



SAFETY UPDATE

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NEWS

CONSTRUCTION FATALITIES FALL TO RECORD LOW

HSE release final annual workplace fatality figures 2018/19

Annual figures for work-related fatal injuries for 2018/19 and the number of people known to have died from the asbestos-related cancer, mesothelioma, in 2017 have been released by HSE.

The provisional annual data for work-related fatal injuries revealed that 147 workers were fatally injured between April 2018 and March 2019 (a rate of 0.45 per 100,000 workers).

There has been a long-term reduction in the number of fatalities since 1981. Although 2018/19 saw an increase of 6 workplace fatalities from 2017/18, the number has remained broadly level in recent years.

Mesothelioma caused 2,523 deaths in Great Britain in 2017- a broadly similar number to the previous five years and largely a consequence of occupational asbestos exposures that occurred before 1980.

Construction deaths lowest number on record

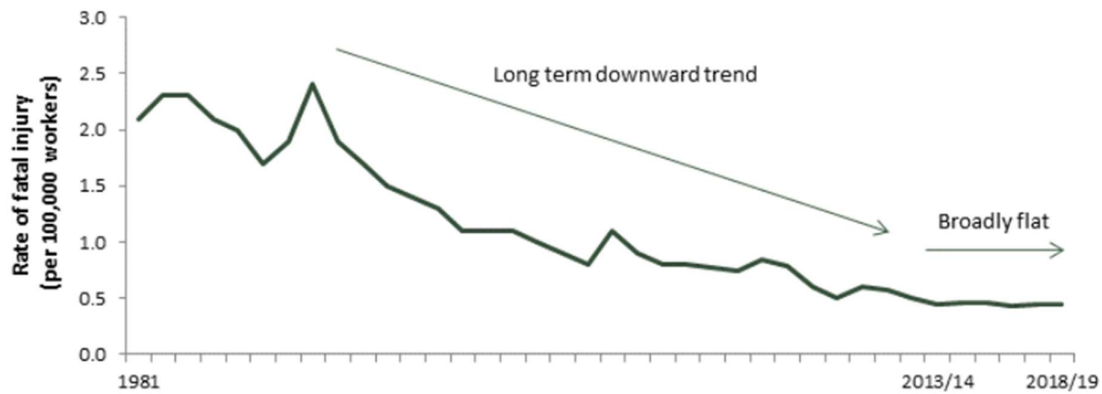
Agriculture, forestry and fishing, and Construction sectors continue to account for the largest share of fatal injuries to workers (32 and 30 deaths respectively in 2018/19).

The number of fatal injuries to workers in Construction in 2018/19 (30) is the lowest number on record, a similar number to the previous low in 2016/17 (31). However, the number has fluctuated over the last five years ranging between 30 and 47 (in 2015/16)

Across all sectors the three most common causes of fatal injuries continue to be; workers falling from height (40), being struck by a moving vehicle (30) and being struck by a moving object (16), accounting for nearly 60 per cent of fatal injuries in 2018/19.

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Figure 12: Rate of fatal injuries to workers in Great Britain, 1981-2018/19p



MPs EXAMINE CONSTRUCTION RESPIRATORY HEALTH

Parliamentary group calls for evidence on the impact of worker silicosis

The *All-Party Parliamentary Group on Respiratory Health* and B&CE have launched an inquiry into the impact of silicosis on construction workers. The aim is to understand:

"why construction worker lives continue to be claimed by silicosis caused by silica (respirable crystalline silica) – the second biggest health risk to construction workers after asbestos."

Silica is commonly found in stone, bricks and concrete. Construction workers engaged in cutting and breaking these materials are exposed dust which can cause chronic breathing difficulties, significantly impact quality of life and avoidable deaths.

The call for evidence ends on August 31 2019.

Findings and recommendations presented to government

The inquiry will call on expert clinicians, campaigners, industry bodies, academics and government to help Ministers gain a greater understanding of the disease, to discover more about the financial burden it places on the NHS and the challenges it presents to productivity in the workplace.

Jim Shannon MP, Chair of the APPG on Respiratory Health said:

"Silicosis is a particular danger for construction workers; causing many to suffer chronic and debilitating breathing difficulties, while claiming the lives of others."

We are delighted to be working with B&CE, which is conducting pioneering work to help the APPG further understand the cause and effect of this terrible disease."



