

17.9 MILLION WORKING DAYS LOST LAST YEAR DUE TO MENTAL ILL-HEALTH



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[More than half of Britain's working days lost in 2019/20 were due to mental ill-health, according to latest statistics from the Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\).](#)

The rate of self-reported work-related stress, depression or anxiety was 828,000 workers last year, accounting for 17.9 million working days lost.

Workload, lack of support, violence, threats or bullying and changes at work are thought to be the main causes of work-related stress, depression or anxiety based on Labour Force Survey data.

Emily Pearson, founder and managing director of corporate mental health training consultancy Our Mind's Work, said while the new stats are worrying, they're not surprising.

Since the HSE started collecting data on work-related stress, anxiety and depression in 2001 – two years after the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations came into force, which required employers to carry stress risk assessments and act upon them – there was a steady decrease until 2006 when it returned sharply to 2001 levels, where they remained with slight variation until 2015, explained Emily.

'Despite numerous mental health awareness campaigns and programmes over the past five years, work-related stress has increased,' she added. 'So, what's gone wrong from 2010 to 2019 when the largest increase has occurred? Well, people feel more able to categorise what they're experiencing, self-diagnose and share this information with others. So as the stigma reduces and awareness increases, this is only to be expected. But it doesn't account for all of it.'

She believes the second problem is a lack of enforcement and a reluctance to put work-related stress in the same category as say, a broken leg.

'We cannot allow this to be ignored any longer – the impact of COVID-19 on people's mental health are concerning enough without workplaces contributing to the mental health crisis we are sleep walking towards,' adds Emily. 'Employers must take ownership of the problem by implementing a robust strategy that provides evaluation of the problem areas and education, skills and training and the tools to deliver the solutions effectively, reducing work related stress before it turns into a psychological injury.'

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MUSCULOSKELETAL SPOTLIGHT

The HSE is demonstrating a new MSD tool - an all-in-one digital solution that is being developed for the well renowned MAC tool.



The new tool has been designed to simplify the process of completing each assessment, with a logical step-by-step approach, saving your assessors time in populating and interpreting the results manually.

Employers and safety representatives can use the tool to assess the risks posed by lifting, carrying and team manual handling activities. The assessor can then understand, interpret and categorise the level of risk, and implement the appropriate control measures.

In addition, the automated management reports include tracking of assessments that have been completed; identification of priority areas and tasks for improvement; support and identification of common themes across multiple departments/sites/locations.

[Register for a live webinar demonstration](#) of the MSD tool on Wednesday 2nd December at 2.30pm

HSE'S RISK-REDUCTION THROUGH DESIGN AWARD 2020-2021

HSE's annual musculoskeletal disorders 'risk-reduction through design' award needs your nominations!

The award highlights the important contribution that design changes can make to reduce risks of musculoskeletal disorders. Building on the success of last year's award, we want businesses to nominate design changes that have made a real impact.

We are looking for approaches that have worked from across all sectors, anywhere in the United Kingdom. There are no restrictions on the size of business that can enter; both large and small employers are encouraged – small scale/low cost solutions are just as welcome as large scale/high cost designs.

The emphasis is on design solutions that have or can reduce the risk of musculoskeletal disorders for workers, but we are also interested in novel, innovative or niche solutions that tackle difficult-to-solve problems. Involving the workforce in developing the solution is essential and cross-sector application, that might inspire others to think more actively about design-based solutions, will also be part of the judging criteria.

Entries should be submitted on **no more than two sides of A4 paper**. Please include:

- the problem, the design solution and its potential for MSD risk reduction
- how your workforce was involved in developing the solution and their feedback on the changes
- a description of the musculoskeletal and any wider benefits
- your contact details

Please submit your nominations to msdpp@hse.gov.uk by **31 January 2021**. Full application details are available on the HSE Website.



MANUAL HANDLING AT WORK

A reminder that as an employer, you must protect your workers from the risks of manual handling.

