

National Irish Safety Organisation

Update!



Celebrating

50
years

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

SUMMER 2013



SAFETY REPRESENTATION – DOES IT WORK?

HSA 2012
ANNUAL REPORT
AND STATISTICS
SUMMARY

National Irish Safety Organisation

Update!

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Editorial enquiries to: The Editor,
NISO, A11 Calmount Park,
Calmount Avenue, Ballymount,
Dublin 12. Tel: 01 465 9760
Fax: 01 465 9765
Email: info@niso.ie

Design & Print: Print Bureau
Tel: 01 4733 567
www.printbureau.ie



*Pauric Corrigan, president,
National Irish Safety Organisation*

NISO President Reports

NISO celebrate 50 years but raise concerns with Government funding cuts to health and safety.

Over the past two years, many concerns have been raised in the NISO Update and other publications regarding the future of the Health and Safety Authority (HSA). Firstly, there was talk of integration into other bodies that had no direct relationship with health and safety, to be followed by a reduction in the Authority's budget in 2012 and a further reduction in 2013. Since 2008, the HSA has seen a reduction of nearly six million euros in grants from the Oireachtas. NISO, like many, is now gravely concerned with the reduction in both policy and field inspectors.

The HSA was a flagship organisation across Europe for the way it dealt with the REACH regulations and then the global harmonisation standards. When the chemical business service unit was set-up within the HSA to be the national competent authority for chemicals, the original proposal was for in excess of 40 employees - this number is now in lower single figures.

The number of workplace fatalities, serious injuries and dangerous occurrences have not reduced to a level that would justify a reduction in the Authority's budget, staff or facilities. These are all used to enforce and promote occupational safety and health.

In these difficult and challenging times, the question must be asked, is it right to deplete the resources of the HSA? One could suggest areas to Ministers where savings may be achieved in order to protect one of societies most cherished gifts - the right of an individual to go to work and return home without any risk to loss of life, injury or ill health. NISO fully supports the concerns expressed by Michael Horgan, chairman of the HSA, in the Authority's 2012 Annual Report.

Conference

NISO's annual conference and safety awards ceremony (in conjunction with NISG) will take place in the Radisson Blu Hotel, Galway on Friday 4 October 2013. This will be hosted by the NISO western region and will mark NISO's 50th year of promoting occupational safety and health in Ireland. This year's conference, entitled *Safety Fifty and Beyond*, will include a panel of speakers both national and international.

The deadline for submissions to the All Ireland Safety Awards has now closed. I am pleased to report a high level of entries again this year and they are of an exceptionally high standard. The safety awards will be presented to recipients at the gala dinner following the annual conference.

Construction award

As last year, in conjunction with the Construction Safety Partnership, there will be a Small Contractor / Sub Contractor Innovation Award. This will be awarded to a small contractor who has introduced an innovation/change to the way they operate that has made improvements to health and safety within the last three years.

Therefore, if there is 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. An application form can be downloaded from the NISO website: www.niso.ie. The closing date for entries is Friday 30 August.

The NISO Safety Representative of the Year Award 2012, in association with Nifast will also be presented at the gala dinner on 4 October. The closing date for entries to this award is Friday 30 August. An application form for this award can also be downloaded from the NISO website: www.niso.ie.

HSA warn employers to be extra vigilant with young workers

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) are urging employers to be extra vigilant when it comes to taking on young workers for the summer. European figures indicate that young people are at least 50% more likely to be hurt at work than older more experienced workers so it's vital that employers understand the added risk involved with employing teenagers and young inexperienced workers.

The HSA have the following advice for employers:

- Ensure young workers are given the appropriate training and clear instructions.
- Provide any necessary PPE (personal protective equipment).

- Closely supervise young workers, especially when undertaking higher risk activities.
- Encourage young workers to ask questions and raise concerns when they have any.

For further information on managing young persons in the workplace, please see the Spring 2013 edition of the NISO Update where Edel Niland, health and safety officer at DIT, writes a feature article on the safety of young persons in the workplace.

A guidance document on the protection of children and young persons can also be downloaded from the HSA website: www.hsa.ie.



BBQ Safety

Barbeques (BBQ's) have been linked to several campsite deaths caused by carbon monoxide poisoning. If you are planning on using a BBQ, whether it is a disposable one, gas or charcoal, make sure you keep yourself safe and do not put yourself at risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. Follow these top tips for BBQ safety:



- ✗ Never take a smouldering or lit BBQ into a tent, caravan or cabin. Even if you have finished cooking, your BBQ should remain outside as it will still give off fumes for some hours after use.
- ✗ Never use a BBQ inside to keep you warm.
- ✗ Never leave a lit BBQ unattended or while sleeping.
- ✗ Place your cooking area well away from your tent. Always ensure there is an adequate supply of fresh air in the area where the BBQ is being used.
- ✓ Only use your BBQ in accordance with the operating instructions.
- ✓ Remember the signs and symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning – headaches, dizziness, breathlessness, nausea, collapse and loss of consciousness.

