

Construction Newsletter

March 2017

Website: www.constructionss.co.uk
E-mail: info@constructionss.co.uk
Tel: 01869 220649

Construction Safety Solutions Ltd

Health and Safety Events Focus on Sectors

Great Britain's independent safety and health regulator is holding a series of events across the country to look at what businesses can do to look after people at work.

As part of its ongoing commitment to reducing death, injury and ill-health in the workplace, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is hosting the engagement opportunities to allow companies to come together to discuss how all industry sectors can contribute to helping Great Britain work well. The first event was held in Swansea and will move onto Glasgow, Coventry, London with the final one in Manchester in April.

The events being held over March and April will provide a platform for attendees from Britain's diverse business community to discuss how to drive continued improvement in workplaces across the country.

HSE, Trade Unions, employer groups and business leaders will be asked to submit solutions that can be implemented within businesses, in partnership and how those solutions can also benefit others in the supply chain, particularly smaller businesses.

HSE's new sector plans have been split into 19 sectors, based on industry type and risk profile, providing a solid base for all to build on and improve. For each sector HSE has covered that sector's health and safety performance identified the top three strategic priorities for the next three to five years; and included actions HSE proposes to take.

The events will provide a further opportunity to comment on these plans, and HSE is inviting attendees to think about how to implement them to best effect. It will ask how best HSE and dutyholders work together, how workers and people can be reached in new ways, and how the campaigns can resonate with the workforce.

Last year, work related illness affected around 1.3 million workers and nearly 26 million working days were lost to it. The economic costs are equally stark – totalling over £9 billion per year just for new cases – that figure does not include ongoing costs from past working conditions.

It can sometimes be difficult to convince businesses that regulation is as an enabler of economic activity and essential for sustainable growth.

But HSE wants organisations to understand that sensible and proportionate risk management supports growth, enables innovation and protects an organisation's most vital asset, its people.

HSE will tell attendees it is focused on where it can make a difference, targeting the right places at the right times, whether through enforcement, advising or encouraging and engaging with all sectors to understand how health and safety outcomes can be positively influenced.

HSE has been working with key stakeholders to develop plans for 2017 and is encouraged with the actions that have been outlined – the series of events are designed to refine and fine tune that activity.

Construction Firm Fined After Worker Fell From Height

Construction company Kier Construction Limited has been fined £400,000 after a worker fell from height.

Westminster Magistrates' Court heard how Jair Morales was installing plywood boards covering holes on the third floor of a building at a construction site in Uxbridge, Middlesex when he fell a distance of 3.95m to the floor below.

The court heard no steps had been taken to prevent him falling through the opening as he installed the plywood boards. Mr Morales suffered fractures in his pelvis and his arm following the fall and has been unable to work since the accident.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Kier failed to ensure the work was properly planned and carried out in a safe manner. Kier Construction Limited of Tempsford Hall, Bedfordshire pleaded guilty to breaching section 4 (1) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005, has been fined £400,000 and ordered to pay costs of £1,534.

Speaking after the case HSE inspector Owen Rowley said: "This incident could have been a lot worse. The system that Kier Construction Ltd has in place to control the risk from installing the protection for openings was not implemented on site, ultimately resulting in the accident.

“The risks of working at height are widely recognised throughout the construction industry. This case highlights the importance of ensuring that all work at height is properly planned and carried out safely.”

Full story: Jail For Bosses Who Tried to Cover up Details of 25-year-Old's Fatal Fall

Three company bosses have been jailed following the death of 25-year-old father of one, Benjamin Edge, who fell from a roof he was working on, without safety equipment and in windy conditions.

Following the incident safety failings were covered up, a new risk assessment was written and an employee was “sent home to collect harnesses to make it look like the accident was Mr Edge’s fault, because he had not worn safety equipment” it was reported.

The fatal incident:

On 10 December 2014, Mr Edge, fell from the roof of a metal structure he was helping to dismantle in Ramsbottom, Bury.

He died hours later at Salford Royal Hospital, after suffering catastrophic head injuries. At the time of the fall, Mr Edge was working for SR and RJ Brown and was working on a site run by Marshalls Mono.

Investigation:

A joint investigation by the Greater Manchester Police alongside the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) looked into the circumstances surrounding Mr Edge’s death.

It was heard in court how MA Excavations Ltd, contracted out the work to brothers Christopher and Robert ‘James’ Brown, directors at SR and RJ Brown Limited.

Mark Aspin, director at MA Excavations Ltd said he believed the Browns were ‘competent’ and could complete the job safely, but the court heard he did not check their qualifications. Manchester Evening News reported that Robert ‘James’ Brown composed a ‘grossly inadequate’ risk assessment before the job which he did not show to anyone.

After Mr Edge was rushed to hospital he then typed up another risk assessment, which should have been done beforehand.

Peter Heap, 34, who had been working alongside Mr Edge was asked by Christopher Brown, 25, to go home and collect harnesses to make it look like the accident was Mr Edge’s fault, because he had not worn safety equipment.

“Foolishly, weakly and criminally – as he now realises – Peter Heap went along with what he was told to do,” Mr Justice Openshaw said.