Manual handling means transporting or supporting a load by hand or bodily force. It includes lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying or moving loads.

Make sure that you prevent these sort of risks in your workplace with the HSE [step-by-step guide](#).

The HSE downloadable leaflet, [Manual handling at work: a brief guide](#), explains the problems associated with manual handling and gives guidance on how to deal with them.



DUST BLITZ CATCHES COVID BREACHES



The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) month-long initiative inspecting respiratory risks and occupational lung disease in the construction sector has revealed some workers are confused between RPE and PPE, the regulator has confirmed.

Though the inspection programme, which ran throughout October, examines respiratory risks and occupational lung disease, especially asbestos (outside of licensed contractors), silica and wood dust, inspectors have also been checking whether firms are protecting their workers from the risk of coronavirus and if workplaces are COVID-secure.

'Inspections of this sort are not out of the ordinary for the sector,' said health and safety law expert Sean Elson of law firm Pinsent Masons. 'This is continuing evidence of the drive in relation to occupational health and respiratory conditions in particular. What is interesting is that the HSE as the COVID regulator has flagged that [it] will be using this programme to look at how duty holders are managing the COVID-19 risk at a project level. The HSE will be keen to show that it is taking action in relation to the pandemic and playing its part in employers taking adequate measures.'

In response, an HSE spokesperson said: 'These [respiratory risks] are mature health topics that the industry should now be managing accordingly,' but added: 'This year, we have also included COVID in the initiative as a very current issue for the construction industry and all inspections include a COVID-19 spot check. Getting COVID controls right is critical to the industry continuing to operate and for people to work safely.'

Overall findings from the inspection initiative show that most construction duty holders understand and implement COVID-secure arrangements on their sites, the HSE confirmed, with inspectors giving verbal advice, mainly on social distancing and welfare requirements.

'HSE inspectors have reported some workers on site using face coverings meant to stop the spread of COVID being used to protect against exposure to dust. They are keen to make the point that face coverings or disposable face coverings are not RPE and that RPE should be fit for purpose – use the right equipment for the right job,' added the spokesperson.

LEGIONELLA RISKS DURING THE PANDEMIC

Employers, the self-employed and people in control of premises, such as landlords, have a duty to protect people by identifying and controlling risks associated with legionella.

If your building was closed or has reduced occupancy during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, water system stagnation can occur due to lack of use, increasing the risks of Legionnaires' disease.

You should review your risk assessment and manage the legionella risks when you:

- reinstate a water system or start using it again
- restart some types of air conditioning units

If the water system is still used regularly, maintain the appropriate measures to prevent legionella growth.



WORKER STRUCK BY CONCRETE PUMP BOOM



A Brighton construction firm has been convicted of CDM breaches after an employee was struck by the placing boom of a concrete pump, causing serious injuries.

On 5 March 2019, concrete footings were being poured at a site at Ditchling Common, East Sussex. Due to the soft ground, vehicles could not get close to the work, so a concrete pump with a 52-metre boom was used.

During the pour, the ground beneath one of the pump outriggers collapsed. The concrete pipe and boom struck the worker, dislocating and fracturing his hip, fracturing his spine and tearing ligaments and muscles.

He was also later diagnosed with a brain injury. He still undergoes physiotherapy and suffers from post-traumatic stress but does not know the long-term effects of the brain and nerve damage.

The work had not been properly planned, managed or monitored, HSE investigators found. Although some work had been done to stabilise the ground in the area where the pump was set up, no checks had been made as to the load that the ground could sustain, and no consideration had been given to the size or type of spreader plates that would be required to support the vehicle outriggers.

'The employee's injuries are life-changing and he could have easily been killed,' said HSE Inspector Stephen Green. 'This serious incident and devastation could have been avoided if basic safeguards had been put in place.'

At Brighton Magistrates' Court, Axio (Special Works) admitted breaching regulation 13(1) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations and was fined £20,000 plus £5285 in costs.

