in through the Road Traffic Act 2011, the first piece of legislation under the new Government to be signed into law by the President.

#### Safety of Fishing Vessels Regulations 2007 (Revocation) Regulations 2011

The Minister for Transport on the 9th of February 2011 revoked the Safety of Fishing Vessels Regulations (S.I. No. 563 of 2007) under the Safety of Fishing Vessels Regulations 2007 (Revocation) Regulations 2011.

The 2007 Regulations are no longer required because powers and arrangements for the raising of sunken vessels are now provided in Part 5 of the Merchant Shipping Act 2010 (No. 14 of 2010).

*All legislation listed in this article can be downloaded from the NISO website: [www.niso.ie](http://www.niso.ie).*

### Guides and Information

#### CSP Activity and Progress 2008 - 2010

The Construction Safety Partnership (CSP) has produced an activity and progress report for the three year period, 2008 - 2010. This report examines the six goals set by the CSP in 2007 and reports on their background, objectives, outcomes and conclusions.

#### CSP Plan 2011

The CSP has published their programme of work for 2011. The CSP has agreed five key objectives covering: design and procurement, small contractors/subcontractors, construction plant and equipment, worker engagement and safety representative facilitation and benchmarking.

According to Peter McCabe, chairman, CSP, the partner organisations, which include NISO, are again committed to sharing and carrying out the necessary work to ensure that the overall targets of continual reduction in the rate and cost of accidents will be achieved.

#### Prevention of Sharps Injuries in Healthcare

The HSA has produced a guide to highlight control measures required in the healthcare setting to prevent sharps injuries occurring (see page four for further information).

#### Information Sheet on Chemical Distributors Duties under REACH and CLP

The HSA has produced an information guide for distributors of chemicals. Distributors of chemicals have duties under EU chemical legislation including the REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and restriction of Chemicals) Regulation and the Classification, Labelling and Packaging (CLP) Regulation.

#### Guidance on Safety with Mobile Patient Hoists and Slings in Healthcare Establishments

Patient hoists and slings are used in many healthcare establishments to assist in the moving and handling of patients and reduce the degree

of manual handling required by the carer. The information sheet produced by the HSA provides guidance for employers and employees in healthcare establishments on safety with mobile hoists and slings.

#### Safe Handling of Cattle on Farms

Any work with cattle involves some level of risk. This publication, released by the HSA on the 23rd of June 2011, has been prepared to provide general advice and guidance to all persons handling cattle on farms.

#### Forklift Truck Operator Checklist and Poster

#### Forklift Truck Operator Pre-Use Checklist and Poster

The HSA have produced these useful posters/checklists for forklift operators. The posters/checklists include information on visual checks, working environment, if used on the public road, practical/operational checks and thorough examination.

#### Bus Driver / PSV Walk-Around Check Sheet

#### Truck / HGV Driver Walk-Around Check Sheet

#### Van / LGV Driver Walk-Around Check Sheet

The HSA have produced these sample driver walk-around checklists. It is recommended that operators prepare their own driver walk-around checklists to account for the type and use of their own vehicles.

*The listed guides, information and checklists are available from the HSA website: [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie).*

*A comprehensive report of this article can be downloaded from the NISO website: [www.niso.ie](http://www.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 2011.

## 1. Courses scheduled at NISO Training Centre, Ballymount, Dublin 12

**Occupational First Aid Refresher/Re-Certification Course, FETAC Level 5**  
(Course Length: 1 day)  
June 28

**Safe Pass Course**  
(Course Length: 1 day)  
July 1 / July 8 / July 15

**Health and Safety Representation Course, L22487, FETAC Level 5**  
(Course Length: 3 days)  
July 4, 5, 6,

**Manual Handling Instructor Course, 6N0233, FETAC Level 6**  
(Course Length: 5 days)  
July 11, 12, 13, 18, 19

**Occupational First Aid Course, FETAC Level 5**  
(Course Length: 3 days)  
July 12, 13, 14

**VDU/DSE Assessors Course**  
(Course Length: 1 day)  
July 14

**Basic Manual Handling Course**  
(Course Length: Half day)  
July 6 / August 24

**Safety and Health at Work, D20165, FETAC Level 5**  
(Course Length: 10 weeks, Tuesdays from 2pm-6pm, plus a 1.5 hours exam)  
October 12

## 2. Courses and events in the regions

### EAST REGION

**Seminar: Responsibilities of Directors and Employers under Section 80 and 81 of the SHWW Act 2005**  
Venue: Gresham Hotel, Dublin 1  
July 28 - to be confirmed  
Contact: email [east@niso.ie](mailto:east@niso.ie)

### MIDLAND REGION

**Course: NISO Introduction to Occupational Safety and Health**  
Venue: Athlone Institute of Technology  
(Course Length: 13 weeks, Mondays for 2 hours)  
September 26  
Contact: Dr Sean Reidy – 090 642 4400 – [midland@niso.ie](mailto:midland@niso.ie)

### MIDWEST REGION

**Course: NISO Introduction to Occupational Safety and Health**  
Venue: Limerick Institute of Technology  
(Course Length: 13 weeks, Tuesdays for 2 hours)  
September 27  
Contact: Trevor Montgomery – 087 695 7362 – [midwest@niso.ie](mailto:midwest@niso.ie)

### NORTHEAST REGION

**Course: NISO Introduction to Occupational Safety and Health**  
Venue: Dundalk Institute of Technology  
(Course Length: 13 weeks, Tuesdays for 2 hours)  
Commencing date to be confirmed

Contact: email  
[northeast@niso.ie](mailto:northeast@niso.ie)

**Course: NISO Health and Safety Representation Course, L22487, FETAC Level 5**  
Venue: Dundalk Institute of Technology  
(Course Length: 13 weeks, Tuesdays for 2 hours)  
Commencing date to be confirmed  
Contact: email  
[northeast@niso.ie](mailto:northeast@niso.ie)

## 3. National Events

**NISO Annual Conference and Trade Exhibition**  
October 7, Malton Hotel, Killarney, Co Kerry

**NISO and NISG Health and Safety Awards Ceremony**  
October 7, Malton Hotel, Killarney, Co Kerry



NISO, A11 Calmount Park, Calmount Avenue, Ballymount, Dublin 12.  
Tel: 01 465 9760 Fax: 01 465 9765 Email: [info@niso.ie](mailto:info@niso.ie) Website: [www.niso.ie](http://www.niso.ie)