

## Health and Safety NEWSLETTER

**What's in Edition 1:** ▪ Chairman's Welcome Message ▪ European Week for Safety and Health at Work  
▪ Fit3 Programme - Slips and Trips, Falls from Height, Workplace Transport, Work Related Ill-Health  
Musculoskeletal Disorders, Asthma and Dermatitis, Cancer and Asbestos ▪ Where to get help.

### Chairman's Message

*"Welcome to this first edition of our Health and Safety Newsletter. Through it, we aim to keep local businesses up to date with occupational health and safety requirements that may affect their operations.*

*We will be distributing it, every 6 months, to all businesses for which South Staffordshire Council has enforcement responsibilities, preparing you for what Health and Safety Inspectors will be looking for during their visits to your workplace.*

*The launch of our Newsletter coincides with European Week for Safety and Health at Work, which this year is aimed at raising awareness of the risks facing young workers, especially those new to a work environment. You will find information about this and the 'Fit for Work, Fit for Life and Fit for Tomorrow' programme that has been developed by the Health and Safety Executive, in consultation with local authority representatives, to address targets for reducing workplace injuries and ill-health by 2008.*

*We feel that producing this guidance is important, especially for those smaller enterprises that do not have a head office to rely upon for such information, but we would also appreciate feedback from you on what you think of the idea and, if you support it, any suggestions for future editions."*

**Councillor Brian Cox,  
Chairman of South Staffordshire Council's Regulatory Committee**

### EUROPEAN WEEK FOR SAFETY & HEALTH AT WORK

#### Young Worker Safety



As part of European Week for Safety and Health at Work, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has introduced its 'Safe Start' campaign. This is dedicated to the occupational safety and health of young people under 25, who represent the next generation of our workforce.

As an employer, your role is to get them off to a safe and productive start and helpful information for you, your young employees and their parents is provided in the attached *fact sheet* and on-line at [www.hse.gov.uk/campaigns/euroweek](http://www.hse.gov.uk/campaigns/euroweek)

**Even if you are providing a safe work environment for children aged between 13 and 16 years, if the work isn't licensed, it's illegal** – if you employ children you are legally obliged to licence the employment of children with the Education Authority. Children under 13 years of age cannot work.

For more information about licensing - how many hours children can work and the sort of jobs they can have, please contact us, or, visit [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education/EducationWelfareService/EmploymentofChildren](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education/EducationWelfareService/EmploymentofChildren)

**European Week for Safety and Health at Work - 23<sup>rd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> October 2006**



SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

For advice and guidance  
you can email our  
Health and Safety Enforcement Team  
[env.commercial@sstaffs.gov.uk](mailto:env.commercial@sstaffs.gov.uk)

**ACCIDENT AT WORK?**  
Report it to the  
**INCIDENT CONTACT CENTRE**  
**Tel: 0845 300 9923**



## Fit for Work, Fit for Life, Fit for Tomorrow (Fit3) Programme

South Staffordshire Council's **Health and Safety Enforcement Team** is working in partnership with the HSE to reduce ill health and accidents at work, by supporting campaigns and targeting inspections on what we call **Fit3 Topics**. These are hazards that are statistically responsible for most workplace injuries and illnesses and comprise:

**Slips and Trips - Falls from Height - Workplace Transport - Work Related Ill Health**

We will be encouraging local employers to practice '**Sensible Risk Management**', concentrating efforts on the real risks of harm and suffering.

### Slips & Trips

Employers find **slips and trips** no laughing matter. They are the most common cause of injury to their employees and to members of the public, costing businesses £500m in 2003.



slip on spillage

Potential slip and trip hazards are easily recognised and simple precautionary measures can normally be introduced at little expense. To provide a safe place to work and visit you need to identify potential slip and trip hazards and introduce effective controls to reduce the risks of accidents happening.

*Examples of risks to consider are:* - contamination of floors through leaks and spillages, loose, torn and damaged floors and floor coverings, trailing cables and general untidiness.

Health and Safety Inspectors have been specifically advising employers for over 12 months on how to manage **slips and trips** around the workplace and, in April of this year, HSE launched its national '**Watch Your Step**' campaign, highlighting the danger of slips and trips at work in newspapers as well as on television and radio.

The '**Midlands Floor Cleaning Project**' was also launched locally as part of this campaign, advising contract cleaners and those businesses using them of their responsibilities.

Inspectors will continue to focus on **slips and trips** when visiting local businesses and will expect to find that these have been addressed in risk assessments. They are likely to take formal action when potential hazards, such as that shown in the photograph opposite, are not adequately controlled.