If you are using a gas BBQ or gas camping equipment, follow these extra tips to help you stay safe:

- ✓ Check that the appliance is in good order, undamaged and that hoses are properly attached and

undamaged. If in doubt get the hoses replaced or don't use it.

- ✓ Make sure the gas taps are turned off before changing the gas cylinder and do it in the open air.
- ✗ Don't over-tighten joints.
- ✓ When you have finished cooking, turn off the gas cylinder before you turn off the BBQ controls – this means any gas in the pipeline will be used up.
- ✓ Read the manufacturer's instructions about how to check for gas escapes from hoses or pipework, e.g. brushing leak detection solution around all joints and looking for bubbles.
- ✗ Never take a gas stove, light or heater into a tent, caravan or cabin.

For further information on gas safety and seasonal advice, visit the Gas Safe Register website: www.gassaferegister.co.uk.

Information on gas safety can also be found at the Bord Gáis Networks website: www.bordgaisnetworks.ie.

HSA Annual Report and Statistics Summary

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) have launched their 2012 Annual Report and Statistics Summary for 2011-2012. Last year the Authority carried out 13,835 workplace inspections and investigations (a reduction of 9.8% compared to the previous year). More than half the inspections were carried out in two sectors: construction (3,992) and agriculture (3,341).

The Authority also issued 508

Improvement Notices and 356 Prohibition Notices and brought 20 prosecutions to a conclusion. Sentences in successful prosecutions resulted in total fines of €425,000 and an 18-month suspended custodial sentence.

The key facts from the Statistics Summary 2011-2012 are that:

- 48 people were killed in workplace accidents in 2012; that is six fewer than the 54 killed in 2011.
- The agriculture, forestry and fishing sector reported the highest number of worker fatalities for the fifth consecutive year with 28 fatalities; this comprised of 22 farming and 5 fishing fatalities.
- The other fatalities were in construction (8), utilities (4), wholesale/retail (3) and one each in professional/scientific activities, mining/quarrying, transportation/storage, administrative/support service activities and human health/social work activities.
- 6,619 non-fatal accidents were

reported to the Authority in 2012, compared to 6,956 in 2011 and 7,284 in 2010.

- The human health and social work sector continue to account for the largest percentage of non-fatal injury reports (19.8%), followed by manufacturing (16.8%), public administration and defence; compulsory social security (12.5%) and transportation and storage (12.3%).
- Topping the list of accident trigger or cause was manual handling at 34%, followed by slips, trips and falls at 18% and violence or aggression at 7%.
- Back injury at 23% was the most injured body part, followed by fingers at 9%.

For further information on the *Annual Report 2012* and *Summary of Workplace Injury, Illness and Fatality Statistics 2011-2012*, please see page nine of this magazine. The reports can be downloaded from the HSA website: www.hsa.ie.



Stress less common in Irish workplaces



An opinion poll of European workers found that four in 10 workers in Ireland (42%) believe cases of work-related stress are common in their workplace, while 55% say such cases are rare.

The poll commissioned by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), based on a sample of full-time, part-time and self-employed workers aged 18+, focused on two issues: stress and the aging workforce.

According to the poll, when asked to choose from a list of six possible causes of work-related stress, three-quarters of workers in Ireland (76%) selected job reorganisation or job insecurity. The next highest contributors to work-related stress are perceived to be hours worked or workload, and being subjected to unacceptable behaviours such as bullying or harassment, selected

by 73% and 70% respectively. More women (74%) than men (66%) believe that being subjected to bullying or harassment is a common cause of work-related stress. These trends are virtually identical to those observed across Europe as a whole.

Other key findings include:

- Two-thirds of workers in Ireland (66%) believe that workers aged 60+ tend to be less able to adapt to changes at work than other workers, which is above the European average of 60%.
- 44% of workers in Ireland expect the proportion of workers aged 60+ in their workplace to increase by 2020, but over a half (55%) think this is unlikely.

For further information on the European Opinion Poll on Occupational Safety and Health, visit the EU-OSHA website: www.osha.europa.eu.

Workers Memorial Day 2013

A large number of people gathered at Glasnevin Cemetery on 28 April this year to commemorate Workers' Memorial Day. Irish trade unions marked the event by acknowledging the reality of working life during 1913 and especially remembering the decades of struggle for safe and healthy work. Speakers at the memorial day included Ted O'Keeffe (NISO), Frank Barry (UNITE), other trade union representatives and workers.

Workers' Memorial Day is held every year to remember all those who have suffered or died because of their work but at the same time ensuring that such tragedies are not repeated.

New construction regulations to impact on homeowners



Delegates at a recent NISO seminar on the New Construction Regulations 2013 were informed of the extra duties placed on homeowners undertaking construction work. As proposed in the draft construction regulations, a client will be defined as a person for whom a construction project is carried out, which will now include a person having construction work carried out on their own home.

The extra duties of the homeowner will include:

- appointing competent persons to carry out the construction work,
- appointing project supervisors for the design process and for the construction stage where necessary,
- keeping a safety file,
- sending notification of the works to the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) where necessary.

