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BAOHSF Chair's Report

2010-11 has been a difficult year for the Forum and the country as spending cuts have hit the Forum and partners. After receiving funding for the year to April 2011 from the NHS we received initial indications that we would be funded for the three year period 2011-13. It therefore came as something of a shock that the NHS found they were unable to support our work and we were left without funding from April 2011. We continue to seek funding and are building a relationship with Bradford Council that we hope will bear fruit in the future.

The forum continues for 2011-12 utilising the small reserves we hold, but we have had to make some difficult decisions, the forum has closed its office and Bradford Resource Centre have been very kind to offer us accommodation. We have prioritised the free seminars that the forum provides and we have sought sponsorship to eke out the funds we hold. Jane, our Forum Development Worker has had her hours reduced and the quarterly Well@Work newsletter and flyers for the seminars are now delivered electronically. I thank Jane for all her hard work arranging the seminars, editing the newsletter and support over the year.

We have provided interesting and well attended seminars over the last year and I thank the working group members from Enforcement Agencies, Public & Private Sector Employers, Trades Unions, Health Services and Voluntary Sector organisations who all give their time and resources free of charge. In particular I thank those members who have retired this year John Blanchfield (Environmental Health) and Wendy Bland (Bradford Council) and wish Chris Flint from the HSE all the best in his new position.

The forum continues to take a strategic interest in the Health, Work and Wellbeing and has produced a new strategy document *HEALTH, WORK AND WELL-BEING STRATEGY FOR THE BRADFORD DISTRICT 2011 – 2014*.

In closing we face a challenging year and if funding is not forthcoming for 2012 onwards the future of the forum is bleak. I am certain however that the new working group will work hard to maintain the reputation of the forum as an exemplar in its field and we shall overcome the difficulties we face.



Slips and Trips

The Forum hosted a slips and trips seminar in July which was well attended by local employers.

Environmental Health Officer, David Kean gave the first presentation. David talked about real life scenarios of workplace slips, trips and falls. He spoke about the surface roughness meter that is used by his department as well as a Slips Assessment Tool. Environmental Health, who are one of the two enforcing authorities for health and safety, use a Topic Inspection Pack, which helps them risk assess slips and trips.

David said that a major problem occurs around floor cleaning and the small yellow cones are not very effective, as people tend to walk around these. It is better to try to use several of these but the best system would be to use an alternative route whilst floors are being cleaned. It is also best practice to time the cleaning of floors to coincide a low use of the area being cleaned.

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The Forum is looking for sponsors for its seminars, Please let us know if your company is interested.

Slips and trips, continued from page 1

Kevin Hallas from the Health and Safety Laboratories spoke next. He said that 10,000 bones are broken each year from slips and trips in the workplace and that this cost business £500 million (approx £5k each bone).

Kevin spoke about footwear, cleaning and slip resistance of floors. He said it is not a particular material that makes a floor safe or slippery, it is the finish on the material that makes a difference. Preferably one that has sand or small plastic balls added.

A sensible shoe policy is needed for use in slippery areas. Shoes or boots should be flat, have good grips and be a good fit. He gave a word of warning because some shoes say they are slip resistant but in fact are not very good. It is worth spending some time and finding the correct ones for you and your employees.

Kevin spoke about cleaning floors well, and that detergent can be left on for a while to do its work fully. The HSL are happy to give advice free on this matter and you can contact Kevin or one of his colleagues on Tel: 01298 218 349 or by email: kevin.hallas@hsl.gov.uk



Kevin Hallas

The final speaker was Mick Gledhill (photo below) from Bradford's Communication Workers' Union.



Mick said that postal workers do not have a lot of control over the environment they encounter. Eg slippery paths, snow and ice.

The Royal Mail uses a Walk Risk Assessment Platform. This is an Excel software for recording hazards and it outputs generic solutions.

Postal Workers have hazards cards which they bring back to their Managers. This is a very simple and responsive system. Walk logs have to be used and effectively managed. Dog stickers are used and reminders used to warn the postie of problem addresses.

As well as hidden perils there are latent organisational factors that cause slips and trips. These include rushing, pressure (self-imposed and unrealistic work loads) and increasing intensity.

Mick warned of blame cultures which mask the real problems. He said blaming people can and does suppress accident reporting and therefore makes situations worse.

Increase in Workplace Deaths

The number of people killed at work in Britain last year rose by 16 per cent, prompting renewed calls on the Government to rethink its strategy to reduce health and safety activity and resources.

Provisional figures released by the last month (28 June) revealed that 171 workers died in 2010/11 – up from the record low of 147 deaths in 2009/10. The rate of fatal injury per 100,000 workers also went up – from 0.5 to 0.6.

