

# Health and Safety

THE HEALTH AND SAFETY AUTHORITY NEWSLETTER

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# matters

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## New man in charge

*Martin O' Halloran, has taken up his position as the new Chief Executive of the Authority.*

Previously holding the post of Assistant Chief Executive (ACE) of Corporate Services, Mr O' Halloran brings a wealth of expertise and knowledge of the health and safety environment to his new post as head of the Authority. He served as a non-executive director of the then National Authority for Occupational Safety and Health and was Irish delegate to the European Commission advisory committee on Occupational Safety and Health from 1992 to 1995. A native of County Meath, Mr O' Halloran has worked as an occupational health and safety professional in industry and held senior positions with the former Telecom Eireann, Eircom and Vodafone. A graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, he holds a M.Sc. in Statistics and Operations Research as well as a B.Sc (hons) Applied Physics, Mathematics from the University of London. He also holds a Graduate Diploma in Occupational Safety and Health 1990 (Masters Programme) from the Robens Institute, University of Surrey. As one of the first health and safety professionals ever in this country, Mr O Halloran takes the helm at an exciting time for the Authority, overseeing its extended legislative role in terms of the 2005 Act and also as competent interim Authority for the new REACH regulations.



*New CEO Martin O'Halloran*

## Launch of Annual Report

The launch of the Health and Safety Authority's Annual Report for 2006, and an accompanying report entitled 'Summary of Injury, Illness and Fatality Statistics 2005-2006', took place at the Mont Clare Hotel in Dublin on Wednesday 18th July.

The event was kindly attended by the new Minister for Labour Affairs, Mr. Billy Kelleher T.D. Also present were Mr. Jim Lyons, Chairman of the Board of the Health and Safety Authority and Mr. Martin O'Halloran, CEO of the Authority.

The annual report outlines the work of the Authority as the national body with responsibility for securing safety, health and welfare at work. The statistics report is a detailed examination of workplace fatality and accident information which will inform the Authority's work in the future.

Minister Kelleher commented "With the introduction of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005, the Authority is now armed with the most modern workplace health and safety legislation in Europe. I commend what they have achieved in 2006 as evidenced by this annual report".

Both publications can be purchased or downloaded free of charge from our website, [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie).



*L-R: HSA Chairman Mr Jim Lyons, Minister for Labour Affairs, Mr. Billy Kelleher T.D. and Mr. Martin O'Halloran*

# REACH Right Now!

The new REACH Regulation came into force here on June 1st, a single regulation replacing the bulk of all previous chemical legislation. REACH, an acronym for Registration, Evaluation, and Authorisation of Chemicals, will affect many sectors across the spectrum of Irish business; from manufacturer, importer and seller to end user. Its implication is that, in future, responsibility for the registration and evaluation of chemicals will be placed firmly with the business itself, hence the importance of a clear understanding of what it entails. Given the large level of chemicals now in use on a daily basis in organisations it is vital to become informed with what's required of them in managing their chemical inventory.

Speaking at the launch of the event at the Radisson SAS, Dublin on May 29th, Dr. Sharon McGuinness Assistant Chief Executive of Chemical Policy and Services, commended the new regulation and spoke of the numerous benefits to all concerned. "REACH will provide many benefits to industry as an improvement to current regulations and practices. It is designed to enhance health and safety and it will also help to protect the environment. It will also ease the path for the research and development of new chemicals needed to drive innovation in our economy," said Dr. McGuinness. In excess of 300 figures from industry and the business world attended the information seminar.

REACH's arrival marks an exciting new departure for the Authority, in its new capacity as interim competent authority for the REACH regulation in Ireland. Throughout 2007, a range of REACH information seminars and briefings will be held countrywide to raise awareness, in conjunction with a high profile advertising campaign. Booking for these seminars can be done online at [reachright@hsa.ie](mailto:reachright@hsa.ie), where a specialized REACH helpdesk exists to answer queries. The helpdesk can also be contacted via Locall 1890 289 389.