The new construction regulations also place a greater responsibility on contractors to prove their competency to a client. The contractor must provide the client with evidence of training undertaken, references from previous clients, safety statement, etc. and must allocate adequate resources to complete the work safely. In addition, if a contractor is not aware of the appointment of project supervisors, the contractor shall promptly inform the client of the client's duties under the new regulations.

The Construction Regulations 2013 are due to come into effect on 1 August and aim to identify revisions and reduce the regulatory and administrative burdens imposed on all clients in construction while not diminishing workplace health and safety standards. The regulations will prescribe the main requirements for the protection of the safety, health and welfare of persons working on construction sites and to give further effect to Council Directive 92/57/EEC on the minimum safety and health requirements at temporary or mobile construction sites.

Delegates at the NISO seminar were also reminded about the new Construction Products Regulations 2013. The EU construction products regulation lay down harmonised conditions for the marketing of construction products and is directly applicable, in its entirety, in Irish law.

As of July 2013, manufacturers, importers and distributors have new mandatory obligations and responsibilities when placing a construction product on the Irish market.

Speaking at the New Construction Regulations 2013 seminar were Paraig Earley and Michael McDonagh of the HSA construction policy unit and Robert Butler of the Construction Industry Federation.

HSA warn about reduction in safety standards

In the foreword to the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) *Annual Report 2012*, the chairman of the Authority, Michael Horgan, comments that "the continuing losses of staff mandated under the Authority's employment control framework will lead to further reductions in the ability of the Authority to support key economic sectors during 2013 and 2014."

"The Authority has reduced its inspections in line with the reduction in employment across a range of sectors but current staffing means that no proactive inspections can be carried out across a wide range of sectors, and are being reduced in other sectors. In our view, this will lead to a reduction in standards and an increase in workplace injuries and costs" added Mr Horgan.

These comments come as the HSA, which reduced staff numbers by seven in 2012 to 170, has to reduce the number by a further 20 to 150 by the end of 2013. The Authority's budget grant also fell from €19,968,000 in 2011 to €19,146,000 in 2012.

These cuts have meant a 25% drop in the number of inspections conducted by the HSA from 18,451 in 2009 to 13,835 in 2012.

For further information on the *Annual Report 2012*, please see page nine of this magazine. The report can be downloaded from the HSA website: www.hsa.ie.



Safety Representation – does it work?

Following the series of Safety Representative seminars organised by the National Irish Safety Organisation (NISO) in conjunction with the Health and Safety Authority, Siobhan Byrne writes on the role of the safety representative and their effectiveness in the workplace.

The consultation process

The *Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005* permits the election, by employees, of a workplace safety representative. Under section 25 of the Act, employees may select a person, or several people with the employer's approval, to represent them on safety and health matters when in consultation with the employer.

Section 26 provides details about the consultation process. The goal of the consultation process is to advance workplace safety through co-operation between the employer and employees in identifying, promoting and assessing safety measures.

The consultation process can also be accomplished through a safety committee. Where such a committee exists, employees are entitled to select one employee, or more depending on the size of the committee, to represent them. Alternatively, the employer may consult directly with employees.

Roles

The method for selecting a safety representative is not specified in law. Each employee group may decide on an election process; when elected the individual must be available to represent all employees, usually for a term of three years and may be re-elected. The role is not associated with any required

duties, other than those that apply to any employee. If a safety representative agrees with a management proposal they cannot be held legally accountable for outcomes when the proposal is implemented.

The main function of the safety representative is to represent employees in consultations with the employer on health and safety matters. The rights of the safety representative include having access to information on:

- risk assessments,
- accidents,
- occupational illnesses and dangerous occurrences, and
- the outcomes and effectiveness of preventive measures implemented in the workplace.

The employer must provide information to the safety representative on any visit by an inspector and allow the safety representative to consult, accompany and attend interviews with the inspector on any visit as required.

Additional rights of the safety representative include the right to:

- Inspect the workplace; the inspection and schedule should be agreed with the employer.
- Investigate accidents, dangerous occurrences and complaints, without interfering, and having given notice to the employer.

- Liaise and consult with other safety representatives from the same company and consult with the employer on issues relating to workplace safety.

The employer must consider any representations made and 'as far as is reasonably practicable' take the appropriate action. The employer is obliged to consult with employees on prevention and protection measures, workplace accidents, any proposed worker training and safety related duties to be assigned to employees.

Effectiveness

So, does the consultative approach and employer/employee co-operation actually work to reduce workplace health and safety risks? Recently published research from the European Commission indicates that 96% of Irish employees feel they are well informed about workplace risks.

Research in the UK points to several factors that promote effective consultation. The first is a strong legislative framework requiring consultation and is supported by external inspections. The employer must also ensure a safety management programme is in place and is properly resourced. Safety management programmes should include a formal consultation process.



Siobhan Byrne, Consultant and Lecturer

Being informed does not necessarily equate to risk reduction. Consultation is about discussion, not negotiation and not collective decision-making. Employers are required to take action following representations made to them and must act as they consider necessary and appropriate.

