

# Health and Safety

THE HEALTH AND SAFETY AUTHORITY NEWSLETTER

May 2005 **matters**

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## Fatalities up 40% in first four months of 2005

- **World Health and Safety Day is focused on prevention**
- **Construction and agriculture sectors are singled out for special attention**

"Deep concern" has been expressed by the Chief Executive of the Health and Safety Authority, Tom Beegan, at the rise in fatalities in the first four months of 2005. To date, 23 people have been killed in work related accidents making it one of the worst starts to a year this decade.

Speaking on World Health and Safety Day, Tom Beegan said "I am very concerned that the lessons have not been learned and that people are dying needlessly simply because proper measures have not been taken to ensure workplace safety. It is simply not acceptable that any worker could lose their life by just turning up for work and carrying out their job.

It is time to accept that a proper health and safety management system will in the medium term make the workplace safer and reduce overall costs."

The fatality figures show that the same sectors are the worst offenders once again with construction topping the list followed by Agriculture.

- The figures for the first 4 months are already up 40% on the same period in 2004.
- 9 people have been killed in the construction sector – up from 7 in the same period last year.
- 7 people died in agriculture – up from 4 in the first four months of 2004.
- The blackspots this year are: Cork (4 deaths), Donegal, Dublin, Louth and Wexford (3 deaths in each).
- Louth recorded no work-related deaths in the whole of 2004 and already this year, three have been reported.
- Already, Cork, Donegal, Dublin and Louth have all either equalled or exceeded the level of work-related deaths recorded for the whole of last year.

"All those involved in construction and farming must face up to the safety issues," urges Tom Beegan. "Year in year out the same industries has the worst safety record and people keep getting injured and being killed. It must not continue and we will use every means at our disposal to ensure that it doesn't."

## First anniversary of smoke free initiative



The Health and Safety Authority has announced an average 92% compliance rate with the workplace smoking ban, over the nine months from its introduction on 29th March 2004 to 31st December last. The Authority is enforcing the ban across enclosed workplaces excluding the hospitality industry and health sectors, which are covered by the Health Boards.

The Authority has carried out almost 7500 inspections for compliance with the smoking ban in relevant workplaces in the nine months in question. The Authority has also responded to hundreds of calls from employers and employees seeking information on the ban and has received 188 complaints in the matter.

Compliance rates were highest among those employing more than 100 employees where compliance averaged 98% as compared to average compliance rates of 91% among smaller employers (0 - 20 employees). Across sectors, there was some variation also, with a 92% compliance rating in the construction sector, a 94% rate in manufacturing and a rate of 93% in the mining and quarrying industries. Inspections for compliance in transport, storage and communications industries revealed a 89% compliance rate while the comparable figure in real estate, renting and business activities was 95%.

This newsletter is produced regularly. For further details contact the editor, Niamh Parnell at [niamh\\_parnell@hsa.ie](mailto:niamh_parnell@hsa.ie) or 01 6147067.

# Farm Safety Week

(11th April to 17th April)

The Minister for Agriculture and Food, Ms Mary Coughlan TD and the Minister for Labour Affairs, Mr Tony Killeen TD launched Farm Safety Week in Sligo on 4th April. Farm Safety Week, began on 11th April and will focus on four themes:

1. Safety for the Elderly on Farms
2. Completion of Farm Safety Self Assessment Document
3. Tractor Maintenance
4. Machine Guarding especially PTO shafts

A host of activities were organised to mark the week including:

- a national radio campaign
- a targeted inspection campaign
- a safety ad aired in marts nationwide via Farm TV
- the distribution of Farm Self-Assessment Documents
- 90,000 Farm Safety brochures included in Farmer's Journal by FBD Insurances
- a text message alert to farmers

Co-ordinated by the Health and Safety Authority, the week is supported and promoted by members of the Farm Safety Partnership, an advisory committee to the Authority.

Highlighting the importance of promoting the health and safety message, the Minister for Labour Affairs, Mr Tony Killeen spoke about the shocking statistics of farm deaths. "It is deeply worrying that 80% of those that have died in farm accidents this year are over the age of 65. There is a terrible trend developing on our farms where the elderly are most likely to lose their lives in farm accidents. In 2004, 7 out of the 14 people who died on Irish farms were over 65. It is important that this trend is highlighted and that all organisations working in the farming sector work towards reversing this trend."

The deaths so far this year have taken place in Louth, Cork, Cavan, Mayo and Wexford.