L-R: Former Minister Tony Killeen and Doctor Sharon McGuinness

## Publication of Authority's Safety Strategy

The Authority's 'Strategy Statement – Working to Create a National Culture of Excellence in Workplace Safety, Health and Welfare in Ireland 2007- 2009' and also the 'Programme of Work 2007' were published in April, reflecting its short and long term strategic objectives. The release of these publications reflect the overarching vision the Authority has of ensuring each and every one of the 2m employees in Ireland are protected from accident, injury and ill health in the workplace. Speaking at the launch, Michael Henry, Assistant Chief Executive of Compliance and Advice, confirmed 'This Strategy is aimed at bringing about a culture change. This change will build on the modern Irish workplace- valuing competitiveness whilst also valuing the health and safety of our workplace.'

Indeed, the Authority strives to spread the ethos of making health and safety central to all operations in all workplaces nationwide, reduce injury and fatality rates and make Ireland one of the safest places in the world in which to do business.

"Our simple desire as an organisation is that everyone should come home safely and in good health at the end of a days work. We will do that by building a national culture of health and safety at work, by persuading society in general of the need to put workplace safety at the centre of every operation and by enforcing the 2005 Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act," Mr Henry said.

Copies of the "Strategy Statement 2007- 2009" and the "Programme of Work 2007" are available from the Authority's website [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie) or directly from the Authority.



## HSA Make It To The Top!

A group of staff members from the Authority recently made a weekend voyage across the water to Wales, in a quest to conquer its most challenging and rugged mountain peaks.

And conquer it they did; following a gruelling trek across North Wales the intrepid staff made it to the summit of Snowdon, the highest peak in Ireland, England and Wales!

Team leader Martina O'Kearney Flynn using her trusty map reading skills safely guided the group of eight all the way to the top and back down, in an impressive six hours.

The fit adventurers even managed to visit several quaint medieval Welsh villages en route, making the trip a truly cultural (and cardiovascular) enlightenment.

This year's band of explorers were Martina O'Kearney Flynn, Sheena Notley, Paula Gough, Hilda Martin, Iris O'Neill, Catherine Halligan, Frank Kellaghan and Martin O Dea.



L-R: Martina O'Kearney Flynn, Sheena Notley, Paula Gough



L-R: Iris O'Neill and Catherine Halligan

## Charity begins at Work

Following on from last issue's report on the adventures of Ronan Kilgallon and Mark Madigan, the intrepid duo managed to raise a staggering €10,500 for the Irish Hospice Foundation over the course of their campaign. A cheque for this princely sum was recently presented to Eugene Murray, CEO of the Irish Hospice Foundation.

Generous HSA staff also raised €254 for Crumlin Children's Hospital during the recent Jersey Day, and this year's Daffodil day on March 23rd saw €225 raised for the Irish Cancer Society. Many thanks to all who contributed so generously.



## Irish lessons for Chile

A successful delegation to Ireland by a high powered group from Chile could lead to a number of Irish safety initiatives becoming part of the world of work in South American countries.

The group, representing the Chilean Construction industry, government, trade union and insurance interests, have just completed a study tour to this country. The visit was hosted by the Authority and managed by its construction specialist Paula Gough.

The visit followed the success of the Authority's Safe System of Work Plan (SSWP), which picked up a key award at a major conference in Brazil in 2006. The Chileans came to Ireland on foot of that success to see SSWP in operation at first hand. Whilst here they also examined the Safe Pass and SafeTCert programmes.

The tripartite group also reviewed Ireland's successful experience in risk control in the construction sector and investigated the possibility of future technical cooperation between Ireland and Chile. They were particularly interested in the success of the partnership approach to tackling workplace health and safety issues.

Whilst in Ireland the group met a wide range of representatives of industry, trade union and government interests. Paula Gough described the visit as worthwhile for both sides and said the Authority was particularly pleased to see the manner in which SSWP was being received.

