

HSE SAFETY CORNERSTONES

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An Update on Higher Health and Safety Fines After 1 Year

In February 2016, the new guidelines from the Sentencing Council came into force, which dramatically increased fines for corporate manslaughter, food safety and hygiene offences, and health and safety offences.

Within the first year, it has become apparent that the new guidelines have been effective, as there were 19 fines of at least £1 million, compared to only three in 2015 and none in 2014. To put this in perspective, the value of the 20 highest fines in 2016 totalled £38.5 million, just barely more than the total value of all the HSE's successful 660 prosecutions in 2015-16.

However, even after more than one year, some organisations are still unfamiliar with the new guidelines and fines. In fact, most are unaware that the average cost of a health and safety fine is £75,000 more than the general cost of ensuring that an organisation is compliant, according to recent data from the HSE. To ensure that your organisation prioritises health and safety and avoids the serious repercussions from these new fines, follow these three best practices:

1. Conduct a thorough risk management and health and safety review of your premises and policies. Ask your employees to identify their top health and safety concerns to better understand all the potential risks affecting your business.
2. Provide annual comprehensive safe work practices training for all your employees. In addition, your employees should have regular technical and operational training to ensure that they can safely use all the equipment and perform all required tasks.
3. Schedule an annual inspection from a health and safety consultant to conduct a thorough risk assessment.

Deliberate Fire Incidents Spike in 2016

Arson was on the rise last year, as a recent government report shows that the number of deliberate fires rose from 37 to 45 per cent. The same report found that false alarms accounted for 40 per cent of total incidents. False alarms are a financial drain and the Fire Industry Association estimates that they cost the economy about £1 billion a year. To ensure that your employees know what to do during a fire, adopt the following four best practices:

1. Schedule an annual fire safety risk assessment, which should include testing smoke and fire alarms as well as inspecting sprinklers and fire extinguishers.
2. Organise and practise routes for employees to use in the event of a fire.
3. Provide your employees with fire safety training, which should include how to prevent fires, use a fire extinguisher and how to report fires.
4. Establish safe chemical storage policies.

HSE News and Prosecutions

Construction Company Fined £750K After Asbestos Failings

Barroerock Construction Limited was fined £750,000 and ordered to pay costs of £14,874.68 for repeated asbestos failings. The first offence was in 2013 when the company conducted an inspection for asbestos, yet did not implement any preventive measures after the inspection found the dangerous material. Then, in 2014, despite hiring a licensed asbestos contractor to remove the remaining asbestos materials, workers were still exposed due to unsafe work practices. In its investigation, the HSE stated that both of these events could have been prevented had the company implemented effective management controls.

Council Fined After Member of Public Crushed by Tractor

Nottinghamshire County Council was fined £1 million and ordered to pay costs of £10,269.85 after a disabled member of the public was struck by a county tractor. County employees were collecting branches in the vehicle when they collided with the man. In its investigation, the HSE found that the council failed to provide comprehensive training and adequate supervision for its employees.

Contractor Fined After Worker Fatally Crushed

CMF Ltd was fined £185,000 and ordered to pay costs of £20,606.14 after a subcontractor was crushed by a concrete staircase. In its investigation, the HSE found that the company had not established any type of safe system of work nor had it supervised the installation.

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Crendon Insurance Brokers Ltd

www.crendoninsurance.co.uk

0121 45 45 100

enquiries@crendoninsurance.co.uk

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