

# ***Report on the Seminar "Accidents Hurt",***

***-Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> June 1998***

This year the annual BHSA seminar returned to its traditional venue of the National Motorcycle Museum where the Construction Committee Chairman, Charles Johnson of Tarmac Construction, welcomed the delegates. After outlining the day's programme, Charles set the proceedings moving with a video called "One in 1.6 Million", the tragic story of Ken who was blinded in a chemical accident. All the more powerful because it was totally unscripted, Ken's thoughts on his actions before and after the accident were riveting and graphically underlined the need for today's presentations and workshops. No comment was needed afterwards, before the presentations which we summarise below!

Having grabbed the delegates' attention the first speaker, **Gary Watton, Birmingham City Council Housing Department**, dealt with the Legal, Moral. Financial motivations for employers to investigate accidents.

Closely related to this is the question of "Who is the most Suitable Person to investigate an accident?" - an issue dealt with by **Alan Craddock - HSE Midlands Region**. Alan then went on to give the next presentation which looked at the best way to collect evidence, what information was needed and what analysis techniques could enhance the investigation.

The next speaker was **Trevor Shaw, HSE Human Factors Unit**, who expanded our thinking about the underlying reasons for the human errors which cause 80% of accidents. He emphasised the need to understand the multi-causal human factors at individual, job and organisation level which affect the design, manufacture, management, operational and maintenance stages of any undertaking. Consideration of these factors enables the competent investigator to make the quantum leap out of the 'Blame Culture' into a new era of continuous safety improvement.

**Gerry Mulholland of Tilbury Douglas** then took us into the often-neglected subject of Post-Traumatic Stress Counselling. Only needed in exceptional circumstances it is, nevertheless, an essential discipline because for investigators and management to be familiar with so that they are able recognise the need for it at a very early stage, following an accident.

**Tilbury Douglas** Contributed again in the next presentation on **Prevention** by **Warwick Adams**. This concentrated on the short term measures that are essential to take in the immediate aftermath of an accident - to prevent a tragic 'carbon copy'

from occurring on the tail end of the first one! It also has the effect of preparing all levels in the organisation for the need to be thinking about longer term remedies.

This session naturally led on to the presentation on **Reviewing Accident Patterns** by **Roy Gill** of **John Laing's**, which developed the long term strategy for learning the deeper lessons to be drawn from a rigorous accident investigation. This effectively summarised the principles learned in the previous papers and presented managers with the structure for a Safety Management Plan for the continuous development of improved health and safety performance.

The Seminar concluded with a workshop in which the syndicates examined four case studies drawn from different industries, to exemplify a range of learning points. The syndicates then presented their findings to the delegates for open discussion. The case studies were:-

- A fatal fall from a roof.
- A street lighting accident.
- A serious transport workshop accident
- A site engineer impaled on a reinforcement bar.