	Total Farm Deaths	Involving those over 65
2005	7	4
2004	14	7

## Members of the Farm Safety Partnership

Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association • FBD Insurance • ICMSA • IFA • Farm Relief Services Network • Macra Na Feirme • Teagasc • Department of Agriculture and Food • Health and Safety Authority • Professional Agricultural Contractors Ireland

## June Construction Blitz Planned

The Health and Safety Authority will hold the first of its Construction Inspection Campaigns in June.

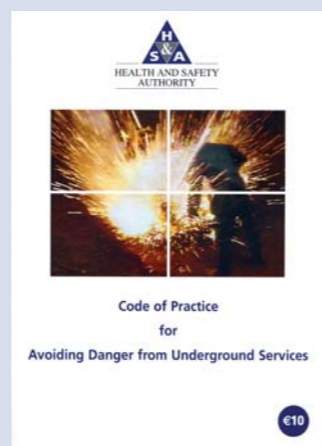
The Campaign, involving all available inspectors, will be focusing on following key issues:

- Health and Safety Plan
- Safety Statement
- Welfare
- Site traffic and plant
- Work at a height
- Notification / Appointment of duty holders



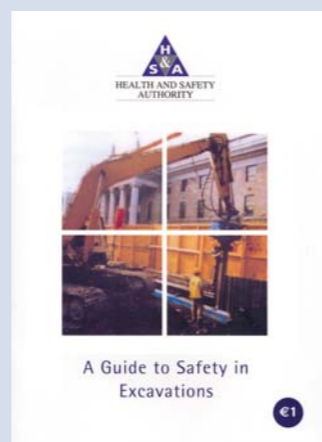
Housing construction and renovation will be a key focus on the campaign. The Health and Safety Authority will announce more details shortly.

## NEW PUBLICATIONS



### Code of Practice on Avoiding Danger on Underground Services

The code was developed in conjunction with the major utility companies, CIF, ICTU and local authorities and sets out the process which should be undertaken from design stage to work completion on any construction project. It provides information and guidance on how to reduce the risks arising from contact with underground services. It is a very useful job aid for workers, which sets out how they should behave when working near underground services.



### A Guide to Safety in Excavations

The aim of this guideline is to assist persons in controlling the risks associated with excavations. Persons involved at all stages of excavation work should be aware of the hazards involved and the procedures in place to control the risks associated with this type of work. To ensure the safety of those involved, this guide explains how excavation work must be properly planned, managed, supervised and executed in order to prevent accidents.

# Health Service Audit Tool

The Health Service Audit Tool is a new initiative devised by the Health and Safety Authority. It was officially launched on 1st March 2005 by the Tanaiste and Minister for Health Mary Harney TD and the Minister for Labour Affairs Tony Killeen, TD. The Audit Tool aims to facilitate better health, safety and welfare management systems for the health service.



Photograph from left to right: Tom Beegan, Chief Executive of the HSA, the Tanaiste and Minister for Health and Children, Mary Harney T.D., Minister for Labour Affairs, Tony Killeen T.D. and Peter McCabe, Vice-Chairman of the Board of the Health and Safety Authority.

It is six-month programme which is being piloted by five health organisations. The programme is comprised of the Audit Tool and a guidance document. It lists 20 criteria for carrying out a comprehensive audit health and safety management system. The criteria range from setting out clear lines of accountability, to consultation and communication with staff as well as the steps involved in carrying out a risk assessment and ensuring the safety, health and welfare of both patients and staff. Over 800 Health service workers were injured while on duty during 2003. Manual Handling accounted for 36% of the total injuries followed by slips, trips or falls on the same level accounting for 22% of injuries (see table below). The Audit Tool is expected to lead to a better management system and result in a safer workplace to help reduce the numbers of such incidents. It will enable all in the health service to identify their roles and responsibilities in safety management and understand the steps required to achieve a first-rate health, safety and welfare management system. The five health organisations involved in the pilot scheme include Adelaide and Meath Hospital (incorporating the National Children's Hospital) in Tallaght, Cheshire Ireland, HSE Midlands, HSE North Eastern and HSE South Western Area. The programme will be implemented nationally next year once any problems have been addressed in the pilot scheme.

### Health Sector Percentage Incident Type

Incident Type	Health	All Sectors
Injured while handling, lifting or carrying	36	33.8
Slips, trips or falls on same level	22.0	25.5
Injured by a person – malicious	18.8	6.3
Exposure/contact with harmful substance	4.5	3.2
Injured by a person – non-malicious	7.3	1.2



## Cork Inspection Blitz

On 9th February the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) launched a 'safety crackdown' targeting Cork workplaces. This crackdown involved a four-week inspection blitz after it emerged that Cork had the worst January for fatalities in a decade. This followed the tragic deaths of four people through work-related incidents in the Cork area.

