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HSE ANNUAL FATALITY STATS

A total of 111 individuals lost their lives at work in the 12 months ending 31 March 2020, the lowest ever recorded number of workplace fatal accidents.

The HSE's annual fatalities statistics, released on Wednesday, also revealed a 25% decrease on the 149 fatalities in 2018/19.

The provisional figures, which could be revised slightly up or down, give an overall fatal injury rate of 0.34 deaths per 100,000 workers in Great Britain, compared to 0.45 in 2018/19.

However, the regulator said that the 'striking' year-on-year fall may not reflect a major shift in the inherent dangerousness of workplaces, and points out that COVID-19 potentially reduced the death toll by suppressing the economy in February and March.

However, the statistics show a trend-defying spike in construction fatalities, with 40 recorded in 2019/20, exceeding last year's total of 31 and the five-year average of 37.

Overall, construction deaths account for 36% of the year's total.

Construction was the only industry where the fatality rate increased against the previous year, reaching 1.74 per 100,000 compared to 1.31 in the preceding year. Most other industries recorded year-on-year decreases. Agriculture, forestry and fishing, a recent accident blackspot, saw 20 deaths compared to 32 in 2018/19 and a five-year average of 27 fatalities. However, the sector still has the highest sectoral fatal accident incidence rate at 5.96 cases per 100,000.

The waste and recycling sector, also known for the wrong sort of headlines, saw five deaths compared to seven fatal accidents in 2018/19 and a five-year average of nine.

EXPLAINED: THE DRAFT BUILDING SAFETY BILL



The government is bringing forward changes that will improve building and fire safety, so that people will be, and will feel, safer in their homes.

The Grenfell Tower fire in West London on 14 June 2017 claimed 72 lives. The tragedy exposed serious failings across the whole system of building and managing high-rise homes.

The Government took immediate steps to make residents safer, and asked Dame Judith Hackitt to carry out an independent review of building regulations and fire safety to understand the causes of the fire.

The review concluded that the whole system needed major reform and that residents' safety needed to be a greater priority through the

entire life cycle of a building – from design and construction, through to when people are living in their homes.

The government accepted the review's recommendations and this draft Bill, which, alongside the existing Fire Safety Bill and fire safety consultation will set out how we are bringing forward those proposals to provide the biggest improvements to building safety in nearly 40 years.

The draft Bill will ensure that there will always be someone responsible for keeping residents safe in high rise buildings – those 18 metres and above. They will also have to listen and respond to residents' concerns and ensure their voices are heard – they will be called the 'Accountable Person'.

To oversee all this and make sure that Accountable Persons are carrying out their duties properly, there will also be a new national regulator for building safety, within the Health and Safety Executive.

The regulator will have 3 main functions: to oversee the safety and standard of all buildings, directly assure the safety of higher-risk buildings; and improve the competence of people responsible for managing and overseeing building work.

It will operate a new, more stringent set of rules for high-rise residential buildings. The new set of rules, contained in the draft Bill, will apply when buildings are designed, constructed and then later occupied.

At each of these 3 stages, it will be clear who is responsible for managing the potential risks and what is required to move to the next stage enabling a 'golden thread' of vital information about the building to be gathered over its lifetime.

The Bill will now be reviewed. The government is keen to receive further views from parliamentarians, residents and industry via the Parliamentary process of pre-legislative scrutiny before the Bill is introduced to Parliament.

PLUMBER JAILED FOR ILLEGAL GAS WORK

A self-employed plumber has been jailed after carrying out gas work without being Gas Safe registered.

Bolton Crown Court heard how Aaron Davidson of T/A AD Plumbing Solutions had installed boilers at two properties in Bolton and Bury in January and March 2018, whilst falsely claiming to be Gas Safe registered.

Following notification of installation defects by the occupiers of the properties, Gas Safe inspectors visited and found the work to be of a poor standard. In the property at Bury it was classed as 'not to current standards', and at the property in Bolton 'at risk' due to the danger to life from the possible escape of carbon monoxide and risk of electrocution.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), found that Aaron Davidson had never been Gas Safe registered and was not qualified or competent to undertake gas work.