In order to fully understand the effectiveness of the consultation process, further research into the relationship between representation and measures of health and safety activity will be required.

In accordance with the *Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005*, it is essential that safety representatives attend training and gain the knowledge and skills necessary to perform their function effectively.

To learn more about Health and Safety Representation or to attend a Health and Safety Representation course, contact NISO at 01 465 9760 or email: info@niso.ie.

NATIONAL IRISH SAFETY ORGANISATION

Saving lives since 1963



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50
years

50TH ANNIVERSARY ANNUAL CONFERENCE



SAFETY 50 AND BEYOND IRELAND'S PREMIER HEALTH AND SAFETY EVENT OCTOBER 4TH • RADISSON BLU HOTEL GALWAY

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

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DR PJ CLAFFEY, PROGRAMME MANAGER, HEALTH AND SAFETY AUTHORITY
GAY CONNOLLY, GROUP CLAIMS DIRECTOR, AON IRELAND
EAMON DEVOY, GEN. SECRETARY, TEEU / CHAIR, ICTU HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE
JOHN LONERGAN - THE GOVERNOR
DAVID NOLAN, SC, CHAIRMAN, IRISH BAR COUNCIL
MARTIN O'HALLORAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, HEALTH AND SAFETY AUTHORITY
DR CHRISTA SEDLATSCHKE, DIRECTOR, EUROPEAN AGENCY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK
DAVID KEANE, MAINTENANCE SUPERVISOR, SHELL
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Construction Safety Partnership Small / Sub Contractor Safety Innovation Award 2013

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



The award

The CSP Small Contractor / Sub Contractor innovation award will be awarded to a small contractor who has introduced an innovation / change to the way that they operate that has made improvements to health and safety within the last three years. This may have been a small engineering change or indeed a management change that has been adopted by the company to address a safety problem that existed. The aim of this award is to highlight and reward the commitment of small enterprises to improving health and safety performance within their organisations.

How to enter

To nominate someone or to enter directly, please complete the Nomination Form; this form can be downloaded from the NISO website: www.niso.ie.

Completed application forms must be returned to NISO not later than **Friday, 30 August 2013**.



Celebrating

50
years

National Irish Safety Organisation

NISO Safety Representative of the Year Award 2013

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



The award

The Safety Representative of the Year winner will be presented with a Certificate and a €600 cheque sponsored by nifast. The Prize will be presented to the overall winner at the NISO Annual Awards Presentation Dinner on 4 October 2013 in the Radisson Blu Hotel, Galway.

How to enter

To nominate someone or to enter directly, please complete the Nomination Form; this form can be downloaded from the NISO website: www.niso.ie.

Completed application forms must be returned to NISO not later than **Friday, 30 August 2013**.

Update from the Health and Safety Authority

Gavin Lonergan, head of communications with the Health and Safety Authority (HSA), summarises the key highlights from the recently published 2012 Annual Report.

Our very extensive remit across all economic sectors, spanning over 200 acts, regulations and conventions, means that the Authority had a significant impact on many Irish workplaces, workers and the general public throughout 2012. Sadly, there were 48 work-related deaths last year, an 11% reduction on the 54 workplace deaths in 2011. Continuing the trend from previous years, over half of all these deaths occurred in the farming and fishing sectors.

Compliance and Advice

The Authority focused inspection activities on those

sectors where risks are identified as highest and where there is evidence of low levels of compliance. As has been our approach for previous years our inspection programme aims to ensure that employers who are committed to ensuring healthy and safe workplaces are supported through the inspection process. We aim to educate and increase awareness of employers, employees and other duty-holders so that they understand and act on their responsibilities.

We carried out a total of 11,029 inspections and 1,408 investigations under

occupational safety and health legislation in 2012. This was almost 5% higher than the target set for our inspection and investigation programme.

The use of an active and effective health and safety management system and the control of known hazards in the workplace is a key indicator of a commitment to health and safety. The practical implementation of the system at the place of work continues to be a central focus of inspection. The following are indicators of the levels of compliance in relation to such systems across all sectors:

- 71% of places of work inspected had a safety statement prepared and available at the workplace. Of these, 73% had been prepared by the employer themselves.
- The level of awareness among senior management of their duties under health and safety legislation continued to be high at 87%.
- 92% of workplaces had systems for safety consultation with their employees (where relevant).



Gavin Lonergan, Health and Safety Authority

- Similar to 2011, 9% of employers indicated that there had been a reportable accident in the previous 12 months and 56% of the employers indicated that they had reported the incident to the Authority, an increase of 16% on 2011.

Prevention

Working to the goals of the Authority's Strategy 2010–2012, we continued our programme of development and provision of tools and resources for employers, employees, the self-employed and others to improve overall safety and health performance in the workplace. A number of new prevention initiatives across major sectors and hazards were implemented in 2012.

