

Strategy Statement 2013-2015

Our vision: A country where worker safety, health and welfare and the safe management of chemicals are central to successful enterprise

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Foreword by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation

The Health and Safety Authority has an extremely important role - to ensure the safe return home of workers to their families once the working day is over.

Every workplace fatality and serious injury is a major tragedy for a family, but every workplace fatality and serious injury is preventable. That is what the work of the HSA is about.

In doing so, it is important that regulation is well targeted at the outcome to be delivered – reducing tragic fatalities and serious injuries in the workplace – and that unnecessary burdens on business are avoided.

There is a perception that health and safety regulation imposes excessive and unnecessary costs and 'red-tape' on businesses. We must continue to work hard to ensure that all regulation is well-targeted and risk-based, and I believe this Strategy will continue to bring about that change in conjunction with the Authority's work as part of the Government's commitment to reduce the regulatory and administrative burden on business.

It is also important to point out that good health and safety practice makes good business sense, aids competitiveness, improves relations with workers and is, in fact, central to successful enterprise. Many businesses in Ireland, both indigenous and multinational, are placing best practice in health and safety at the centre of their enterprise strategy.

The Authority is committed to providing all businesses, ranging from those in the pharmachemical industry with merchandise exports of over €50 billion per annum to the small enterprises which make up the backbone of our economy, with the necessary supports to comply simply and cost effectively with good health and safety practice. Equally, the Authority is committed to supporting workers as they strive to meet their obligations to making each workplace a safe and healthy working environment.

It is a given that we expect to return home safely from work. Making this a reality requires the promotion and adoption of this message - that good health and safety management and the safe use of chemicals makes sense for everybody.

I support the goals the Health and Safety Authority has set for itself in its new Strategy. Implementing it at a time when resources are scarce will be a challenge and the Authority will need to continue to be flexible and responsive to changing circumstances but I have every confidence that it can rise to this challenge in the interests of every worker in the country.

RICHARD BRUTON TD MINISTER FOR JOBS, ENTERPRISE AND INNOVATION

Introduction

We are pleased to present the Authority's strategic plan for 2013-2015. This is the third strategy prepared by the Authority under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005.

The aim of the Authority is to ensure that workers in Ireland return home safely from work to their families and that everyone is protected from the harmful effects of chemicals. Our very broad remit, spanning over two hundred acts, regulations and conventions, means that the Authority has a significant impact on many aspects of Irish life and business.

Through our strategy and annual programmes of work, we aim to achieve a continued downward trend in work related deaths, injuries and ill-health and an increase in the safe use of chemicals.

The Authority will work with employers, employees, representative bodies and other organisations to champion our key messages and activities. We will operate in a way that supports economic and business success. We will continue our extensive work to represent Irish interests at EU level and to contribute to the development of practical and appropriate legislation. We are committed to operating as a high performing organisation providing value for money to the Irish taxpayer. During the course of this strategy the staffing and budget of the Authority will be reduced in line with overall reductions in public sector resources.

This strategy has been developed by the senior management of the Authority under the direction of the Board and in consultation with the staff of the Authority. During public consultation, we received very positive feedback on our approach and valuable recommendations in relation to our priorities and objectives. These submissions enhanced the strategy and are greatly appreciated.

This document sets out our mandate, mission, vision, strategic outcomes and priorities up to the end of 2015. This strategy will set the overall direction for the Authority's activities during this time; we look forward to positive outcomes.



Michael Horgan Chairman



Martin O'Halloran Chief Executive Officer

The Authority was established in 1989 under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 1989¹ and reports to the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

The Authority has a number of major roles. We are:

- The national statutory body with responsibility for ensuring that approximately 1.8 million workers (employed and self-employed) and those affected by work activity are protected from work related injury and ill-health. We do this by enforcing occupational health and safety law, promoting accident prevention, and providing information and advice across all sectors, including retail, healthcare, manufacturing, fishing, entertainment, mining, construction, agriculture and food services.
- The lead National Competent Authority for a number of **chemicals** regulations including REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals) Regulation and Seveso II Directive. Our responsibility in this area is to protect human health (general public, consumers and workers) and the environment, enhance to competitiveness and innovation and ensure free movement of chemicals in the EU market.
- A key agency involved in market surveillance and ensuring the safety of products used in workplaces and consumer applications. We have a remit to protect 4.5 million citizens from unsafe products and articles and to enable the international movement and trade of goods manufactured in Ireland.



