

HSE Annual Progress Report & Future Plans

Rosi Edwards, Regional Director, HSE Midlands.



Rosi Edwards

Rosi opened her presentation with a reference to the HSE Strategy, “Be part of the solution” that was launched last year and said that it had been well received, with over a 1000 companies who had signed the Pledge to support it! The Purpose of the Strategy, Rosi added, was

“The prevention of death, injury and ill-health to those at work and those affected by work activities”.

Rosi went on to say that the strategy contained 10 Goals, with the emphasis on the first two as being the two key issues: -

- 1. To encourage strong leadership in championing the importance of, and a common sense approach to, health and safety in the workplace.**
- 2. To promote worker involvement and consultation in health and Safety matters – unionised and non-unionised workplaces, large and small.**
3. To investigate work related accidents and ill-health and take enforcement action to prevent harm and secure justice when appropriate.
4. Get everyone to focus on the really important issues.
5. To encourage an increase in competence so that there is sensible and proportionate risk management.
6. To target key health issues and to identify and work with those bodies best placed to bring about a reduction in the incidence rate and the number of cases of work related ill health.
7. To set priorities and identify which activities reduction in the rate and number of deaths and accidents.
8. To customise approaches to help the increasing numbers of SMEs in different sectors to comply with their health and safety obligations.
9. To reduce the likelihood of low frequency, catastrophic events. *(As an example, Rosi cited COMAH sites, Chemical Plants or the Utilities, that were normally well controlled but could cause a disaster if the process got out of control.)*
10. To take account of the wider issues that affect health and safety – working with others

Dealing with the first goal, Rosi reminded us of the joint HSE/IOD Guidance that recommended “Strong and visible guidance from the top” including: -

- Visible active commitment from managers “walking the job”.
- Being clear what you want and how you expect to get it

- Being clear what you want to know – in order to check if you’re getting what you want.

The second goal of involving workers gives innumerable benefits to a company, in addition to health and safety improvements: -

- It is a legal duty
- There are clear business benefits: -
 - Knowledge of what is really going on in the organisation
 - Knowledge about what actually works – and what doesn’t!
 - Joint problem solving that reinforces industrial relations

This applies to all sizes of firm and all types of employee relationships – including Agency Workers and Contractors.

Continuing on this theme, Rosi also included HSE Working with other bodies such as :-

- Local Government – to promote joined up working
- Other Regulators – to ensure consistency and effectiveness
- Employers and supply chains
- Trades Unions
- Employer Groups
- Health and Safety organisations

More recently, HSE had made all written guidance freely available on-line and also launched the “Sign the Pledge” initiative for firms who wanted to make a formal commitment to support the strategy. Supporting this was an on-line Pledge Forum to join at www.hse.gov.uk/pledge

Regarding evidence of any progress, Rosi said that in 2008/09 there were 180 workers killed (0.6 per 100,000 workers), with 28,692 injured in major accidents (94.8 per 100,000 workers). Although the results had seemed to be levelling off, the timeline showed an encouraging downward trend. The RIDDOR statistics, however, were distorted by 58% under reporting, which prompted **Tim Prestage of Tim Prestage Ltd.** to say that there was a variance of 1000 deaths between RIDDOR and UK Coroners’ returns. Rosi did not have a specific answer for this, other than to say that the Coroners’ figures probably included other categories of fatality. Ed Friend suggested that maybe road accidents were included.

Rosi then singled out the following industries with the highest numbers and rates of fatality: -

- Construction – 53 deaths (2.5 per 100,000 – down from 3.4 in 2007/08)
- Agriculture – 26 deaths (5.7 per 100,000 – down from 9.1 in 2007/08)

Although it was customary to home in on accident statistics, diseases from Asbestos exposure were still a problem and were the target of the high profile Hidden Killer Campaign featured in the HSE video screened before the meeting and on UK TV Channels. there were about 4,000 deaths each year from past exposure and in 2007 there were 96 from asbestosis and 1812 from mesothelioma. The predicted peak in

deaths will occur in about 2016, after which the effect of the reduced use and better controls will start to show.

The Labour Force Statistics (LFS) figures for Health show, Rosi continued, that 1.2 million people suffered from the following ill health that they thought was work related: -

- Musculo-skeletal 538,000
- Stress 415,000
- Breathing or lung problems 39,000

This data seems to be confirmed by information from GPs for proportion and prevalence.

Dealing with the enforcement side of HSE activities, Rosi said that

- 600 companies and individuals were prosecuted by HSE, of which 548 were convicted of one or more breaches.
- Total offences prosecuted were 1104, with 860 convictions
- Local Authorities prosecuted 329 offences, with 309 convictions.
- Notices HSE 8,054 LAs 6340

The Accident Statistics for the West Midlands were as follows: -

- 12 workers killed
- 2,553 major injuries
- 119 prosecutions by HSE – 98 convictions
- 38 prosecutions by LAs – 35 convictions

In answer to her own question “Are things getting better?”, Rosi said: -

- Ill-health figures probably not on track to meet the 20% cut in the revitalising targets, although the trend was improving.
- There had been a significant fall in MSD and Stress cases.
- Fatal and Major injuries were well on track, with a 19% fall against a target of 10%.
- Construction: number of fatalities lowest on record; 36% reduction in major injuries since 1999/00.