A successful prevention strategy requires continuous awareness-raising, targeted



particularly at high risk sectors, of the key messages of workplace safety and health. This is in addition to the promotion of new legislation, guidance, information and events to support employers, employees and the self-employed in their duty to comply and their efforts at workplace level to prevent accidents and ill health.

In 2012, the Authority devoted a considerable portion of its resources to reaching people with key messages. Efforts ranged from delivery of a hard-hitting national campaign directed at all who work in the agriculture sector through to targeted local events aimed at promoting access to and registration on BeSMART, our online tool for small businesses.

Education

Our work in education aims to achieve a positive safety and health culture for the future and the results have been significant in their reach and their impact. The highest number of post-primary students ever participated in our Choose Safety programme during the 2011/2012 academic year. 18,000 students across transition, fifth and sixth years completed the programme.

Our work-related vehicle safety programme is based on a five year plan and 2012 saw the successful implementation of the second year of the plan. Our work in this area has become more effective as a result of this plan and the joining of forces with the other principal leaders in vehicle safety management: the Road Safety Authority (RSA) and An Garda Síochána.

Policy inspectors delivered a comprehensive range of information and guidance across sectors and key hazards. Their role typically requires a thorough assessment of relevant issues, extensive consultation with others, primarily external to the Authority, followed by setting targets and delivering programmes for these areas. Much of our work has been jointly achieved with partner organisations because it would not be possible to deliver the volume and quality of work without others.

Chemicals

The chemicals manufacture, use and transport programme in 2012 saw the Authority deliver on its Competent Authority obligations, provide stakeholder advice and information, complete onsite and desk-based inspections and undertake enforcement action under the full range of legislation including the Chemicals Act 2008.

The Authority's focus on and commitment to customer support and advice remained high in 2012. As the national provider of the REACH and CLP helpdesk, we addressed a total of 213 REACH and 107 CLP queries in the course of the year alongside addressing queries on the full range of chemical issues around detergents, export, import, etc. As part of our helpdesk responsibilities, we actively engaged with other Member States and ECHA through participation in Helpnet meetings and by responding and inputting data into ECHA's HelpEx system to ensure that appropriate responses were

developed on specific REACH and CLP queries.

In relation to Classification, Packaging and Labelling (CLP), we continued to provide policy and technical input at the United Nations (UN Sub-committee of Experts on Globally Harmonised System for Classification and Labelling) and at the Competent Authority subgroup.

Two awareness campaigns were launched in 2012, one on the countdown to the substance registration deadline of May 2013, the other on the first application deadlines for substances subject to authorisation in 2013. Following an alert from the National Poisons Centre in Beaumont Hospital regarding detergent liquitabs and incidents with children, we launched a joint initiative to address the matter voluntarily with the industry sector. By year end, the industry had voluntarily

agreed to changes in packaging and labelling to reduce the possibility of child exposure to the contents.

In 2012, the focus for the carriage of dangerous goods by road (ADR) work programme was the provision of stakeholder guidance, advice and support following the publication of the 2011 ADR Regulations. To this end, an ADR guidance document specifically developed with small-medium enterprise in mind was prepared and published.

The above is a short summary of key highlights from last year. For full details, the Authority's 2012 Annual Report and Statistics Summary 2011-2012 can be downloaded for free at the HSA website: www.hsa.ie. For further information, email: wcu@hsa.ie or phone 1890 289389.



Update from the Irish Business and Employers Confederation

Dr Kara McGann, policy executive in education, social & innovation policy at IBEC, writes on a proactive approach to mental health in the workplace.

Mental health remains an area that many people do not understand or may fear. As a result, it is not talked about, particularly in the workplace. Yet, one in five people of working age experience a mental health problem, such as anxiety or depression. In late 2012, IBEC published *Mental Health and Wellbeing: A Line Managers Guide*, which sets out what all line managers in your organisation need to know when dealing with mental health in the workplace.

Problems with mental health can occur in any individual, regardless of their job, gender, age or social background. For some, this may be a mild and temporary experience while for others it may be more severe or long-term.

Importantly, only one in 100 people experience the more severe conditions while the vast majority of problems are manageable with treatment by a GP or counsellor.

So why are we so reluctant to talk about an issue that affects so many of us?

A recent survey by See Change, the national stigma reduction partnership, found that 56% of respondents said they would not want people to know if they were having mental health problems, with 28% delaying seeking treatment due to the fear of others finding out. A further 57% believed that being open about a mental health problem at work would have a negative impact on their job and career prospects, while 47% believed it would affect their relationships with colleagues.

As a result, mental health disorders often go unrecognised and untreated — not only damaging an individual's health and career, but also reducing productivity at work.

Companies have become more aware of the need to put the right supports in place to promote wellbeing. A recent IBEC survey of human resources management practices found that over one-third of respondents had engaged in employee health screening in the twelve months preceding the survey. Almost one in five had a stress management campaign and just over one in ten had held a mental wellbeing campaign.