For further information please contact us, or, visit [www.hse.gov.uk/watchyourstep](http://www.hse.gov.uk/watchyourstep)



trip hazard on damaged carpet

### Falls From Height

**Falls from height** are the most common cause of workplace deaths in Britain. In 2004/5 nearly 3,800 people were also seriously injured with most of them falling from a distance below head height.



Businesses need to identify all aspects of their work that is undertaken **at height** - which includes any work that could result in a fall from one level to another and could be a matter of centimetres, not necessarily metres. You then need to put effective controls in place to reduce the risk of any such fall happening and the most important thing to ask yourself, when assessing such risks, is: -

**"Can working at height be avoided by doing the work differently?"**

The photograph above shows a simple '**safe system of work**' that has removed the need to use a ladder and the risk of falls from height by introducing extensions to window cleaning equipment.

HSE's '**Height Awareness**' campaign, in May and June of this year, comprised media publicity linked to promotional events aimed at building contractors and suppliers of plant maintenance. This Council's Inspectors provided information and advice, in particular on ladder safety, tower scaffolding and mobile elevated working platforms, to customers of three building material suppliers in the District, using a promotional trailer in their car parks.

Inspectors will focus on identifying work at height issues during all their visits to local businesses and continue to provide advice on assessing and controlling risks. They are, however, likely to take formal action where they find obviously dangerous activities being undertaken without proper controls in place, such as equipment being used that is not suitable for that use, or, equipment not being properly maintained.

For further information please contact us, or, visit [www.hse.gov.uk/falls](http://www.hse.gov.uk/falls)

## Workplace Transport

**Workplace transport** was responsible for 1,982 fatal and major accidents in 2004, the greatest single cause being struck by a vehicle. There are, however, other causes of transport related injuries such as people and objects falling from vehicles and vehicles toppling over.

Businesses again need to identify any operation involving transport of materials, or people, whether as part of their own activities, or, where other businesses make deliveries to or from their premises. Effective controls need to be put in place to ensure equipment is properly maintained and operated safely by trained operators, with particular emphasis being given to effective segregation of transport and pedestrian activities.

Workplace transport safety needs to incorporate **'Safe Site, Safe Vehicles, Safe Driver'**.

Later this year local authorities and HSE will be working together on a national project called **'Moving Goods Safely'**. This aims to reduce injuries and ill health arising from the movement of goods from supplier, through hauliers, to recipients and end-users, including home deliveries. The project will include coordinated inspections focusing on all aspects of workplace transport, including risks of slips, falls from vehicles and other physical injury during the collection and delivery of goods.

Inspectors will continue to focus on workplace transport during visits and investigations undertaken outside the remit of the **'Moving Goods Safely'** project. In addition to enforcing health and safety requirements, they will be pleased to provide advice and guidance to those businesses requesting assistance.

For further information please contact us, or, visit [www.hse.gov.uk/movinggoods](http://www.hse.gov.uk/movinggoods)



## Work Related Ill Health - occupational MSDs, asthma, dermatitis and cancer

**Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs)** - are the most common occupational illness in the UK, affecting muscles, joints, tendons and other parts of the musculoskeletal system, usually as a result of a previous physical injury. Each year, **one million** people are diagnosed with these disorders and it is estimated that **80%** of your employees will suffer from back pain during their lifetime.

**'Backs 2005'** was a campaign, mounted last year by HSE and Local Authorities, highlighting the dangers of manual handling and promoting the use of lifting and handling aids to reduce the incidents of back injuries at work. This year's **'Better Backs'** campaign will build on the success of 'Backs 2005' and also extend its scope. Its aim will be to reduce not only the incidence and impact of back pain caused or made worse by work, but also the number of working days lost due to back pain. The focus is on the holistic approach needed to manage back pain through promoting **sensible workplace precautions** that reduce the risk of it occurring and to emphasise the positive benefits of staying active with back pain, through encouraging employers and employees to work together in helping sufferers return to normal activities, including work.

This year our Health and Safety Inspectors will be focusing the provision of advice and guidance on employment agencies and local businesses having a history of work-related back injuries.

For further information please contact us, or, visit [www.hse.gov.uk/msd](http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd)

**Asthma and Dermatitis** - are work related lung and skin diseases, caused by exposure to external agents in the workplace. They affect thousands of workers each year, causing disabilities that result in considerable work-time lost and, sometimes, people having to give up certain types of work completely.

**Asthma** can be triggered by a large number of agents, including commonly occurring materials such as flour, grain and wood dusts; glues and resins; latex (gloves); dyes, plastics, solvents and printing inks.

