

Health and Safety

THE HEALTH AND SAFETY AUTHORITY NEWSLETTER

March 2007

matters

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This newsletter is produced regularly

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Safety Statistics 2006

Dramatic drop in construction figures

Facing into 2007, the release of the Authority's end of year statistics, revealed a 32% reduction in workplace fatalities, with 50 deaths reported, compared with 74 for the same period in 2005.

The numbers killed in construction almost halved from 23 to 12, reflecting the effectiveness of the safety campaigns and legislation targeted at this sector in particular, throughout 2006.

However, both the construction and agricultural sectors remain two of the most formidable industries to be involved in, where 60% of all reported fatalities occurred. Agricultural deaths remained unchanged from 2005 figures at 18 and combating the persistently high rates in both sectors remains a key challenge facing the Authority for the year ahead.

7000 non fatal accidents were reported last year, where 'handling, lifting and carrying' (32%) and 'slips, trips and falls' (16%) remained the two most common sources of occupational accidents, in line with trends from previous years. Although these figures overall are some of the lowest since 2000, efforts must be redoubled to ensure they continue to fall.

Acting CEO Michael Henry recognised the significant fall off in fatalities, but confessed there was no room for complacency. The trajectory of the Authority's programme of work for 2007 continues to concentrate on the construction and agricultural sectors, with a new code of practice for the fishing industry also in the pipeline. Indeed, this is particularly timely considering the worrying number of deaths that occurred in this sector early this year.

Henry at the helm

Michael Henry, Assistant Chief Executive has taken over as Acting CEO, pending the appointment of Tom Beegans successor. He has been with the Authority from the very start and brings a wealth of experience to this role. Tom Beegan, former CEO of the Authority for the past five years, has taken up a new position in Ottawa, Canada.

The Chairman of the Board of the Health and Safety Authority Jim Lyons, paid tribute to Mr Beegan and said the Authority had become a vibrant and progressive organisation under his stewardship.



Michael Henry (Acting CEO)



Tom Beegan (Former CEO)

"Much was achieved during Tom Beegans time as CEO, including the passing and promotion of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 and the implementation of the smoking ban. He clearly established the Authority on a firm footing as one of the leading statutory agencies in the country," he said.

Young Scientist Exhibition 2007

The Authority was among exhibitors present at the 'BT Young Scientist' exhibition 2007 held at the RDS in January, promoting safety issues to the thousands of young people in attendance.

Our stand aroused enormous interest for its innovative display, which included a 'Spot the Danger' chart and a colourful safety booklet on hazards facing young people.

The presence of the Authority, its first year in attendance at the event, highlights the enormous role safety issues now play in the lives of young people. Indeed, health and safety themes were particularly strong this year, with project titles such as 'Safer Routes to School' and 'Hearing Loss in Teenagers', highlighting the culture of awareness now widespread.

Our Assistant Chief Executive (Prevention Services), Mary Dorgan, presented the 'Health and Safety Authority' award to the winner in the 'Social and Behavioural Sciences' category, for their project entitled 'It's not all about Blades!'. Their study focused on the effects various stud and soil types had on athlete's performance.



Overall, the event was a huge success, breaking all previous records in terms of the number of participating schools, visitors and exhibitors. In total over 10,000 people attended over the three days. Indeed, the success of our exhibition stand and the level of interest shown from both pupils and teachers alike, highlights the critical role the Authority plays in reinforcing the message of workplace safety. Furthermore, we are pleased to confirm we will be in attendance at next year's event.

SAFETY ALERT Excavator Quick Hitches

The Health and Safety Authority issued an urgent warning on the dangers associated with the operation of excavators, particularly the use of excavators fitted with a 'quick hitch' device.

This warning followed a number of fatal and serious accidents in the construction industry in recent months, where excavator buckets became detached and fell onto workers.

Quick hitch devices are used on earth moving equipment for the removal and attachment of equipment such as buckets and rock breakers. These devices depend on positive hydraulic pressure and/ or mechanical locks or safety pins to hold buckets and other attachments in place.

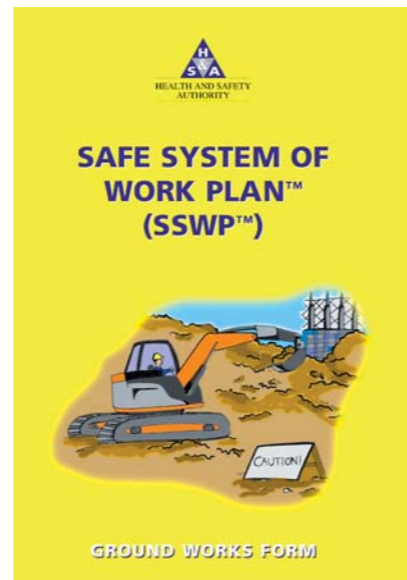
Paula Gough, Senior Inspector (Construction) with the Authority said "In a number of cases investigated by us, involving quick hitch devices, it was found that the safety pin had not been inserted and the bucket became detached from the quick hitch, striking the worker.