CSCS Academically Qualified Person Card

Following negotiation with CSCS, the yellow and white Academically Qualified Person card can now be applied for if you have an MSc or HNC in Lift Engineering.

The qualifications are listed on the CSCS website (grouped under Electrical and Electronic Engineering):

<https://www.cscs.uk.com/agp-groupings/electrical-and-electronic-engineering/>

The application page is here:

<https://www.cscs.uk.com/card-type/academically-qualified-person/> just enter the word 'Lift' in the search box. You will need to have passed the CITB Managerial and Professional (MAP) level Health, Safety & Environment Test, rather than the specialist Lift and Escalator level test to obtain this card, and you will need to provide proof of your qualification when you apply.

CASES

FEMALE WORKER SCALPED AND BADLY INJURED

Wood product manufacturer fined £466,000 over rotating shaft danger

A wood product manufacturer and a company director have been fined after a female worker was dragged into a rotating drive shaft at premises in St Helens in June 2016.

Liverpool Magistrates Court heard how she was working on a production line making parts for staircases when her hair became entangled on a rotating drive shaft resulting in the loss of her full scalp, ears and one of her thumbs.

She suffered severe physical and mental trauma and has undergone numerous reconstructive operations and has been unable to return to work since the incident.

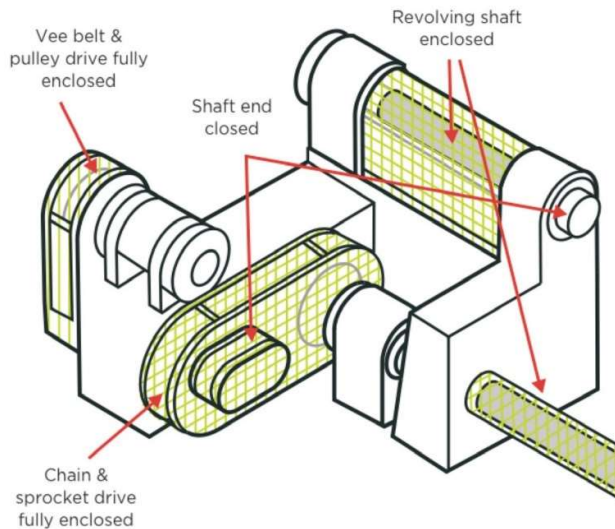
Director aware of dangerous systems of work

HSE investigators found the company failed to adequately guard the production line, allowing worker access to dangerous parts of machinery during operation and cleaning.

Workers were regularly accessing the strapping section whilst the machinery was running and the Production Director was aware of this practice.

The company was fined £466,666 and ordered to pay costs of £7,475.90 and a victim surcharge of £170. The production director was fined £10,800, ordered to pay £43,241 in costs and £170 victim surcharge.

After the hearing HSE Principal Inspector Helen Jones said:



"This incident, which was easily preventable, has had a devastating impact on the victim involved and those close to her. The company failed to prevent employees accessing dangerous moving parts of machinery."

APPRENTICE OVERCOME BY CHEMICAL VAPOUR

Stripping operations lacked ventilation controls, RPE and training

An alloy wheel refurbishment company has been sentenced after a 16-year-old apprentice worker was overcome by vapours from a chemical used in the stripping and cleaning of alloy wheels in December 2017.

South Tyneside Magistrates heard how the young man entered the "acid room" to retrieve alloy wheels from one of three barrels of a chemical substance containing Dichloromethane (DCM), Methanol and Hydrofluoric Acid used in the stripping process. He was later found by a colleague slumped unconscious over a barrel.

Could have easily resulted in death

HSE investigators found that the risk assessment for the chemical wheel stripping process was not suitable or sufficient. Appropriate control measures should have included suitable exhaust ventilation in the room as well as respiratory protective equipment (RPE) for the employees.

RPE was provided but it was not maintained in an efficient or effective state. Several parts were damaged and the air feed was not filtered correctly. The employee was not wearing the RPE when he entered the room.

Employees were not provided with suitable and sufficient information, instruction, and training with regards to the risks involved with using the chemicals, particularly the risks involved with using DCM.