SAFETY INNOVATION – RISER SAFE

Ambar Kelly designs, fabricates and supplies engineered 'chequer-plate' covers for all Duct Voids through the precast slabs and incorporates precise access holes for service installations to maintain safety and fire security throughout the building process.

The benefits of this are:

- Lifted in at the same time as the precast – immediately covers large service holes.
- Removes need for handrails and birdcages.
- Stops spread of smoke and flame between floors.
- Load bearing up to 6T.
- Drives M&E design to early completion.
- Remains in place throughout the whole project.
- Service Plates unbolted when service ready to be installed whilst maintaining fall protection to riser.



ARCHITECT REMOVED FROM REGISTER FOR FAILING TO ADDRESS FIRE SAFETY

[James Craigie Tannahill Thomson of Thomson Hunter Architects in Kilmarnock has been erased from the Architects Register for failing to address fire safety issues](#)

The ARB alleged that James Craigie Tannahill Thomson had produced interim and final Professional Consultant Certificates for a property when the flats within the building did not comply with Building Regulations relating to fire safety.

It was also not constructed in conformity with the drawings approved by building control.

Thomson was found guilty of unacceptable professional conduct (UPC) following a hearing of ARB's Professional Conduct Committee (PCC) on 17-21 August 2020 and 24 September 2020.

The PCC heard that Thomson had been engaged to inspect the construction of a block of residential flats in Troon, Ayrshire, and subsequently issued Professional Consultant Certificates to confirm that they had been built in general conformity with building regulations and approved drawings.

Purchasers of the properties relied upon those Certificates, but on occupation it became clear that there was inadequate acoustic insulation.

A subsequent inspection of the property established that the walls and ceilings did not have the required layers to provide sound insulation and fire protection. In addition, fire doors were missing the required closers and seals that would slow the spread of fire and smoke.

Thomson was legally represented but neither he nor his representative chose to attend the hearing. He denied the allegations, stating that he was awaiting the results of an acoustic report which would have identified the issues, and that he had trusted the word of the contractor who had misled him that the building had been constructed with the proper protections and construction material in place.

The PCC did not accept this explanation and found Thomson guilty of unacceptable professional conduct.

It was not appropriate for an architect to rely on the word of a contractor on such a matter without challenge, and as a result of his inadequate inspection regime had compromised the safety and wellbeing of those who live in the flats.

When considering sanction, the PCC took into account the very serious effect Thomson's failings had had on the residents, who were now living in unsafe, noisy properties they are unable to sell. The cost of remedial work will be significant.

The PCC considered that James Craigie Tannahill Thomson had a number of opportunities to identify the problems but had persistently failed to do so and had shown no evidence of remorse or insight afterwards.

In such circumstances, the PCC concluded that only erasure from the Architects Register would uphold the reputation of the profession and protect the public.



AGA E-LEARNING COURSES

Whether you are looking to improve your own knowledge or provide training to employees, our E-Learning courses will guide you through the regulations, your legal duties, identifying hazards in your workplace and suitable control measures. Each course is followed by a short test to clarify your understanding regarding that topic, upon which after completion, you will be issued a certificate.

Each course costs £15+vat unless otherwise stated. The courses we currently offer training in are:

- Asbestos Awareness *Course cost is £20+vat*
- Abrasive Wheels
- Basic First Aid
- COSHH
- Display Screen Equipment (DSE)
- Falls Prevention – Working at height
- Fire Safety
- Fire Warden *Course cost is £20+vat*
- Health and Safety Level 2 *Course cost is £20+vat*
- Legionella Awareness
- Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV)
- Lone and Remote Workers (Personal Security)
- Manual Handling
- Office Safety
- Risk Assessment
- Slips and Trips
- The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations (Overview)



For more information or to book our courses visit www.aga-ltd.co.uk/e-learning-courses.



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