While this is a positive trend, much more needs to be done. IBEC's *Mental*



Dr Kara McGann, IBEC

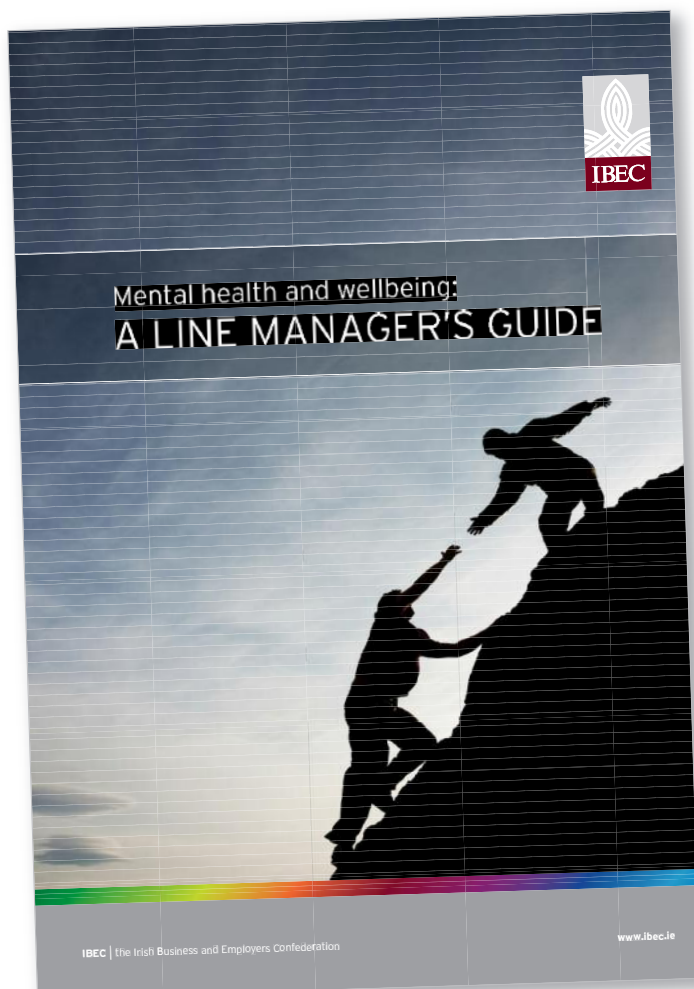
Health and Wellbeing: A Line Managers Guide provides employers and particularly line managers, with some of the tools necessary to respond appropriately and support their employees in a practical manner.

Early and consistent efforts by employers to acknowledge and support their employees can go a long way towards building a culture that is conducive to a healthy workplace. This is in everyone's interest.

Warning signs

Very often employees experiencing mental health problems are reluctant to seek help initially and the problem goes unchecked.

Employers have a key role to play. There are a number of key signs that can help alert you to a colleague experiencing difficulties, including changes in a person's usual behaviour, poor performance, tiredness, increased absence, previously punctual employees turning up late, noticeable increase in alcohol consumption or smoking, and tearfulness, among other things.



It might be the case that certain tasks, work environments or times of the day are associated with people experiencing difficulty. Similarly, if an individual is having frequent short bursts of sickness absence with a variety of reasons such as stress, back pain or no reason, there may be an underlying, if transitory, mental health problem that should be discussed.

How can you help?

Communication is essential. If you are a manager, this can be done naturally through normal work strategy sessions, appraisals, return to work (following absence) interviews or informal chats which offer an opportunity to discuss any difficulties the employee may be having.

At all times, in the language used and the attention given, individuals should be treated with respect. Managers should remember that their behaviour will act

as a model for the wider work team.

The use of open questions, such as “How are you doing at the moment?” or “Is there anything we can do to help?” can help the employee express any concerns they may be experiencing. Questions should be neutral and you should give the employee time to answer.

If you have specific grounds for concerns – such as poor performance – it is important to raise this at an early stage. Again, the use of open, exploratory and non-judgmental questions can elicit key information from employees. For example, “I’ve noticed you’ve sometimes been arriving late recently and wondered if there was a problem.”

Often employees who have experienced stress, anxiety or depression in the workplace need a platform to vent their emotions.

At times, empathy may be all that is needed. However, where there are serious underlying problems, the best approach is to refer them to someone trained to provide appropriate support. Many organisations have employee assistance programmes where trained counsellors provide support to employees within an agreed framework.

An effective manager should be able to anticipate and identify problems, dealing with them before they escalate. Taking the time to get to know your team, regular communication and meetings will enable a line manager to notice any emotional difficulties or changes that may be occurring for an employee.

Some people with mental health problems require minimal support, while others need more. Dealing with mental health can be a challenging period of time for employee and employer

alike but the employee can be helped immensely through the support and assistance of their employer.

IBEC’s *Mental Health and Wellbeing: A Line Manager’s Guide* encourages companies to put the proper supports in place for the wellbeing and mental health of individuals and teams. It contains information and practical advice on recruitment, wellbeing, creating an environment for disclosure and helps managers facilitate conversations about mental health problems so that employees can stay well and in work.