Aaron Davidson, T/A AD Plumbing Solutions of Chip Hill Road, Bolton, pleaded guilty to breaching section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, and Regulations 3(3) and 3(7) of the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998. He was sentenced to 16 months imprisonment.

After the hearing HSE inspector Jane Carroll said: "Aaron Davidson undertook gas work which he knew he was not registered to do. All gas work must be done by registered Gas Safe engineers to ensure the highest standards are met to prevent injury and loss of life."

10 THOUGHTS ON COVID RISK ASSESSMENT

The HSE has published a comprehensive guide to what should be included within the COVID-19 risk assessments. See the below link - <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/assets/docs/risk-assessment.pdf>

1. HAND WASHING

We began this crisis light-heartedly washing our hands while singing a double rendition of 'happy birthday'. But as the virus continues to hit hard, we find hand hygiene remains front and centre. The science tells us adequate hand washing is effective but also simple, logical and cheap. It is difficult to imagine a reasonable excuse for an employer that fails in this respect.

2. WORKER ENGAGEMENT

While there have long been legal requirements to consult with employees, COVID-19 as a risk has grabbed the attention like few other hazards. The risk assessment reinforces the importance of worker input: 'make sure you talk to your workers and their representatives to explain the measures you are taking. They can also provide valuable information on how you could control the risks'. Employers ignore this at their peril.

3. SOCIAL DISTANCING

Social distancing is becoming an increasingly elastic concept; sometimes two metres, sometimes 'one metre plus' and differing throughout the UK. The document reminds employers that local rules may differ which highlights the importance of nationwide organisations remaining abreast of local updates and being agile and responsive to changes at short notice.

4. REMOTE WORKING

Virtually all jobs have changed in some way since the Spring. Many of our new working practices are no doubt here to stay. There is a hint of this in the new document, which encourages the increased use of online meeting facilities, even when people are working in the same building.

5. VENTILATION

Good ventilation is another basic control measure to reduce the risk. This is reflected in the risk assessment, which suggests propping open non-fire doors to improve air circulation, ushering in another important point: COVID-19 control measures should not adversely impact pre-existing safety regimes.

6. MENTAL WELLBEING

The document takes a huge step forward in identifying the detrimental impact of the pandemic on our collective mental health and wellbeing. While the focus is on planning for those coming back into workplaces, huge numbers are still working from home and the importance of contact, time management and fatigue are among the hazards highlighted.

7. BACK PAIN

Thinking about those remote workers, the assessment also highlights the musculoskeletal disorders risked by lengthy DSE use at home. The HSE maintains that 'there is no increased risk for people working at home temporarily' but there is no question that this pandemic is testing the bounds of what 'temporarily' really means.

8. SHIELDING WORKERS

The all-encompassing task facing employers is laid bare by the need to identify those within the workforce who are vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable. The suggested control measures include an individual assessment of these employees and a discussion to identify what is needed in each case. Managing to balance the risk management elements of this process with the employer's HR obligations will be no mean feat.

9. TRAVELLING

Once again we see the attempt to stretch health and safety law beyond its typical boundaries. In identifying occasions when social distancing may be difficult, employers' control measures are said to include the provision of facilities to keep people from public transport and creating working cohorts of those who already travel to work together.

10. FACE COVERINGS

The very last point, contained within brackets; face coverings. These are 'not required to be worn in the workplace' but 'where people choose to wear them you should support them'. The government guidance for those in close contact sectors such as hairdressing now requires the wearing of visors to 'provide a barrier between the wearer and the client from respiratory droplets caused by sneezing, coughing or speaking'. Of course, face coverings are also now mandatory on public transport too. Logically there is an acceptance that simple barriers (not PPE) have a part to play in reducing the transmission risk and a more sweeping change in the existing non-committal position feels almost inevitable.

SAFETY INNOVATION IDEAS



Competency Helmet Stickers

Richards Builders' has put in place a policy of continuous professional development and responsibility. Each competency course successfully passed is recorded in an employee's personal record and a small colour coded helmet sticker is issued. For example, Asbestos Aware is represented by an 'a' on a yellow background.

The company's risk assessment forms feature the same colour coding system. Therefore, when a risk assessment needs to be signed off, the correct person to do so is easily identifiable by their helmet.