¹The Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 has replaced the 1989 Act.



	Occupational health and safety	Chemicals	Market surveillance
Legislation	Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005	Chemicals Acts 2008 and 2010	Relevant EU product safety directives
Legislative role	Protecting workers from occupational injury and illness	Protecting human health and the environment Enhancing competitiveness and innovation Ensuring the free movement of chemicals on the internal market	Protecting workers and the public from unsafe articles and products
Population protected	1.8 million workers and those affected by work activity	4.5 million citizens and the environment	4.5 million citizens

The Authority has a very broad mandate as set out in over two hundred Acts, Regulations and international conventions. Together with the roles outlined above, we also have responsibilities in the areas of transport of dangerous goods by road, control of major accident hazards, chemical weapons, offshore installations and market surveillance related to personal protective equipment, machinery, transportable pressure equipment and lifts, gas appliances, REACH, classification, labelling and packaging, detergents. The core elements of our mandate are summarised below.

Mandate of the Health and Safety Authority

- To regulate the safety, health and welfare of people at work and those affected by work activities.
- To promote improvement in the safety, health and welfare of people at work and those affected by work activities.
- To regulate and promote the safe manufacture, use, placing on the market, trade and transport of chemicals while enhancing innovation and competitiveness.
- To act as a surveillance authority in relation to relevant single European market legislation.



Review of Strategy 2010-2012

The Authority's Strategy Statement for 2010-2012² aimed to build on the progress already made to ensure a better quality of life for everyone in Irish workplaces. It identified scope for further improvements in

the areas of both occupational health and safety and the safe and sustainable management of chemicals. The strategy presented six goals:

- 1. To enable employers, employees and other duty holders to reduce risks to safety, health and welfare.
- 2. To motivate and gain commitment to having safe and healthy workplaces which support success in all enterprises.
- 3. To support the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation in the initiation and development of appropriate legislation and policies.
- 4. To hold accountable those who disregard their duties and responsibilities for occupational safety, health and welfare.
- 5. To promote the safe and sustainable management of chemicals.
- 6. To ensure the Authority is effective in achieving its goals and delivering value for money.

The ultimate outcomes we aim to achieve through our strategies remain consistent – to reduce the levels of work-related deaths, injuries and ill-health and to increase the safe and sustainable use of chemicals. Data to assess the rates of injury and ill-health for the period 2010 to 2012 will only be available in 2014 but some of the available data is presented here for interim assessment.

Figure 1 shows that the reported rate of fatal injury has decreased overall since 2003. The fatality rate has more than halved since the establishment of the Authority in 1989. This significant progress has resulted in the saving of hundreds of lives. The higher number of fatalities in 2010 and 2011 (due largely to very high numbers of agriculture fatalities) has caused an increase in the rolling rate for 2010. We will continue our efforts to reverse this trend throughout the term of our new strategy.

The most recent available data from the CSO on injury and illness rates is presented in Figures 2 and 3. The overall trend in both injury and illness rates appears to be downward. The figures for 2009 are believed to be unreliable due to methodological changes while the figures for 2010 would seem to be more in line with previous rates, possibly with some increase. However, further analysis for the specific period of the strategy will be done when CSO data for 2012 becomes available.