Sponsorship and advertising opportunities are available

For further information,
please contact
Ted O’Keeffe tokeeffe@niso.ie
or phone 01 465 9760

New Irish legislation and information guides April 2013 - July 2013

By Ted O'Keeffe

Statutory Instruments

Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness (Vehicle Testing) Regulations 2013

These regulations came into operation on 27 March 2013. The regulations specify the requirements and arrangements to apply for the compulsory testing of light commercial vehicles and heavy commercial vehicles in accordance with the *Road Safety Authority (Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness) Act 2012* (No. 16 of 2012).

Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

The purpose of these regulations is to amend the *Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) (Amendment) Regulations 2012* (S.I. No. 461 of 2012) as regards the operational date for those regulations which is changed from 1 June 2013 to 1 August 2013.

The *Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 2013* prescribe the main requirements for the protection of the safety, health and welfare of persons working on construction sites and give further effect to Council Directive 92/57/EEC on the minimum safety and health requirements at temporary or mobile construction sites.

Publications, Guides and Information

Safety Data Sheets for Hazardous Chemicals – Information Sheet

This information sheet produced by the Health and

Safety Authority (HSA) includes guidance on the 16 headings contained in a safety data sheet (SDS), when a SDS should be provided and tips for formulators who prepare and supply SDS's to their customers. Over the coming years, SDS's will include further information on safe handling, in the form of exposure scenarios.

HSA Annual Report 2012

The HSA have launched their Annual Report for 2012. During the year there were 20 prosecutions for health and safety breaches, which resulted in total fines of €425,000 and an 18-month suspended custodial sentence.

Latest Statistics

The latest workplace fatality statistics as of 9 July 2013 show there were 18 fatalities so far this year.

EMPLOYMENT SECTOR	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
A - Agriculture, forestry and fishing	6	28	27	29	13
B - Mining and quarrying	1	1	1	0	2
C - Manufacturing	1	0	2	2	1
D - Electricity; gas, steam and air conditioning supply	1	0	0	0	0
E - Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	0	4	3	2	0
F - Construction	2	8	6	6	10
G - Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and personal goods	3	3	2	4	2
H - Transportation and storage	2	1	7	3	6
I - Accommodation and food service activities	0	0	1	0	1
J - Information and communication	0	0	0	0	0
K - Financial and insurance activities	0	0	0	0	0
L - Real estate activities	0	0	0	0	0
M - Professional, scientific and technical activities	0	1	2	0	1
N - Administrative and support service activities	1	1	0	0	1
O - Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	0	0	1	0	2
P - Education	1	0	0	0	2
Q - Human health and social work activities	0	1	1	1	1
R - Arts, entertainment and recreation	0	0	1	1	0
S - Other service activities	0	0	0	0	1
Total fatalities	18	48	54	48	43

Source: www.hsa.ie

Summary of Workplace Injury, Illness and Fatality Statistics 2011-2012

48 workplace fatalities were reported to the Authority in 2012. The agriculture, forestry and fishing sector reported the highest number of worker fatalities for the fifth consecutive year with 28 fatalities. There were 6,619 non-fatal injuries reported to the Authority in 2012, compared to 6,956 in 2011.

HSA Programme of Work 2013

This is the first programme of work that the HSA prepared as part of their new strategy for the period 2013 to 2015. The programme, which sets out five strategic priorities, was prepared



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

against the background of unacceptable levels of work-related deaths and injuries in the agriculture sector and continuing reductions in fatalities in other sectors.

The listed publications, guides and information are available from the HSA website: www.hsa.ie.

Help on stress, bullying, manual handling instruction and contact lenses in construction

Brian O'Connor answers members' queries.

QUESTION 1

I have been asked by my employer to implement a stress and bullying policy into our workplace but I am not sure where to begin. Can you please let me know (a) if there is a need for such policies? (b) what should be contained in the policies?

ANSWER 1

All employers are legally

required to assess the working environment for systems and practices that lead to health and safety hazards, including stress and bullying, and to put in place preventive measures. 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.

In terms of a need for policies; prevention is the



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

best way to avoid the risk of bullying and stress at work. An effective policy and a strong commitment to implementing it is required.



The purpose of an effective policy is not simply to prevent improper conduct and behaviour but also to encourage best practice and a safe and harmonious workplace where such behaviour is unlikely to occur. Employers should therefore adopt, implement and monitor a comprehensive, effective and accessible policy on bullying and stress at work.

As a minimum, the policy should contain:

- commitment that safety and health legislation will be complied with;
- specify those responsible for implementing the policy at all levels in the organisation;
- define responsibilities of employer, employees and others;
- specify the organisation's commitment to ensuring it will manage and conduct its work activities, so far as is reasonably practicable, so as to be safe for employees and others in its workplace, and the organisation will not allow improper conduct or behaviour which is likely to put safety and health at risk;
- specify that adequate resources will be provided.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) state that the six areas of work that can lead to stress if not properly managed should be incorporated or made reference to in the organisations stress policy. The six areas include: demands, control, support, role, change and relationships. For further information on these six areas please view the HSE document *How to Tackle*

Work Related Stress, available to download from the HSE website: www.hse.gov.uk.

