

May 2014

HSE Safety Cornerstones Newsletter

A newsletter of practical compliance and safety tips provided by
Crendon Insurance Brokers Ltd

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The Benefits and Methods of Managing Work-related Stress

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work's (EU-OSHA) 2014-2015 Healthy Workplaces Campaign is 'Healthy Workplaces Manage Stress'. With this campaign, EU-OSHA—an organisation committed to making Europe a safer, healthier and more productive place to work—aims to raise awareness of stress and psychosocial risks in the workplace and encourage cooperation between employers, managers and workers to manage those risks.

EU-OSHA's campaign highlights the corrosive effects of work-related stress, which develops when employees are unable to cope with the demands being placed on them. Work-related stress can be a significant cause of illness and directly contributes to high levels of sickness absence, staff turnover and a host of other problems, including increased errors.

Work-related stress does not discriminate—it can afflict anyone, and recent HSE research proves that work-related stress is widespread and is not confined to certain sectors, jobs or industries. A cooperative, population-wide approach is therefore necessary to successfully tackle work-related stress.

Symptoms of work-related stress are diverse—they range from mental health problems such as anxiety and depression to physical ailments like hypertension, heart disease and a weakened immune system. You can find a more comprehensive guide to signs and symptoms of work-related stress here: www.hse.gov.uk/stress/index.htm. If you are suffering from any of these work-related symptoms or see the signs in your employees, take action. Easing stress at an early stage can help soothe symptom severity or eliminate the stress altogether.

The benefits of recognising and lowering work-related stress are numerous. Less work-related stress translates to an improved return on investment in training and development, reduced costs of sick pay, and fewer accidents. Your business can even boost work quality by curbing work-related stress.

To help businesses gain these benefits and squash work-related stress, the HSE provides six management standards, found here: www.hse.gov.uk/STRESS/standards. These standards define the characteristics or culture of an organisation where the risks from work-related stress are effectively managed and controlled. They are:

- Demands – issues such as work load, work patterns and the work environment
- Control – how much influence employees have in the way they work
- Support – includes workplace encouragement, sponsorship and resources
- Relationships – involves promoting positive working to avoid conflict
- Role – whether people understand their organisational roles
- Change – methods for managing organisational change



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Planning and Managing Your Company Events Safely

Planning and managing your company events involves shouldering a significant burden—you have prime responsibility for ensuring overall health and safety. That means you are inevitably culpable for any event-related health and safety failings. Avoid buckling under the pressure by following some easy-to-adopt guidance.

Before you start planning, you should set realistic limits. Decide on an appropriate level of planning detail that matches the event's scale and degree of risk. Establishing such limits early on helps you avoid overlooking important health and safety hazards or bogging yourself down in unimportant minutiae.

After imposing these boundaries, choose a dedicated team to assist with your various duties. Assess your strengths and weaknesses and cherry-pick a team that can provide support in the areas where you feel weakest. Defer to your organisation's health and safety policy for help assigning health and safety responsibilities to your teammates. Most organisations always assign certain positions the same health and safety responsibilities to ensure consistency.

Only after everyone in your team understands their duties can you begin writing one of the event's most important documents: the safety plan. Your event safety plan should identify what resources and facilities you will need to satisfy health and safety regulations. Safety plans work using the logic of 'risk assessments', or assessing the workspace and work-related activities in an effort to identify and prevent all risks associated with your event. To write your event's safety plan, you will need the following information:

- The scale, type and scope of the event
- The type and size of the audience
- The event's location and duration
- The time of day and year the event will be held

Event planning can be a massive undertaking. Rely on Crendon Insurance Brokers Ltd to help bear some of your burden with our expertise and extensive resources.



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Recent HSE News, Myths and Prosecutions

Company and director in court for safety neglect

A Gwent-based property development company and its director were fined more than £4,000 each for endangering their employees' lives through unsafe roof work. While the company was installing a new roof in Cardiff, a member of the public saw the construction site, noticed the site's dangers and contacted the HSE. The HSE's subsequent inspection found three people working on a fragile pitched roof between 5 and 8 metres above the ground with no measures to stop them from falling through the roof or off its edges to the concrete below.

Worker loses leg when crushed by vehicle

An engineering firm in Stanley, County Durham was fined £20,000 and ordered to pay £8,045 in costs after its safety failings led to a worker losing his right leg. The 32-year-old worker was crushed between a moving vehicle and a water tank for almost an hour before being freed by emergency services. He spent a month in hospital, during which time his right leg was amputated above the knee. An HSE investigation revealed the firm neglected to provide effective measures to prevent any contact with the moving vehicle.

Ban on filling working dog's water bowl

A Perth deaf woman who is accompanied by a hearing dog in the workplace was prohibited by her employer from filling up her dog's water bowl in the office's communal kitchen. Her employer reasoned that filling up a dog's bowl in a kitchen is against health and safety law and would upset the other employees. Instead, the employer expects the deaf woman to take the dog's bowl to the toilet to empty it, then bring it back to her desk only to successively fill it up by collecting cups of water from the kitchen. The HSE declared this a particularly egregious case of hiding pointless rules behind bogus health and safety claims.

Pork crackling banned in restaurant

A London restaurant refused to serve pork crackling because health and safety law deemed the food too dangerous (or so it claimed). But pork crackling is not banned from restaurants. Although it can be tricky to serve, the HSE believes breaking the crackling into pieces for serving should be a fairly basic skill for any chef to acquire.

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