

Health & Safety update



Sensible risk management

I'm sure you've all heard the stories about 'elfandsafety' stopping people doing worthwhile and enjoyable things, yet at the same time others are suffering harm and even death due to poor management and complacency. In some instances health and safety is used as a convenient and lazy excuse to justify unpopular decisions or cover up management failure. The fear of litigation of course does not help either. Often you will hear of events or activities being cancelled after many years of safely being run without incident. The excuse given is 'Health and Safety won't allow it'. Usually however, the risks are poorly understood, which can lead to the dreaded fear of being sued and insurance companies being unwilling to underwrite an event.

If you believe some of the stories you hear, health and safety is all about stopping any activity that might possibly lead to harm, think again. Risk management should be about practical steps to protect people from real harm and suffering - not bureaucratic back covering. Instead sensible risk management should aim to seek a balance between the unachievable aim of absolute safety and the kind of poor management of risk that damages lives and the economy.

To help businesses adopt a better approach to risk management, the Health and Safety Executive have written a common sense set of principles which should form part of any business management systems. (see www.hse.gov.uk)

The 5 principles of sensible risk management:

- Ensuring that workers and the public are properly protected
- Providing overall benefit to society by balancing benefits and risks, with a focus on reducing real risks – both those which arise more often and those with serious consequences
- Enabling innovation and learning, not stifling them
- Ensuring that those who create risks manage them responsibly and understand that failure to manage real risks responsibly is likely to lead to robust action
- Enabling individuals to understand that as well as the right to protection, they also have to exercise responsibility
- Remember sensible risk management is not about:
 - Creating a totally risk free society
 - Generating useless paperwork mountains
 - Scaring people by exaggerating or publicising trivial risks
 - Stopping important recreational and learning activities for individuals where the risks are managed
 - Reducing protection of people from risks that cause real harm and suffering

NEW LEGAL DUTY TO MANAGE ASBESTOS 2003

You must keep a record of accidents and report fatalities, major injuries and accidents resulting in more than 3 days off work. Major injuries include: broken bones, amputations and injuries resulting in a member of the public going to hospital for treatment. Certain work related diseases and dangerous occurrences must also be reported. They can be reported to the Incident Contact Centre (ICC):

Tel 0845 300 9923 web Internet: www.hse.gov.uk/riddor E-mail: riddor@natbrit.com.

NEW AND EXPECTANT MOTHERS AT WORK

The definition of a new or expectant mother is someone who is pregnant, has given birth within the previous six months, or is breastfeeding. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulation requires every employer to assess workplace risks for all their employees, and take practical action to control those risks. In addition, employers must take particular account of risks to new and expectant mothers.

Employers must identify hazards in their workplace that could pose a health or safety risk to new and expectant mothers and take appropriate action to remove or reduce the risk. They must also make this information known to all their female employees of childbearing

age, not just those who have informed them they are pregnant. This is particularly important for expectant mothers, as it is possible for the first 4-6 weeks of pregnancy to go undetected.

In most workplaces, controlling common workplace risks appropriately will reduce the need for special action for new and expectant mothers.

The HSE guidance HSG122 'New and expectant mothers at work - a guide for employees' offers clear and practical guidance for employers to comply with their legal duties. The publication is available from HSE books (ISBN 0 7176 2583 4), Tel: 01787 881165.

NEW HEALTH AND SAFETY LAW POSTER

As from 6 April 2009, the HSE is publishing new versions of its approved health and safety poster and leaflet. According to the HSE the new versions are modern, eye-catching and easy to read. They set out in simple terms, using numbered lists of basic points, what employers and workers must do, and tell you what to do if there is a problem.

Employers can continue to use their existing versions of poster and leaflet until 5 April 2014, so long as they are readable and the addresses of the enforcing authority and the Employment Medical Advisory Service are up to date.

The leaflet that employers can give to workers, instead of displaying the poster, will be in the form of a pocket card. These will also be available from 6 April 2009.

As from 6 April 2009 it will only be possible to buy the new law poster and obtain the new pocket cards. The leaflet and pocket cards can be purchased from HSE books, Tel: 01787 881165.



Old poster shown above left and new version shown above right.

CHANGES FOR GAS SAFETY

On the 8th September 2008 the HSE signed a contract with Capita Group PLC to run a new gas engineer registration scheme from the 1st April 2009. The new Gas Safe Register replaces Corgi gas registration. By law all gas engineers must now be on the gas safe register to carry out gas work in Great Britain and the Isle of Man.

