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HSE Safety Cornerstones Newsletter

A newsletter of practical compliance and safety tips provided by

Crendon Insurance Brokers Ltd

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New Figures Show All-time Low in Fatal Injuries to Workers

New figures released by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in July reveal that the number of workers killed in Great Britain last year has dipped to the lowest annual rate on record. Provisional data reports that 133 workers were fatally injured between April 2013 and March 2014, compared with 150 in the previous year. The new figures show that the overall rate of fatal injury dropped to 0.44 per 100,000 workers, down from 0.51 in 2012-13.

Any death at work is one death too many, but these statistics confirm that UK workplaces are at least getting safer due to the HSE's efforts to curb workplace fatalities.

The new figures also show the rate of fatal injuries in several key industrial sectors:

- **Agriculture** – Twenty-seven workers were fatally injured last year in the agriculture sector, lower than the average of 33 in the previous five years. Agriculture's rate of fatal injury in 2013-14 is 8.77, down from the five-year average rate of 9.89.
- **Construction** – Forty-two workers were fatally injured last year in the construction sector, lower than the average figure of 46. The latest rate of fatal injury is 1.98 per 100,000 workers, compared the five-year average of 2.07.
- **Waste and Recycling** – Four workers were fatally injured last year in the waste and recycling sector, lower than the average count of seven over the last five years. The latest rate of 3.3 deaths per 100,000 workers is well below the average rate of 5.48.

Across Great Britain, workers' fatal injury rates continue to lower:

- **England** – One hundred six workers were fatally injured in England last year, resulting in a rate of 0.41 deaths per 100,000 workers, compared to the average of 134 deaths in the past five years and a decrease from the 119 deaths (and rate of 0.47) recorded in 2012-13.
- **Scotland** – Twenty workers were fatally injured in Scotland last year, resulting in a rate of 0.78 deaths per 100,000 workers, compared to the average of 21 deaths in the past five years and a decrease from the 23 deaths (and rate of 0.90) recorded in 2012-13.
- **Wales** – Seven workers were fatally injured in Wales last year, resulting in a rate of 0.52 deaths per 100,000 workers, compared to the average of 10 deaths in the past five years and a decrease from the eight deaths (and rate of 0.61) recorded in 2012-13.

But not everything is so rosy—other figures released the same day by the HSE show a rise in deaths from mesothelioma, a cancer caused by exposure to asbestos. In 2012, 2,535 people died from mesothelioma, an increase from 2,291 in 2011. The HSE believes that the high number of mesothelioma deaths is a reminder of historically poor standards of workplace health and safety which continue to cause thousands of deaths each year.



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Are Your Employees Using Display Screen Equipment Properly?

Although the way your employees configure their display screen equipment may seem to be risk-free, it can actually be very harmful. If they misconfigure their workstations, employees risk developing long-term back, neck, wrist and hand problems.

As a UK employer, you are obligated by the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 (or the Display Screen Equipment Regulations 1992 in Northern Ireland) to ensure that computer screens or monitors, keyboards, non-keyboard input devices, furniture and the general working environment meet minimum requirements and can be adjusted to a worker's individual needs. Failing to do so can cause serious damage. Use the following tips to make sure your employees are using their display screen equipment properly.

Regarding **computer screens**, ensure that users:

- Know how to adjust brightness controls to suit working conditions
- Keep the screen surface clean
- Can adjust software settings to make text large enough to read easily
- Take frequent breaks

Regarding **keyboards**, you should ensure that users:

- Adjust the keyboard to a comfortable position
- Keep their wrists straight when typing
- Use the keys lightly and do not overstretch their fingers
- Take frequent breaks

Regarding **pointing devices**, minimise users' risk by:

- Emphasising using the mouse with a relaxed arm and straight wrist
- Reminding users to rest their fingers lightly on the buttons
- Training users in keyboard shortcuts

Count on Crendon Insurance Brokers Ltd for more employee ergonomic training resources.



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Recent HSE News and Prosecutions

Flower and vegetable pots removed from garden

A West Midlands pre-school that uses a garden managed by the local parish council to teach children about growing flowers and vegetables was told by the council it must remove the children's potted plants from the garden, citing health and safety hazards. The pots were placed near posts holding up a small patio area, and the council was worried someone might trip and sue. The HSE Myth Busters Panel ruled that banning pots from a garden is ridiculous—the council should discuss tripping hazards with staff rather than banning standard garden items and depriving children of a learning opportunity.

Builder ordered to remove World Cup flags

A London builder quit his job after his manager, motivated by health and safety fears, ordered him to remove two flags he had put up to support England in the World Cup. However, health and safety law does not stop anyone from supporting his or her team. The manager may have wanted to avoid setting a precedent that allows all workers to display support for their teams, but it is hard to see why this would be a health and safety problem.

Council and tree surgeon fined for botched felling

Gateshead Council and a tree surgeon were fined a total of more than £50,000 after their botched tree felling injured the surgeon's 52-year-old employee. An employee and tree surgeon were carrying out tree work after being contracted by Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council to remove two trees that were close to falling onto a Network Rail railway line. During the felling, one of the trees fell onto the track. The surgeon and employee tried to cut the tree away, but were unable to do so before an oncoming train slammed into it, injuring the employee. Neither the council nor the tree surgeon had notified Network Rail of the work.

Northern Ireland company fined after worker loses hand

The Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI) reported on a case in County Derry in which a timber pallet manufacturer was fined £8,000 plus £1,500 in costs after its safety failings led to a 22-year-old worker losing his hand while operating a machine. The HSENI found that the worker had only started work at the company seven weeks before the incident and did not receive proper training to maintain and operate the machine.

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