²Health and Safety Authority (2010), Statement of Strategy 2010-2012



Figure 1: Rate of worker fatalities 2003-2011 (Source - HSA database)





Review of Strategy 2010-2012



Figure 3: Rate of 4+ day illness 2003-2010 (Source - CSO)

Other desired outcomes from our strategy for 2010-2012 included the increase in awareness, knowledge and levels of engagement in work-related health and safety and the safe use of chemicals. Over the course of the strategy we have completed a wide range of successful projects and activities that have brought us closer to achieving our goals. Further detail is available in our annual reports for 2010 and 2011 but examples of our achievements include:

- The cost of compliance for business has been reduced through the development of simple and user-friendly tools to assist businesses, particularly small businesses, in meeting their legal requirements. Over 2000 people attended the biggest exhibition event ever held by the Authority aimed at assisting businesses in achieving compliance simply and cost effectively.
- We achieved efficiencies in enforcement and policy making through collaboration with a wide range of other state bodies.
- Awareness of the dangers in agriculture increased following high impact advertising campaigns and engagement with farm representative organisations.
- There is increased workplace safety and health awareness among employers and employees. Results from a survey by the European Agency of Occupational Safety and Health show that Irish workers have one of the highest levels of safety awareness in the EU.

- Many workplace and chemical accidents were prevented by carrying out over 36,000 inspections. We have also become involved in new areas such as waste management, renewable energy and unfinished housing estates.
- We have supported the key chemical industries e.g. pharma-chem, technology and medical devices through the provision of information and advice.
- A significant contribution was made at EU level through participation in a range of committees and working groups which determine EU chemicals and health and safety legislation and policies.
- We have supported the Minister in the development and review of legislation and policies. In particular, we have worked to reduce the complexity of the regulation through repeal of outdated legislation and consolidation of current legislation.
- We have delivered significant reform in how we operate.

We learned valuable lessons during the course of the strategy 2010-2012 which we have considered during the development of our new strategy and which will inform its implementation.

Our **mandate** is important and we need to ensure that we fulfil our core responsibilities despite reducing resources. A clearly understood mandate will guide our decisions about which outcomes should be prioritised during the next three years.

The Authority has **highly committed staff** that have adopted new and smarter ways to deliver our services in a rapidly changing environment. We will operate as a high performing agency which delivers effectively on its remit while giving value to the Irish taxpayer. It is important that we extend the ways in which we **measure our performance**. We need to evaluate everything we do so that we can make informed decisions about future policies and projects and so that we can demonstrate the positive impact of our activities for individuals and society. Our work to improve workplace health and safety and the safe use of chemicals is about culture change and will take time. This three year strategy is part of our longer term mission. Our performance measures need to reflect this.

Our role in implementing workplace health and safety and chemicals legislation has the potential to support Ireland's competitiveness and contribute to **national recovery.**

Strategy context

This strategy has been developed by the senior management of the Authority under the direction of the Board (a tripartite group including nominees from employer, employee and other organisations) and in close consultation with the staff of the Authority.

Set out in this section are the consistent themes that emerged from our analysis of the external environment and which informed the development of this strategy.

Workplace health and safety in Ireland

There are still many people suffering workrelated injuries and ill health in Ireland each year, despite overall reductions in rates since the establishment of the Authority. The rate of worker fatality has fallen from over 3 fatalities per 100,000 workers in the early 2000s to just over 2 fatalities per 100,000 workers in recent years.

Non-fatal injuries may also have serious consequences for many workers - the most recent data from the Central Statistics Office³ estimates that in 2010 there were almost 20,000 work-related injuries and over 15,000 work-related illnesses which were of a severity to cause more than three days absence from work.

There have been changes in accident trends since our previous strategy. With the decline in construction activity the agriculture sector has now emerged as having an extremely high fatality rate compared to other sectors. Of the 54 workrelated deaths reported to the Authority in 2011, 22 of these were farming accidents. The types of accidents are also changing, with data suggesting that accidents involving workplace vehicles and transport are increasing. Equally, some accident triggers remain unchanged – both manual handling and slip, trip and fall hazards continue to account for over half of all non-fatal injuries reported to the Authority.

While the number of work-related deaths and injuries is too high, comparison with rates in other member states shows that Ireland consistently has one of the lowest non-fatal injury rates in the EU.

While there have been clear improvements in workplace health and safety in Ireland, the ultimate aim of this strategy is to continue to further reduce the rates of workplace death, injury and illness.