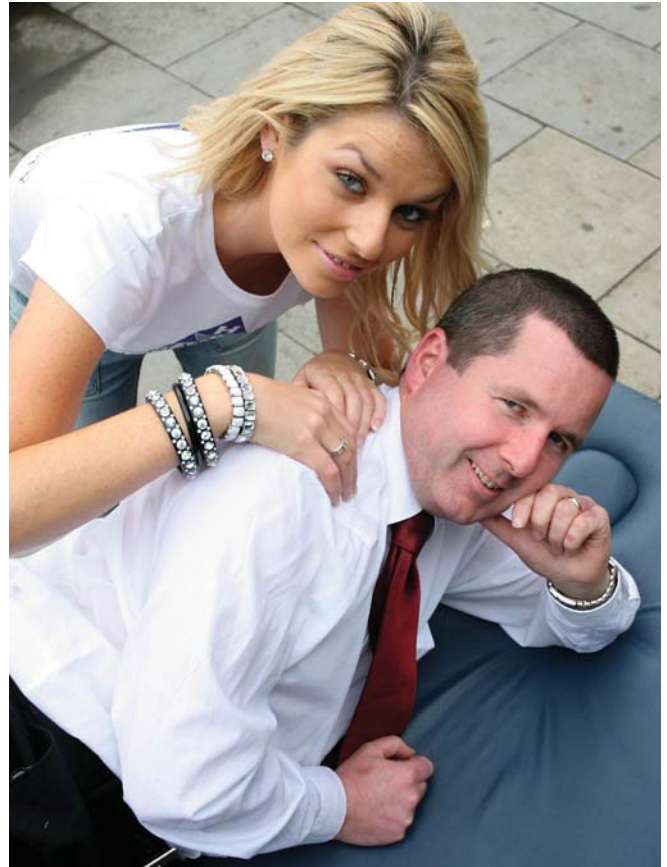
# It's no strain to tackle pain

Backache and muscular pains are the focus of this year's European Week for Safety and Health at Work which will take place from 22-26 of October 2007. 25% of workers complain of backache and 23% report muscular pains. Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are the most common work-related health problem in Europe, affecting millions of workers. MSDs are caused mainly by manual handling, frequent bending and twisting and heavy physical work. According to the EU Commission, the risk of MSDs can increase with the pace of work, low job satisfaction, high job demands and job stress. MSDs are the biggest cause of absence from work in almost all Member States, and can account for up to 40% of all compensation paid to workers. This, in turn, reduces company profitability and adds to social costs for government.

Many problems can be prevented or greatly reduced through employers complying with existing safety and health law and following good practice. However, there are specific actions that have to be taken if MSDs are to be tackled effectively.

'Lighten the Load', the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work's 2007 campaign to tackle MSDs in the workplace, was launched by the EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Vladimir Spidla and supports an integrated management approach with three key elements. First, employers, employees and government need to work together to tackle MSDs. Secondly, any actions should address the 'whole load on the body', which covers all the stresses and strains being placed on the body, environmental factors such as cold working conditions, and the load being carried. Thirdly, employers need to manage the retention, rehabilitation and return to work of employees with MSDs.

The Health and Safety Authority have also launched a nationwide campaign of targeted visits by its inspection staff focussing on manual handling management policy, evidence of manual handling risk assessment and manual handling training programmes. Inspectors from the Authority will also focus on the issue of MSDs during the course of their general inspection routine.



*Model Pippa O'Connor and Francis Power of the Health and Safety Authority at the launch of European Safety Week*

## Legal Cases

The case of Coffey Construction Ltd versus DPP took place on the 8th of June last before Judge Carl Moran at Limerick Circuit Court. The court heard how an accident onsite at Dock Road, Limerick involving a general operative working in a 5m deep excavation on August 5th 2005, led to the fatal injury of Mr Shaun McGowan. An unsupported face collapsed and engulfed the man, a company employee leading to his death at Limerick Regional Hospital from injuries sustained. Coffey Construction Ltd were prosecuted under four separate charges, brought under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989 and Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 2001. Michael McDonagh, lead inspector for the Authority in the case, acted as primary witness to the prosecution. Entering into a guilty plea, Mr Paddy Coffey, managing director of the company, publicly apologised to the family of the deceased and the company was fined €100,000 in total.

A case brought against Eddie Hogan (Drilling) Ltd and Thomas Byrne by the Authority was heard in Birr District Court on 13th April last, involving a fly rock incident which occurred in June 2005 at Loughnane Concrete, Birr. Mr Eddie Hogan, the main contractor on the site acquired the services of Thomas Byrne, an independent shotfirer to load and fire the blast. In spite of earlier instruction from the Authority, Eddie Hogan Ltd failed to provide any drilling or profiling documentation, which resulted in a potentially harmful flyrock blast in the vicinity of the quarry. Eddie Hogan (Drilling) Ltd was fined €500 for one charge 48(2), Regulation 10 taken into consideration and €4,000 costs.