

HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE

OCTOBER 2006

Get a Life

Sorry, we do not mean to sound rude, but are merely repeating the sentiments of the Health and Safety Commission (HSC). For years those in health and safety, including Cope Safety Management, have been labelled as killjoys, making up health and safety stories to justify unpopular decisions. Some of you may recall the story of schools banning children from playing conkers, which made the national headlines.

In response, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has launched a campaign centered around the following key principles.

Sensible risk management **IS** about:

- Ensuring that workers and the public are properly protected;
- Providing overall benefit to society by balancing benefits and risks, with a focus on reducing real risks – both those that arise more often and those with serious consequences;
- Enabling innovation and learning, and not stifling them;
- Ensuring that those who create risks manage them responsibly and understand that failure to manage real risks responsibly is likely to lead to robust action; and
- Enabling individuals to understand that as well as the right protection, they also have to exercise responsibility.

Sensible risk management **IS NOT** about:

- Creating a totally risk free society;
- Generating useless paperwork mountains;
- Scaring people by exaggerating or publicising trivial risks;
- Stopping important recreational and learning activities for individuals where the risks are managed; and
- Reducing protection from risks that cause real harm and suffering.

Johnathan Rees, HSE Deputy Chief Executive, said: 'Health and safety is not about long forms, back covering or stifling initiative. It's about recognising real risks, tackling them in a balanced way and watching out for each other. It's about keeping people safe – not stopping their lives'.

Worker Fatalities

Statistics released by the HSE in August show the total number of fatal injuries to workers in construction during 2005/06 was 59, down 14% from the previous year – the lowest figure on record. After falling from height the most common fatal injuries are being struck by a moving or falling object, being struck by a vehicle, being trapped by something collapsing or overturning and contact with electricity. The HSE has confirmed that fatal injuries overall for 2005/06 have also been the lowest on record at 212 (223 in 2004/05). Falls from height remains the biggest killer at 46 (53 in 2004/05).

The construction and agricultural industries continue to account for just under half of all fatal injuries, however as with construction, the latter has also seen a sizeable reduction in fatalities (21%). The full report can be viewed at: www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/overall/fat10506.pdf.

Bill Callaghan, Chair of HSC said: 'The figures are very encouraging but more needs to be done. There are still too many people killed at work every year, and quite often simple, inexpensive measures could have prevented the tragic loss of life'.

At the same time a report published by the HSE shows that an estimated 2 million British Workers are suffering from ill-health that they believe was caused or made worse by work. This they equate to around 28 million days being lost a year. Musculoskeletal disorders remains the biggest cause of work related ill-health (around 1 million new cases per year) followed by work related stress (around ½ million new cases). The full report can be viewed at: www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/swi/swi0405.pdf.

For further information on these and other issues, please speak to one of our advisors, call our offices or visit our website (www.jwcope.co.uk).