The economy

Ireland's current economic position and outlook sets the context within which the Authority will operate during this strategy. The Authority will contribute to economic growth in three ways – (i) by reducing costs associated with workplace accidents and ill health, (ii) by providing a well-functioning, robust and proportionate regulatory framework and (iii) by ensuring that the Authority provides value for money to the State.

³ Health and Safety Authority (2012), Summary of Workplace Injury, Illness and Fatality Statistics 2010-2011

Poor health and safety costs individuals, enterprises and the State a great deal. According to CSO data, over 1 million work days were lost due to work related injury and illness in 2010 and the total cost of poor health and safety in Ireland is estimated to be approximately 2.5% of GNP⁴ or \in 3.2 billion based on the GNP for 2010. By supporting the reduction of these costs through the proper management of safety, health and chemicals, the Authority can make a positive contribution to enterprise success.

The strategy published by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (2012)⁵ states that Ireland's regulatory environment is one of the more progressive and supportive for enterprise. Recent foreign investment and trade decisions suggest that a well-functioning, robust and proportionate approach to regulation is a fundamental part of Ireland's competitive offering. The work the Authority does to ensure safe and healthy workplaces and the proper and sustainable use of chemicals helps to create this positive regulatory environment. For this strategy we will direct our efforts toward reducing the costs and administrative demands associated with compliance, while always ensuring that people are protected from death, injury and illness.

Changing nature of the workforce and workplaces

While there has been an overall reduction in the number of people at work, industries including pharmaceuticals, technology and medical devices have now assumed increased economic importance. In 2010, for example, the Irish pharmaceutical and chemical sector exported products to the value of €50.8 billion. As the National Competent Authority with responsibility for implementing chemicals legislation the Authority has an important role in terms of regulating and supporting this sector.

We have also observed an increased casualisation of the workforce since the economic downturn. Our previous strategy directed significant effort to engaging with smaller employers and the self-employed and these efforts will continue for this strategy period.

The Authority continuously seeks to identify new technologies, industries and ways of working so that we can quickly and effectively address emerging risks in Irish workplaces.

⁴ Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (2006), commissioned Report on economic impact of Safety, Health and Welfare at Work legislation

⁵ Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (2012), Statement of Strategy 2011-2014

Public sector reform

The focus on reducing costs in the public sector and improving the way in which services are delivered will continue during this strategy. By the end of 2014 the staffing of the Authority will have decreased by 20% from 2010 and spending will also have been significantly reduced. The Authority currently has the lowest ratio of inspectors to persons in employment in the EU⁶. During this strategy the Authority will prioritise service delivery so that our activities achieve the greatest benefit for the resources available to us.

Perceptions of workplace health and safety

Some misconceptions exist in relation to workplace health and safety and the role of the Authority. "Health and safety" is sometimes used as an excuse for not doing something or is the reason given for unpopular decisions. In many cases the real reasons have little to do with workplace health and safety and this can lead to a trivialisation of our work. It is important for the Authority and for our customers that there is a clear understanding of our role and of the benefits for workers, employers and the public of good workplace health and safety management. We intend to address this issue through the combined approach of challenging inaccurate or trivialised accounts while promoting balanced and sensible regulation.

Public consultation

The public consultation on our draft strategy drew a very positive and supportive response from a wide range of organisations – see Appendix 1. There were a number of themes which emerged from our analysis of these submissions:

- There was strong appreciation of our collaborative approach and our emphasis on working with other agencies and organisations to achieve our strategic priorities. Many respondents expressed their satisfaction with ongoing collaborations, while others wished to initiate or extend their working relationship with us.
- Respondents stressed the importance of a whole of Government approach to providing public services. For example, the benefits of data sharing and joint initiatives were highlighted.
- In terms of particular topics to address, several respondents requested that we continue or extend our activities in the area of workplace transport safety. The high fatality rate in the agriculture sector was also noted.