Protecting Lone Workers

By definition, "lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision". Whilst working alone is perfectly legal, employers must take their duty of care very seriously. With this in mind, A & E Elkins have considered the risks to their workers' safety and the challenges they face working in the locations they are based.

Many of their projects involve refurbishment and maintenance of housing association properties. Due to this, lone working is unavoidable and can occur daily. Their staff can be working on different sites in the community visiting a range of residents. Interacting with the community is an important part of A&E Elkins day-to-day operations; however, on occasion front line staff can find their safety under threat from possible physical violence, verbal abuse or intimidation, animal attack or attack against property. These risks can be mitigated by implementing a comprehensive, lone worker solution for site located teams.

A&E Elkins employees wear SoloProtect ID that allows them to present identification as part of their job role. The ID badge can be operated discreetly without having to break eye-contact as the device links to a 24/7 Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC) at the push of a button. Since the implementation of the system they have had five accidental activations, but every one of those has been intercepted by the SoloProtect call centre and dealt with. Therefore, A & E Elkins are confident that if any of their employees were in a vulnerable situation, including violent encounters or a man down situation, SoloProtect would be there to offer that added protection.



Tag Line Weight Invention

A tag line weight, made using a tennis ball filled with silicone to prevent it swinging in the wind, is used on this project.

This solution was devised by the operatives undertaking the work for Wates Construction. Without the tennis ball fitted, the tag line blows in the wind and trying to grab hold of it is difficult.

The tennis ball is also soft so will not cause any damage.

Canteen Covid Screens

In order to maximise the canteen table usage and still comply with the Covid 19 social distancing guidelines, the project arranged for some bespoke perspex screens to be fitted across each canteen table which subsequently doubled the site canteens seating capacity, allowing more people to enjoy their breaks in a clean and comfortable environment.

To try and raise morale during this difficult period, the project team provided marker pens for the workforce to play games such as Noughts and Crosses on the screens whilst enjoying their lunch on their breaks.



CONTRACTORS RETURN TO OFFICES



[Laing O'Rourke reopens HQ to more employees while Mace expects numbers to increase at Moorgate office](#)

Big name contractors are encouraging more employees to return to the office this week as the government launches an advertising campaign to get people back into city centres.

Nearly two months after the prime minister told the country to “go back to work if you can” the government is now redoubling efforts to spread a reassuring message that it is safe for office workers to return.

The employers' organisation the CBI has warned of city centres becoming “ghost towns” as people stay away from offices. It has called for the government to do more to build confidence as an increasing number of employers say home-working could become the norm for many. Outsourcing firm Capita announced at the weekend it is to close a third of its UK offices permanently as it moves to more flexible working patterns.

A Laing O'Rourke spokesperson said it is reopening its head office in Dartford this week to begin the process of a return to office working.

He said: “We have taken many measures to make the office Covid-secure and in the coming weeks will begin trials of dynamic working

as we seek to establish future ways of working that enable us to work safely and productively.”

“We expect to see a progressive return to work over time and will continue to follow all official guidance to ensure our locations are Covid-secure and that people can work safely.”

The firm said its offices had remained open during the coronavirus crisis for a small number of people who cannot work from home.

Mace's chief executive Mark Reynolds also said his firm was also working to get people back into the office. He expected the amount of people able to come back into work to increase this month.

Reynolds said: “We are working to encourage people to come back to the office if they feel comfortable doing so. In reality, given social distancing rules, we are not going to see offices at full capacity for a long time and most people will continue to work flexibly in the future.

“We think September will have a positive impact because hopefully schools will be open and that will enable more people to be able to travel in.”

Mike Hughes, a representative for NAEA Commercial, the professional body for commercial and business transfer agents, said very few employers had made up their minds about how much office space they need.

He said: “I think that as we move into September some certainty will start, and as we get to the end of furloughing. “But at the moment I'm not finding anybody who's made the definite decision, because anybody who is a freeholder is thinking probably now is a bad time to sell their offices.

“Anybody who is a leaseholder is wondering about how they are going to negotiate such a situation for reducing space with their landlord.”

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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