In relation to bullying, the anti-bullying policy should also include:

- a clear statement that bullying is unlawful and will not be tolerated;
- examples of bullying behaviour;
- confidentiality for any complaint;
- reference to grievance procedures, investigation procedures and disciplinary procedures.

For further information on work related stress and bullying, please view the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) documents *Work Related Stress – A Guide for Employers* and *Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work*. Both documents are available from the HSA website: www.hsa.ie.

Another useful document is *A Guide for Manager and Employers – Bullying and Harassment at Work*. This document is available from the HSE website: www.hse.gov.uk.

QUESTION 2

I completed a manual handling instructor course in 2010 but it was not a FETAC Level 6 award at the time. I need to register on a FETAC Level 6 manual handling instructor course but do I need to attend a five day course again?

ANSWER 2

The phase-in period for manual handling instructors to bring themselves up to the FETAC level 6 standard

ended in December 2012.

This means that in order to have been a manual handling instructor at the start of 2013 then one must have completed the FETAC level 6 manual handling instruction course before the end of December 2012.

There are two options available for manual handling instructors to achieve the FETAC level 6 award: through the recognition of prior learning (RPL) process, or through attending a five day FETAC level 6, manual handling instructor course.

RPL requires existing instructors to submit a portfolio of evidence that can be assessed against the standards in the awards. The assessment process will include practical skills demonstration(s) and a theory test to demonstrate competence. RPL can only be offered by registered FETAC providers approved to offer RPL for these awards.

The FETAC level 6 award is an award for life so there is no need for recertification once you have received the award. However, it is advised that instructors maintain their continuous professional development in order for them to maintain their competence and to remain up to date with ongoing developments in the area of manual handling.

For further information on the new manual handling training system, please view the Health and Safety Authority website: www.hsa.ie.

QUESTION 3

I am the health and safety officer on a construction site and many workers on site wear contact lenses. Can you please tell me if there are any known reasons as to why wearing contact lenses on a construction site would not be allowed?

ANSWER 3

It is possible that the wearing of contact lenses could pose a danger to persons on a construction site. For example, a dusty atmosphere is known to be a risk to the wearers of contact lenses; dust can get trapped in the eye and cause irritation, a contact lens may contain the dust which will prolong the irritation and may result in an infection of the eye.

I advise that you create an inventory of the products being used on the construction site and check what controls are required for their use. These controls should be included on the product's material safety data sheet. This information should be included in your risk assessment along with details of the working environment, the work activity, the duration of work, frequency of work, etc.

One of the controls may be that contact lenses should not be worn. For example, in the Health and Safety Authority's information sheet titled *Cementing Safely - Working with Cement*, it states 'contact lenses should not be worn when handling cement or cement containing products.'

Brian O'Connor
BSc OSH, MSc EHS

National Irish Safety Organisation Events Diary



Celebrating
50
years

Please keep an eye on our website: www.niso.ie for forthcoming courses in 2013.

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

Safe Pass Course

(Course Length: 1 day)

26 July / 9 August / 30 August

Basic Manual Handling Course

(Course Length: Half day)

14 August

Health and Safety

Representation Course, L22487,
FETAC Level 5

(Course Length: 3 days)

9, 10, 11 September

VDU/DSE Assessors Course

(Course Length: 1 day)

September – date to be
confirmed

Manual Handling Instructor and Assessor Course, 6N0233, FETAC Level 6

September – date to be
confirmed

2. Courses and events in the regions

EAST REGION

Seminar: Fire in Healthcare

Venue: Dublin

Autumn - date to be confirmed

MIDLAND REGION

Course: NISO Introduction to
Occupational Safety and Health
Venue: Athlone Institute of
Technology

(Course Length: 13 weeks,
Mondays for 2 hours)

Commencing: 30 September 2013

Contact: midland@niso.ie

Seminar: NEW Construction Regulations 2013

Venue: Athlone

August – date to be confirmed

Further information: www.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)

Commencing: 24 September 2013

Contact: midwest@niso.ie or

[www.lit.ie/LifelongLearning/
Courses](http://www.lit.ie/LifelongLearning/Courses)

Seminar: NEW Construction Regulations 2013

Venue: Limerick

August – date to be confirmed

Further information: www.niso.ie

SOUTH REGION

Workshop: Accident Investigation

Venue: Cork

September – date to be confirmed

Further information:

south@niso.ie

Seminar: Fire in Healthcare

Venue: Cork

Autumn - date to be confirmed

WEST REGION

Seminar: Fire in Healthcare

Venue: Galway

Autumn - date to be confirmed

3. National Events

NISO Annual Conference and Trade Exhibition

Venue: Radisson Blu, Galway
4 October 2013

NISO and NISG Health and Safety Awards Ceremony

Venue: Radisson Blu, Galway
4 October 2013



NISO, A11 Calmount Park, Calmount Avenue, Ballymount, Dublin 12.
Tel: 01 465 9760 Fax: 01 465 9765 Email: info@niso.ie Website: www.niso.ie