⁶ EU Senior Labour Inspectorate Committee (SLIC) 2009 Annual Report

Vision

A country where worker safety, health and welfare and the safe management of chemicals are central to successful enterprise

Good safety management should be the normal way of doing business in Ireland because it makes sense for employers, for people at work and for consumers. Everybody has a legitimate right and a legal entitlement to return home safely from their work.

Mission

To protect people from death, injury and ill-health arising from all work activities and chemicals

The Authority works with key duty holders to ensure that they meet their legal obligations in relation to workplace health and safety and chemicals. We motivate and inform through providing a combination of promotion, information, inspection and enforcement.

Values

Commitment to customers

Respect

Integrity

Accountability

Quality and continuous improvement

Speed, agility and innovation

The Authority will continue to operate in line with the values developed during the preparation of our previous strategy.

The ultimate aim of the Authority is to prevent injuries and ill-health caused by work activities and chemicals. Therefore, the overall and most important outcome of this strategy is a reduction in the rate of deaths, injury and ill-health. We have also identified a number of other high-level outcomes which will support our overall aim. These are a combination of final and intermediate outcomes aimed at achieving behavioural change. Specific quantitative and qualitative metrics will be developed to enable the tracking of progress against the strategic priorities and expected outcomes on a quarterly or annual basis. Metrics will include a mix of national statistics, information reported to the Authority, inspection data and customer surveys.

The expected outcomes from our strategy are:

- A reduction in the rates of work-related deaths, injuries and ill-health. We will focus our resources on achieving reductions in high risk activities and sectors, and in particular in the agriculture sector.
- Increased commitment by employers to active management of safety, health and welfare.
- Improved employee consultation and workplace representation on safety and health.
- That small businesses have access to tools and information that will enable them to improve their management of safety, health and welfare.
- An improved awareness and understanding by workers of their role in protecting themselves, their colleagues and their business.
- Targeted and early intervention in relation to key EU proposals that affect Irish interests and the timely development of proposals for the transposition of EU regulation.
- To make the best use of State resources and achieve maximum impact by targeting our activities and working with other agencies.
- An improvement in the understanding and image of sensible workplace health and safety.

Taking account of these outcomes, the results of our environmental analysis and the views expressed during internal and public consultation, we have developed five strategic priorities and associated objectives that will direct our activity for the next three years.

The five strategic priorities are:

- 1. Enable enterprises to comply with their legal obligations in a practical and reasonable manner.
- 2. Achieve a high standard of compliance with safety, health and welfare and chemical laws.
- 3. Support the Minister in the development of a well-functioning, robust and proportionate regulatory framework.
- 4. Engage and work with people and organisations nationally and internationally to achieve our vision.
- 5. Be a high performing organisation delivering value to the Irish taxpayer.

Strategic Priority 1

Enable enterprises to comply with their legal obligations in a practical and reasonable manner.

Objectives

- 1. Motivate and gain the commitment of employers and workers to safe and healthy workplaces and the safe use of chemicals.
- 2. Provide and promote tools to simplify compliance.
- 3. Provide particular supports to assist small businesses in applying good health and safety practice.



Strategic outcomes and priorities

Strategic Priority 2

Achieve a high standard of compliance with safety, health and welfare and chemical laws.

Objectives

- 1. Focus inspections on areas of known highest risk, concern and greatest impact.
- 2. Provide on-site support and advice to duty holders.
- 3. Enforce proportionately, relative to the risk to people.
- 4. Investigate and hold to account employers, employees and other duty holders who have failed in their duty of care.

Strategic Priority 3

Support the Minister in the development of a well-functioning, robust and proportionate regulatory framework.

Objectives

- 1. Make proposals and provide technical support on the transposition of EU legislation and the drafting of national provisions.
- 2. Identify opportunities for rationalising and simplifying the legislative framework.
- 3. Contribute to the national agenda on reduction of regulatory and administrative burden.
- 4. Represent the national interest at EU level for workplace safety and health and chemicals.

Strategic Priority 4

Engage and work with people and organisations nationally and internationally to achieve our vision.