The Browns maintained that the harnesses had been there before the incident, although they did admit falsifying the risk assessment.

Sentencing:

During sentencing, addressing Christopher Brown and Robert ‘James’ Brown Ben’s mother said that when she saw her son’s coffin at the funeral she wanted to drag those responsible to the coffin so they could see what they had done.

She said: “Ben’s death was totally avoidable. He had everything to live for, but his future was stolen from him.”

Mrs Edge added: “Benjamin Edge, known affectionately as Ben, was my son and his father, Tim’s, son. We are so proud of Ben, not just what he achieved, but who he was.”

SR and RJ Brown Limited, of which brothers Christopher and Robert Brown are directors, was fined £300,000 at Manchester Crown Court after admitting corporate manslaughter.

Christopher Brown and Robert Brown pleaded guilty to perverting the course of justice and two counts of health and safety breaches. They were jailed for 20 months. A count of manslaughter for the brothers is to lie on file.

Mark Aspin, 37, was sentenced to a year in jail after admitting health and safety offences.

MA Excavations Ltd, of Garden Street, Ramsbottom, which contracted out the work – was fined £75,000 after pleading guilty to two health and safety breaches.

Employee Peter Heap, 34, was spared jail after he followed orders to bring safety harnesses to the site after his colleague had fallen to try to conceal what had happened. His four-month sentence for perverting the course of justice, which he had admitted, was suspended for two years.

Ben’s family have issued a tribute to their son, who leaves behind a three year-old daughter, a loving mother and father, twin brother, and partner.

“Ben was taken from us in tragic circumstances aged only 25, and our family and all of his friends are totally grief stricken by his loss.

“We miss him so very, very much.

“He was a loving, caring son, twin brother and family man. Ben was a much loved partner and father and will always remain a huge part of everyone’s lives”.

Promoting a Positive Safety Culture

Although 9 in 10 employers state that they involve their employees in the management of their company's health and safety, only 4 in 10 businesses actually achieve what the HSE deems to be good safety practice. Here, John Southall, co-founder at Southalls, explores the simple steps employers can take to engage employees into adopting a positive safety culture.

Trust, respect and cooperation. These are the three factors that the HSE's Director for Scotland emphasises as the key pre-requisites for the prevention of ill health and injury at work.

Employee engagement has been a main point of focus for the HSE, with this year's #HelpGreatBritainWorkWell campaign encouraging business owners to build and maintain engaging relationships between themselves and their employees.

The campaign builds on a year's worth of research into how duty holders can achieve and sustain a positive safety culture, which evidenced that employee engagement across all levels, from owner to contractor, is vital. As the HSE statistics above show, even if a company has the most thorough safety systems and procedures in place, their business' safety aims can quickly fail if their own employees do not actively support them.

So, in an environment where health and safety may often still be met with disinterest, annoyance and a lack of cooperation by some employees, how can employers achieve this all important engagement? The first step employers should take when promoting a positive safety culture is to focus on themselves and their senior management.

Starting From the Top

As with all areas of a business, senior members of the team should lead by example. Founders, owners, managers and supervisors are all responsible for ensuring that a positive safety culture is consistently promoted throughout all areas of the business.

Before beginning to promote this culture, employers must make sure that their own health and safety practices are in keeping with relevant health and safety legislations. As well as being responsible for ensuring all of their own health and safety training is up to date, they should also make sure each member of their senior management teams have received the most recent and relevant training.

As an employer, conducting regular visits around all areas of the business is key to understanding how well employees are engaging with health and safety practices, especially during busy periods. By taking time to regularly visit the shop floor and view how well certain areas are performing, will not only provide an insight into what health and safety procedures require improvement, but also strengthen relationships between management and employees.

Two Way Communications

While an employer's visibility and leadership is essential in ensuring a positive culture change is promoted, it can only be successfully implemented through continuous two-way communication between employer and employees. Business owners should regularly update employees on the business' safety goals, the reasons behind them, and how they can be achieved both individually and as a team.

A common pitfall that workplaces may face when trying to achieve this is the absence of effective and consistent reporting of accidents and near misses due to employees fearing they will be reprimanded or dismissed for their mistakes. However, comprehensive reporting of all incidents, no matter how minor, is key to ensuring that lessons are learnt and relevant prevention is put in place.

For many businesses, adopting private and easy to use reporting systems, such as Safety Cloud's Staff Safety Observations module, is an effective method that allows employees to privately report any concerns or safety issues they have. Once discreet feedback from team members has been received, employers should hold regular meetings to identify and understand why a certain problem may be occurring, and how it can be solved.

To help support this, employers should make sure that health and safety is adopted into each employee's everyday job role to ensure they proactively engage with and complete necessary health and safety processes. Employers should also make sure that all contractors and part-time members of staff receive the same level of communication and support as permanent, full-time employees.

All too frequently business owners are criticised for not being actively involved within their workplace, creating a concerning distance between themselves and their employees. By encouraging continuous two-way conversations between themselves and their employees, business owners can create a positive safety culture change that each employee is part of.