

HSE SAFETY CORNERSTONES

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Hay Fever Comes with a Hefty Cost to Employers: Here's How to Prevent It

As blooming flowers accompany the start of summer, they also present a serious problem for your workplace, as the spread of pollen signals hay fever season. Hay fever, characterised by itchy eyes, runny nose and frequent sneezing, causes nearly 4 in 10 workers to have trouble doing their job, according to research by Well Pharmacy. The same research found that 1 in 5 of those suffering from hay fever have taken time off work for their allergy. Furthermore, a third of those who took time off admitted to not telling their employer the real reason for their absence, fearing that their boss wouldn't find hay fever to be a proper excuse.

However, research shows that hay fever does have the potential to be debilitating in the workplace. About 40 per cent of those with hay fever found it harder to concentrate on work tasks, and 20 per cent of those with the allergy reported being more irritable with their colleagues when suffering. Hay fever season stretches all summer, costing employers £7.1 billion in lost productivity, according to Allergy UK. Follow these guidelines to reduce the risk of hay fever at your workplace:

- **Remove plants and flowers from the workplace**—Although aesthetically pleasing, this form of décor isn't worth the spread of pollen indoors.
- **Offer coat and jacket storage**—Clothes can pick up pollen and carry them indoors. Keep coats and jackets in a storage area to prevent pollen from spreading throughout employees' workspaces.
- **Improve the flooring**—Pollen can often fester in carpet flooring. Vacuum carpets on a regular basis and consider switching to hardwood floors, if possible.

Prepare for HSE Inspections: Avoid FFI

When HSE inspectors visit your workplace, they focus on finding material breaches, also known as violations of any health and safety laws that require attention. If an HSE inspector identifies a material breach, a Fee for Intervention (FFI) will take place. This means that you will then have to pay a fee of £129 an hour for time spent identifying the breach, helping you correct the problem and any further enforcement action. Follow these tips to prepare for an HSE inspection and avoid FFI costs:

- Be prepared to answer questions about your workers and their responsibilities.
- Ensure that all machinery, equipment, documents and records are up to date.
- Be ready to discuss your own knowledge and experience of health and safety.
- Prepare your employees for discussing everyday practices and safety standards in your industry with the HSE inspector.
- Understand that the inspector will likely take photographs of your workplace.
- Read the following [leaflet](#) from the HSE for more information.

HSE News and Prosecutions

Company Fined After Worker Develops Occupational Asthma

A design and manufacturing company, Bayham Limited, was fined £12,000 and ordered to pay costs of £6,385 after a worker carrying out soldering work developed occupational asthma. The company began using an air displacement box (ADB) 15-20 years ago as a fume extractor. However, an investigation by the HSE found that the ADB was acting as a disperser rather than an extractor, exposing employees to harmful fumes from rosin-based solder flux. If you work in the manufacturing industry, click [here](#) for more information on protecting your employees from harmful solder fumes.

Farming Company Fined After Worker Injured in Fall From Height

The HSE fined a Somerset farming company after a worker fell 3 metres from a silage clamp onto a concrete floor and sustained life-changing injuries. An HSE investigation found the company lacked a risk assessment or safe system of work in place for working at height. The company received a £16,000 fine and must pay costs of £3,467.07. For more information on safe agriculture practices, click [here](#).

Fisheries Owner Fined After Putting Workers and the Public at Risk

The owner of a fisheries site has been fined £594 and ordered to pay costs of £10,209 after failing to secure the boundary of a new build local fisheries site while under construction. An HSE investigation found the owner failed to put necessary control measures in place and manage safe working practices during the construction, putting both his workers and the public at risk.

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