Objectives

- 1. Identify, develop and maintain relationships with key influencers and enlist their support.
- 2. Promote sensible and practical awareness and understanding of work related health and safety and safe chemicals management.
- 3. Create awareness and understanding of risk management amongst students.

Strategic Priority 5

Be a high performing organisation delivering value to the Irish taxpayer.

Objectives

- 1. Be a role model organisation in delivering value for money.
- 2. Promote a culture that enhances staff empowerment, learning and development.
- 3. Gather, use and share information that enables us to achieve and demonstrate the greatest impact.
- 4. Meet our statutory obligations.

Programmes of work

The Authority will deliver this strategy through the development and implementation of annual programmes of work which will be submitted to the Minister for approval. These programmes of work will provide details of the specific topics, projects and collaborations we have planned to support the achievement of our strategic priorities.

Resource planning

To successfully implement our strategy, we will require the necessary allocation of resources and we must take responsibility for prioritising those areas where there is the greatest risk and the greatest potential for improvement. The Authority's primary source of income is the annual grant provided by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. We are cognisant the very challenging economic of environment and will continue to focus on delivering value for money to the Irish taxpayer. The breadth of the Authority's mandate makes it critically important that we manage staff reductions to ensure we retain the key competencies that are essential to achieving our strategy.

Monitoring progress

Progress on the annual programmes of work that implement the strategy will be monitored using a range of qualitative and quantitative measures. The Board of the Authority and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation will receive quarterly and annual reports. The Board will periodically review progress in implementing the Authority's strategy. The Authority will agree a service level agreement (SLA) which will form the basis of periodic reports on progress to the Minister.

Taking account of the long term nature of the cultural and attitudinal changes we hope to achieve, the desired outcomes will be assessed over a longer timeline than the three year strategy period. We will also work to supplement our regular updates on fatality, injury and illness rates with other performance measures that more fully capture the range and extent of our activities and impact.

External collaboration

The Authority works with a wide range of national, European and international bodies. Our partnerships support our activities in relation to enforcement, legislation, policy-making and communications.

At the national level the Authority has in place more than twenty Memoranda of Understanding or Protocols with other state bodies. We also lead or participate in a number of advisory groups (agriculture, construction, healthcare, workplace transport, technical and scientific, regional) that bring together representatives from industry, unions, other state agencies, local authorities and third level institutions. During this strategy we recognise that we will need to prioritise those partnerships which best support the delivery of our strategy. A significant proportion of our work is conducted at European level. Staff from the Authority represent Ireland on strategic committees or working groups in Europe. In the next strategy period it will be vital that we continue to influence legislation and policy to ensure good decision-making and to protect national interests.

Internal structure

The Authority's operational policy is determined by a Board of twelve members: a chairperson and eleven members appointed by the Minister. The Minister appoints a tripartite Board, representative of the interests associated with workplace health and safety including employees, employers and others. The appointments are for a term of three years.

The Board has four sub-committees (Legislation and Guidance; Finance; Audit; Strategic Review) and six advisory committees (construction, farm safety, technical and scientific and three regional advisory committees).

The Chief Executive Officer manages the day-to-day implementation of strategy in line with the Authority's statutory responsibilities and policies set out by the Board. The organisation is structured in four sections led by Assistant Chief Executives as below. This structure is currently under review.



CEO Martin O'Halloran



Assistant Chief Executive Compliance &

Advice Brian Higgisson



Assistant Chief Executive Chemical Business Services Sharon McGuinness



Assistant Chief Executive

Prevention Services Mary Dorgan



Assistant Chief Executive

Corporate Services Robert Roe



Annex 1 – Responses to public consultation

The Authority would like to express its thanks to all who responded to the consultation on our draft strategy:

- An Bord Altranais
- Chartered Institution of Wastes Management
- Commission for Energy Regulation
- Department of Health
- Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
- Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
- An Garda Síochána
- Electricity Supply Board
- Health Service Executive
- Injuries Board.ie
- Irish Blood Transfusion Service
- Irish Medicines Board
- Irish Prison Service
- National Disability Authority
- Road Safety Authority
- Teagasc



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