**Dermatitis** can be caused by skin coming into contact with a wide range of chemicals, biological and physical agents and by contact with abrasive materials. It also occurs in workers having frequent and prolonged contact with water.

**Businesses** need to carry out what is called a **'COSHH'** risk assessment of all substances with which workers are likely to come into contact, identifying all hazardous substances and putting controls in place to minimise any risk of harm. Ideally, you will be able to substitute those substances with safer products, or, if this is not possible, provide appropriate and adequate protection, reduce usage and exposure time and/or introduce health surveillance.

**Suppliers of all products** used in the workplace should provide information on possible health effects and safe usage of those products, which should help you in your risk assessments.



Over the next two years, HSE and local authorities will be targeting safety projects at occupations with the highest rates of asthma and dermatitis, including: -

- **In respect of asthma** – bakeries, vehicle repairers, wood workers, health care workers and engineers.
- **In respect of dermatitis** – cleaning contractors, printers, construction and engineering workers, hairdressers and beauty care workers, catering and food processors.

This year, in South Staffordshire, our Health and Safety Inspectors will be specifically targeting florists, bakery shops, hairdressers and nail bars with regard to both dermatitis and asthma, and next year we will be focusing on commercial kitchens and fruit and vegetable outlets regarding dermatitis.

Our aim will be to raise awareness of substances that can cause these work related conditions and to help local business control contact with those substances through good practice in the work place.

For more information please contact us, or, visit [www.hse.gov.uk/asthma](http://www.hse.gov.uk/asthma) or [www.hse.gov.uk/skin](http://www.hse.gov.uk/skin)

### Occupational Cancer

Cancer, due to past exposure to asbestos, is the greatest single cause of work related deaths in the UK, causing the death of thirty-five thousand people, each year – **fifteen times more than deaths caused by workplace accidents.**

A quarter of all these deaths are related to building maintenance and repair work and it is estimated that over half a million workplace premises still contain asbestos. **All businesses are, therefore, now required to effectively manage asbestos in their premises.**



Repair and maintenance workers are most at risk of exposure. They are most likely to disturb or damage asbestos containing materials and often do not realise that they are working with asbestos. The legal **'duty to manage'** asbestos is designed to protect these workers by requiring those who are responsible for repair and maintenance work to buildings, to make sure they control access to any asbestos within that building.

You need to check your premises and identify all materials that may contain asbestos, e.g. insulating boards, ceiling tiles, insulation on pipe work, etc. You can do this by walking around your building and, if not sure about any part of its fabric, presume that asbestos is present:

- if the materials are in good condition, keep a written record of where it is and the condition it is in;
- if the materials are showing signs of damage, draw up a priority action plan for its repair or removal, with reference to the extent of damage and proximity of workers likely to disturb the material; record what you find and the action you take.

Remember, the legal duty is about managing any asbestos in the building – it is not about removing it all. Asbestos is only dangerous when in poor condition or, disturbed. If it is in good condition and not likely to be disturbed it should not be removed. Removal may be unnecessary and costly.

HSE's current asbestos management campaign, **"Don't take the gamble"**, is aimed at helping small businesses take basic steps to meet their legal duty to manage asbestos and, during their visits to local businesses, this Council's Health and Safety Inspectors will be expecting to find that asbestos management plans are in place.

For more information, or, advice: please contact us, or, visit: [www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos](http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos)

## Where to get help

If you need help, or just reassurance, give us a call on **01902 696204** and ask to speak to one of the Council's *Health and Safety Inspectors*, or, e-mail us at [env.commercial@sstaffs.gov.uk](mailto:env.commercial@sstaffs.gov.uk)

We have leaflets and guidance on all the topics raised in this newsletter and more, which we can send to you, or if you wish, we can call and discuss any problems with you, on site.

HSE has a wealth of information on its website at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk) or, you can get to it through links from this Council's website at [www.sstaffs.gov.uk](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk) and [www.sstaffs.gov.uk/healthandsafety](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/healthandsafety) If you would like free and impartial advice, you could also contact **Workplace Health Connect**. This is an agency set up by the HSE, but without links to enforcement authorities, to provide free practical advice on workplace health and safety to smaller businesses having up to 250 employees.



In addition to telephone advice, **Workplace Health Connect** is piloting free advisory visits to local workplaces in the Midlands. They can be contacted on **0845 609 6006** or at [www.workplacehealthconnect.co.uk](http://www.workplacehealthconnect.co.uk)

You can email our *Health and Safety Enforcement Team* on [env.commercial@sstaffs.gov.uk](mailto:env.commercial@sstaffs.gov.uk)