The company from Newcastle was fined £32,000 and ordered to pay full costs of £1718.50. Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Joy Craighead said:



"A young worker suffered a potentially serious injury. Breathing in DCM vapour can produce narcotic effects and, at high concentrations, unconsciousness and death. In this instance, the boy made a full recovery, but it could have easily resulted in his death."

MAJOR FIRM FINED £400k OVER LIFTING OPERATION

Fitter loses four fingers as load slides and falls to the ground

A concrete production company has been fined after a welder lost four fingers during an unsafe lifting operation on premises in London on 27th September 2016.

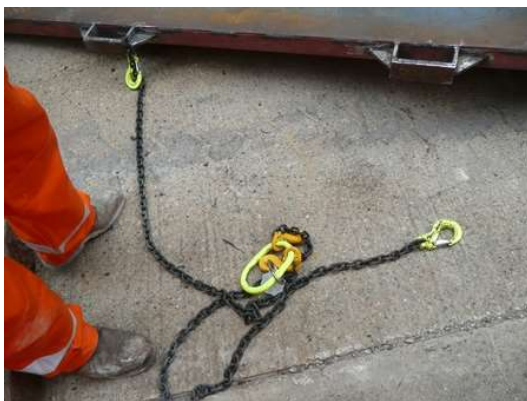
Southwark Crown Court heard how a forklift was being used to lift and swivel a large metal gate attached to the truck with a chain on a "O-ring" slotted onto the forklift truck tines with nothing to prevent the ring sliding from the tine.

During lifting the gate "slipped off" the tines and fell to the floor thereby "slicing off" four fingers from the hand of the workman.

Planning by competent person is essential

HSE investigators found the lifting operation was not properly planned and supervised to ensure it was carried out in a safe manner.

The major employer from Maidenhead breached the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 and was fined £400,000. Speaking after the case HSE inspector Jane Wolfenden said:



"The use of forklift truck, chain and O-ring was unsafe, putting workers at unnecessary risk. This incident could so easily have been avoided by simply having a competent person plan a safe lifting operation and providing adequate supervision to ensure the lifting operation was carried out safely. "

FIRM FAILED TO ACT ON SILICA DUST RISK

Cutting of paving flags exposed workers to respirable crystalline silica

A playground installation and landscaping contractor has been fined after failing to provide adequate control measures to prevent exposure to respirable crystalline silica (RCS) in March 2018.

Greater Manchester Magistrates heard how the HSE inspector served a Prohibition Notice prohibiting use of a powered tool to cut flags without any respiratory protective equipment.

This failure put the health of the employees at risk due to exposure to RCS, which is released when silica-containing materials are cut with a powered tool.

Compliance deadline not met

HSE also served an Improvement Notice, requiring the company to provide adequate control from exposure to RCS. The company failed to provide evidence of compliance within the deadline and a second, similar job was completed at the same site without adequate control measures in place.

The company from Colne, Lancashire was fined £20,000 and ordered to pay costs of £3,000. HSE inspector Rebecca Hamer, said after the hearing:



"The working conditions we encountered were putting the health of the employees at risk due to exposure to RCS, which is released when silica-containing materials are cut with a powered tool."

Exposure to respirable crystalline silica can cause life-threatening diseases including silicosis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD), which can lead to impaired lung function, lung cancer and death."

COMPANY IGNORED HSE ON SILICA DUST ACTION

Worktop manufacturer failed to control dust and manage ventilation

A kitchen worktop manufacturer has been sentenced for non-compliance with HSE Improvement Notices and failure to effectively manage health and safety in March 2016 at the company premises in Sheffield.

Sheffield Magistrates heard that an HSE inspection found a poor standard of health and safety management including significant accumulations of dust around the premises.

Local exhaust ventilation units present were not subject to thorough examination and test and no risk or hazardous substance assessments had been completed.

Five improvement notices issued

The company was served with five Improvement Notices requiring thorough examination of local exhaust ventilation, monitoring for dusts including respirable crystalline silica, a system to manage respiratory protective equipment and assessments of the risk from noise and hand arm vibration.

Despite extensions to the compliance dates for all the notices no reasonable explanations for the non-compliance was provided.

The company was fined £10,000 and ordered to pay £6181.51 in costs. After the hearing, HSE inspector Laura Hunter commented:



"Improvement notices must be complied with. Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standards"

PRISON TERM OVER POORLY GUARDED CIRCULAR SAW

Workman lost three fingers using machine without guard and riving knife

A sole trader has been given a suspended jail sentence for safety breaches after a worker suffered life changing injuries in October 2016 at a workshop in Rotherham.