The construction industry recorded 50 deaths among its workers – an increase of 22 per cent on last year's total of 41 fatalities. The fatal-injury rate in the industry was 2.4 deaths per 100,000 workers. In the agriculture sector, which, along with construction, is traditionally the most dangerous in which to work, deaths fell from 39 last year to 34 in 2010/11.

HSE chair Judith Hackitt admitted that the increase was “disappointing” but was keen to emphasise that Britain still has one of the lowest rates of fatal injury anywhere in Europe.

Calling on all stakeholders to continue to focus on “real risks and not on trivia and pointless paperwork”, she said: “We all have a role to play – employers, employees and regulators – and leadership is fundamental to maintaining and improving our performance even further.”

But the TUC, while agreeing that the responsibility for the rise in fatalities “must be placed at the door of negligent employers”, was adamant that more needs to be done by the Government to ensure

workers are protected, said general secretary, Brendan Barber.

"The Government's recent decision to reduce workplace inspections, and the budget cuts for both the HSE and local authorities, make it far less likely that problems will be identified before something goes wrong."

"Traditionally, injury rates increase as we come out of a recession. If we are going to stop this year's increase becoming a long-term trend we need more inspections in the workplace, not fewer."

His comments were echoed by IOSH, which said that as the economy recovers and industry picks up it is "essential" to maintain inspection levels, increase awareness and ensure access to reliable information and advice.

Mike Macdonald, negotiator for Prospect, called on the Government to rethink the 35-per-cent cut to the regulator's budget, saying: "Not only does the HSE's work save lives and reduce the misery felt by friends and family following the death of a loved one, it saves industry and the taxpayer hundreds of millions of pounds in lost working days and medical bills.

The statistics can be viewed on the HSE website at www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/fatals.htm



Health and safety laws save firms money

Bosses' claims that health and safety is a heavy financial burden were demolished recently by a report by the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health.

It found that protecting workers actually saves money, as work-related accidents and ill health cost businesses nearly £8 billion a year through absenteeism, low productivity and legal bills.

The overall cost of health and safety failures to the public purse, including welfare and health bills, is estimated at £22bn.

Rather than being a burden on business, health and safety can be used as "a driver for growth," the institution said.

It is calling on the government to ensure that plans to cut through so-called health and safety "red tape" do not damage people's health or lead to accidents.

It is also calling for the decision to axe the Health and Safety Executive's advice line to be reversed.

IOSH president Steve Granger said: "Businesses are missing a trick with health and safety. When you operate in a global marketplace, and you're trying to claw your way out of recession, a happy, healthy workforce is a driver for growth.

"It's frankly wrong for ministers and business leaders to talk about health and safety as 'red tape' and a burden on business.

When done properly and proportionately, health and safety is essential to a business's long-term prospects for survival in what are difficult times for our economy.

"As well as the primary aim of saving people's lives and livelihoods, good occupational health and safety can also deliver vital cost savings and help your business to grow."

written by Paddy McGuffin

BAOHSF is currently responding to a call for evidence for a review by Lord Lofstedt on the reform of our health and safety system.

Reforming our health and safety system

Most of our health and safety laws are very significant to improving health and safety. BAOHSF are to recommend to Lord Lofstedt to reinstate the HSE information line as this would significantly help small businesses as a measure to help steer a way through the red tape and receive the correct advice on the health and safety regulations and guidance that apply to them. Simplification of regulations might come to mean relaxation of protection. However, it may be possible to merge a few of the regulations.

Tens of thousands of people die each year of work-related diseases. A TUC report published in September 2010 revealed that more than 20,000 people in the UK are killed prematurely by their work every year.

The number of health and safety regulations has almost halved since 1974 and over the last four years the number of forms used by the Health and Safety Executive to collect information from business has dropped too from 127 to 54.

Safety regulation pays, saves lives and spurs job creation. We need a credible inspection and enforcement regime and worker participation with active trade union involvement not less regulations. Reducing work

related accidents and ill health will help reduce the burden on business and wider society.

The Health and Safety at Work Regulations follow the "risk assessment model" which is widely understood across the whole European Union and which model we believe has had significant positive impact. Voluntary schemes have been tried and have failed spectacularly.

While the UK may have one of the better workplace health and safety records, that is because it has a system of regulation and enforcement that protects. There is a need to strengthen the enforcement of the regulations we have not weaken enforcement and remove regulation.

The use of regulations made under the Health and Safety at Work Act has been and remains a thoroughly effective method. The attitude that if our competitors do not abide by strict rules governing safety and decency at work why should we. This would be part of a race to the bottom and a massive step backwards for the UK. We should not let the world's dirtiest players set the standard.

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