Of the 434 Inspections carried out to ensure compliance with occupational health and safety legislation, 10% of these resulted in enforcement action being taken. The HSA targeted companies in the construction, quarrying, agriculture, transport and manufacturing sectors. The results of these inspections are as follows:

- 20 Prohibition Notices issued, 19 of which applied to the Construction Industry
- 12 Improvement Notices issued
- 7 fines of €2,000 issued

To help raise awareness the Authority ran a local radio commercial targeted specifically at the Cork area. Information meetings and seminars were some of the events held by the organisations involved to promote safety awareness in the workplace. Organisations involved in the 'safety crackdown' include: SIPTU, CIF, The Institute of Occupational, Safety and Health, the Irish Farmers Association (IFA) and the HSA Southern Advisory Committee.

Agriculture	Construction	Manufacturing/ Other	Quarries	Other	Total
55 Visits	253 Visits	35 Visits	3 Visits	88 Visits	434 Visits
3 Improvement Notices		6 Improvement Notices		3 Improvement Notices	12 Improvement Notices
	19 Prohibition Notices	1 Prohibition Notice			20 Prohibition Notices
				7 Fines at 2,000 Euro each	7 Fines

# A day in the life of...

Patricia Murray



## *What's your job?*

I am an organisational/occupational psychologist for the Health and Safety Authority

## *Is that all about how people think and behave?*

Not all, as much of it is about generic causal factors that predispose a situation to negative outcomes for people and therefore, for organisations. Everyone thinks they know psychology. Everyone thinks they know all about stress bullying and anything to do with people's behaviour. However experience does not equate with understanding and psychologists need to be able to move beyond the effects and understand the complexity of the causes.

## *Why does the Health and Safety Authority need an Occupational Psychologist?*

Within the HSA, the need for an Occupational Psychologist came about, because of increasing demand from our customers for advice and information on aspects of workplaces that either effect behaviour or are affected by behaviour. The aim is to bring together somehow meaningfully the people and work relationship so that mental health as well as physical health is addressed in the daily business of health and safety.

The aim is to encourage people to behave in ways which will not detrimentally effect either health or safety outcomes, and –if possible - to actually improve or increase them so that life both inside and outside work becomes healthier. The main areas of my work are stress, bullying and general systems of work issues such as training, standards, policy and implementation, management, order, design and communications.

## *What causes stress?*

Stress is all about different aspects of behaviour. It is affected by the degree of and quality of training as it is about management, and personal fitness for the job. All of these will impact on how the person perceives a situation as stressful or not, and how well he or she will cope with whatever degree of stress they perceive depends on their genetic make up, their upbringing, personality and many other social factors which are influenced by, and influence each other. The more support we get and the better our ability to 'stand back' and try to put order on things, or to 'cope', the less stressed we will ultimately feel.

Bullying is often associated with other issues, like unrealistic attributions, learned helplessness and/or high levels of aggression, lack of self awareness and lack of respect for others generally.

## *So what are you working on at the moment?*

We hope to pilot the newly upgraded Work Positive Stress tool in four sites later this year. This would give us good, reliable information on the four sites, the ways to improve things there in terms of absence due to stress and identify the main sources of stress are in these four sites. The pack was originally launched three years ago but now the Health and Safety Authority in the UK has bought into it and it was upgraded so is a more comprehensive instrument and encompasses the Management Standards approach to organisational stress.

I am also the Authority's representative on a project entitled "Stress Impact" which is being jointly sponsored by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs.

It is trying to analyse what it is that makes people return to work after a stressful event, and what makes them remain off sick. It also touches on what made them go sick in the first place and that information will inform me in my work with those doing risk assessments for stress.

## **Bullying - Top actions for companies**

- Let everyone know what is NOT acceptable behaviour - give examples, make it concrete and outline what will happen if anyone engages in that type of behaviour.
- Develop a short written policy using the Health and Safety Authority Code.
- Take complaints seriously and don't trivialise.
- Remain objective.
- Investigate any serious complaint with a view to both finding out the facts and moving on so that it doesn't re-occur

## **Stress - Top actions for companies**

- Understand what stress is, how it effects behaviour and thoughts - and what it isn't.
- Inform staff of general issues around stress - work-related and other-related.
- Develop a short policy document and highlight control measures - i.e. preventive measures.
- Monitor the environment for sick certs diagnosing 'stress'.
- Interview people returning to work after stress-related absences.
- Manage your own stress so you don't pass it on.