Sheffield Magistrates heard how the employee was using a table circular saw to cut down some large sheets of chipboard when his right hand made contact with the unguarded saw blade causing the amputation of three fingers.

He was taken to hospital by the defendant. Two of his fingers were reattached at the hospital but the third finger was never found.

Protective devices and safe system of work missing

HSE investigators found that the worker was pushing the sheets through the saw by hand, without using a push stick or jig. The crown guard and riving knife were also not fixed to the machine. An Employer's Liability (Compulsory Insurance) policy was not in place.

The defendant was sentenced to 26 weeks in prison, suspended for 18 months, and 200 hours of unpaid work. He was also ordered to pay £17,000 compensation to the injured employee.

After the hearing, HSE inspector Jane Fox commented:



"This incident could so easily have been avoided by implementing suitable control measures and safe working practices.

Dangerous parts of machinery should be appropriately guarded as required by the legislation, in order to protect employees."

UNSAFE LIFTING OPERATION TRAPPED WORKMAN

Sling failure and inadequate lifting plan resulted in leg amputation

A company specialising in the manufacture and installation of industrial staircases has been fined following an incident where a worker became trapped on a London construction site in July 2018.

Westminster Magistrates heard that the workman suffered serious injuries when a section of metal staircase weighing 1.7 tonnes fell and trapped his leg.

The staircase was being lifted into position when one of the fabric slings supporting the load failed, causing one side of the staircase to drop onto the workman causing injuries which resulted in the amputation of his leg just below the groin.

Plan lacked specificity and detail

HSE found the lifting plan was not specific to the job and the method statement lacked the level of detail required about the load, how it should be slung and how it should be lifted.

This resulted in the slings being stretched across the sharp metal edges of the staircase stringers, which caused a shearing action and ultimate failure of one of the slings.

The contractor breached LOLER was fined £14,000 and ordered to pay costs of £7,227.14. Speaking after the hearing, HSE principal inspector Tania van Rixtel said:



"The method employed for lifting the staircase was unsafe. This case highlights the need for duty holders to properly plan all lifting operations before work is carried out to manage the risk of injury to workers. This incident could so easily have been avoided by simply carrying out correct control measures and safe working practices. "

LANDLORD PUT PUBLIC AT RISK FROM ASBESTOS

Powered jet washing of asbestos cement sheets caused spread

The proprietor of lock up garages in Wigston, Leicestershire has been sentenced for asbestos related offences in March and April 2016.

Leicester Crown Court heard that work carried out by the landlord spread asbestos over a number of domestic gardens after a powered jet-wash was used to clean asbestos cement roof sheets.

The power of the water jet caused asbestos to be dislodged from the roofs, and spread across the gardens, the garage units themselves, and nearby Network Rail land.

This put members of the public at risk of exposure to asbestos fibres – a Class 1 carcinogen.

Basic precautions missing

HSE investigators found that work should have been planned to include the use of basic precautions as detailed in published and widely recognised guidance for working with asbestos cement.

Low energy cleaning methods and proper protective measures would have prevented the release of asbestos fibres thus eliminating much of the risk.

The defendant was fined £600 and ordered to pay £10,000 of prosecution costs. Speaking after the hearing HSE inspector Roy Poulter said



"Asbestos cement roofing sheets requires as careful management as any other asbestos product"

PUBLICATIONS

A Safe Place to Work - BSI's latest Health & Safety report

BSI's new report on health and safety discusses priority topics for organizations

Download from:

<https://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/standards/british-standards-online-database/BSOL-Manufacturing/healthandsafety-download/>

Government Consultation: Health is everyone's business: proposals to reduce ill health-related job loss

Download from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/health-is-everyones-business-proposals-to-reduce-ill-health-related-job-loss>

This consultation is being published in a number of formats; as well as a webpage, you can download a pdf, an audio recording, Braille or watch a British Sign Language presentation.

Conversation starters for workplace discussions about musculoskeletal disorders

Download from:

<https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications/conversation-starters-workplace-discussions-about/view>

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work has published a document that provides guidance for managers and staff on how best to communicate around musculoskeletal disorders