In an interesting diversion, Rosi mentioned an EU attitude survey of 1000 people in each of the 27 Member countries, which revealed: -

- 85% of UK sample said they felt very or fairly well informed about health and safety risks (the highest in EU)
- 75% of UK sample said Occupation Health and Safety had got better or much better over the last five years (3rd highest in EU, after Eire and Denmark)

The HSE’s own research shows some interesting results, relative to the Strategy: -

- 78% of business leaders think good H&S is beneficial to their business
- 87% think leadership is most effective way to improve H&S
- 36% think more inspections work
- 69% agree that the cost of H&S is less than the cost of accidents

- 36% think costs of H&S are onerous
- 47% of business leaders think that H&S is at the centre of their business
- 20% say it isn't
- 26% think they will cut their H&S budget
- 42% say theirs won't
- 82% of business leaders and 85% of employees agree a safe and healthy workplace matters
- 90% of business leaders and 81% of workers feel safe in the workplace.

Rosi continued by looking at one or two significant cases to hit the headlines in the past year. For the HSE, the outcome of the ICL Plastics explosion in Glasgow, where nine people died, had far reaching effects. It has caused a major rethink in the way HSE approaches risk profiles and a massive survey of LPG systems has been undertaken in the UK. Last year also saw the first prosecution under the new Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act, with the Cotswold Geotechnical Holdings case after the collapse of an excavation. In the Midlands, there have been high profile cases involving asbestos, gas safety, machinery guarding, contact with overhead electric lines and scaffolding collapse.

Looking ahead, the big issues for the HSE are going to be: -

- Promoting leadership, within individual firms and industry sectors. Two-day Leadership Course in construction.
- Addressing vulnerable Groups, migrant workers and agency staff. (BHSEA had a short presentation from Janine Tickle on this project in September)
- Worker involvement – part-funding training in manufacturing, construction and road haulage. Inspectors to monitor levels of involvement
- Inspection and enforcement – during management inspections, post enforcement senior reviews
- Asbestos – Duty to Manage (DTM) – Awareness raising, enforcement. in addition to work done by construction inspectors, more visits to notified sites planned.
- Construction – Three times more visits planned by Richard Lockwood's team to saturate sites. The focus will be on clients to select competent contractors, ensure they have competent advice and provide necessary information.
- LPG Systems. Inspection Campaign of > 100,000 premises to survey buried metallic pipes and safe installation of tanks. Identifying high risk sites by soil type for increased corrosion risk and ownership of tanks/pipes etc.
- Maintenance. 30% of manufacturing fatalities are maintenance related because of failure to isolate and lock off.
- Respiratory Disease. Effectiveness of Local Exhaust Ventilation with visits to factories using MbOCA.
- Motor Vehicle Repairs. Safe Use of chemicals
- Industries/Activities
 - Waste industry – Briefing for LAs end of January.
 - Farming – “Make the Promise “ campaign
 - Quarries – New national quarries team
 - Fairgrounds

- Midlands Regional Activities
 - Stress – helping managers in public sector use stress standards. Enforcement is not a panacea in this field of risk control!
 - NHS Trusts – selecting a small number for management audit.
- Local Authorities.
 - LPG Pipework and installations
 - Asbestos DTM
 - Violence
 - Asthma in bakeries
 - Sunbeds
 - Dermatitis in Catering and Hairdressing
 - Noise and Entertainment Industry MSDs – Retail checkouts.

Members' Questions

Liz Prohett of Sandwell MBC asked if Rosi had any view on the impact of the proposed “Fit for Work Note”. Rosi answered that she did not have any information on this proposal and that it would take time for this to become apparent. Liz then asked what the likelihood of a change in Government would be, in the light of David Cameron’s remarks on reducing regulation. Rosi said that Geoffrey Podger, HSE Chief Executive, was optimistic about the prospect and that the published media statement had been given an unintended interpretation. HSE and CBI were agreed on the approach to light touch regulation.

Rob Molson, of Radway Ltd, asked about downloaded guidance from the HSE Website being out of date. Rosi said that this problem had been reported to her by **Andy Chappell** some months previously and that this was an ongoing problem that HSE was addressing. The Secretary confirmed the problem and said that the two leaflets he had reported were now being rewritten as a combined document. However, at the time, he added, the errors could have been remedied in less than five minutes, with no detriment to printed stocks, because they were out of print!

Mark Hoare of the University of Birmingham asked if any organisations would be considered to be self-regulating, as a result of satisfactory inspections. Rosi answered that there were no specific proposals. **Andy Chappell** commented that one BHSEA member had recently been inspected by a Local Authority and, as a result of a highly favourable report, had been informed in writing that they were considered to be “self regulation”

Ed Friend, of Ed Friend Ltd., asked what percentage of HSE Resources were committed to Preventative Inspections. Rosi answered that it was a small percentage and that they had some training to do before increasing that activity.