Where earthmoving equipment fitted with quick hitch devices is being operated on a site there was a need to ensure that a safe system of work is used so that:

- No worker is allowed to work within reach of an excavator bucket or rock-breaker.
- Mechanical locking pins are used correctly to prevent an uncontrolled release.

Construction Employers and plant operators should:

- 1 Review operating procedures and standard work instructions to ensure that quick hitch mechanisms are used correctly and in line with the manufacturer's recommendations.
- 2 Review maintenance and inspection practices to ensure that quick hitch mechanisms are maintained in a clean and fully serviceable condition.
- 3 Provide supervision, monitoring and checking to ensure compliance with work procedures by workers and plant operatives.



Construction Guidelines Launch

Love was in the air for the official launch of the Construction Guidelines, which coincided with St. Valentines Day, February 14th last. The two Guidance documents, aimed at tackling the number of workers killed or injured on building sites and those working at heights, were launched by the Minister for Labour Affairs, Tony Killeen T.D., at the Alexander Hotel, Dublin. The event was also attended by key figures from the Construction industry, the (Acting) CEO and Board members of the Health and Safety Authority, as well as members of the media.



Minister Killeen and Michael Henry (Acting CEO)

Endorsing the document, the Minister urged the construction industry to adhere to the Guidelines and make them a central part of all operations, declaring 'It is vital that lives are not jeopardised by over-zealous commercial interests. These guidelines ensure the protection of everyone involved and at every level from drawing board to day to day operations'.

Similarly, Michael Henry CEO (Acting), with the Authority, said the guidelines provided the tools for clients, designers, project supervisors and contractors - all duty holders - to ensure that occupational health and safety lay at the heart of every project and at every stage. "There is no longer any excuse for the best principles of occupational health and safety not being central to every project," he said, and both publications have been distributed widely within the industry. Indeed, the St. Valentines day launch was most fitting as it is hoped the construction sector will act passionately to adhere to the Guidelines and keep them close to their heart!



Notification of Construction projects goes Online

The Authority launched its online Construction Site Notification system last February. This service allows Project Supervisors for the Construction Stage to notify the Authority of construction projects covered by the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 2006, which last longer than 30 days or the volume of work is more than 500 person days.

Using this online system to submit a report has advantages in several respects:

- is faster than filling in a paper AF2 form and sending it by registered post to the Authority
- allows you to view all construction notifications you submitted online over the last year
- provides you with a confirmation reference for each construction notification you submitted

Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations, 2006
Approved Form (AF 2) Regulation 22
 Particulars to be notified by Project Supervisor for the Construction Stage to the Health and Safety Authority before the construction work begins

NOTE:
 This form is to be used to notify the Health & Safety Authority of any project covered by the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 2006, which last longer than 30 days or 500 person days. It can also be used to provide changes to initial notifications of projects. Any day on which construction work is carried out (including holidays and weekends) should be counted, even if the work on that day is of short duration. A period day is one individual, including supervisors and apprentices, carrying out construction work for one normal working shift. This Notification is to be made by Registered Post to HSA, Metropolitan Building, James Joyce Street, Dublin 1; or as may be directed by the Authority. The project supervisor for the construction stage shall clearly display on the construction site a copy of this form.

1 **Client:** Provide name, full address, telephone number and e-mail address for the Client. If more than one Client, please attach details of all Clients on a separate sheet.
 Name: _____
 Address: _____
 Telephone: _____ E-Mail: _____

2 **Project Supervisor Design Process and Health & Safety Coordinator:** Provide name, full address, telephone number and e-mail address for the PSDP and Health & Safety Coordinator for the Design Process.
 PSDP Name: _____ H&S C. Name: _____
 Address: _____ Address: _____
 Telephone: _____ Telephone: _____
 E-Mail: _____ E-Mail: _____

3 **Project Supervisor Construction Stage and Health & Safety Coordinator:** Provide name, full address, telephone number and e-mail address for the PSDP and Health & Safety Coordinator for the Construction Stage.
 PSDP Name: _____ H&S C. Name: _____
 Address: _____ Address: _____
 Telephone: _____ Telephone: _____
 E-Mail: _____ E-Mail: _____

4 **Information on Construction Work:** Please provide your details / estimates for the following.
 Description of Project: _____
 Address of Site: _____
 The planned date for the commencement of the construction work: _____
 How long the construction work is expected to take (in weeks): _____
 The maximum number of people carrying out construction work on site at any one time: _____
 The number of Contractors expected to work on site: _____

5 **Information on Construction Work:** Provide name, full address & telephone number of those selected to work on this project (if required continue on a separate sheet).

Name	Address	Telephone and Email

Signed: _____ by or on behalf of the Project Supervisor for the Construction Stage
 Position: _____ Date: _____

€50,000 Fine for Safety Breach

A case was taken by the DPP against Finnerty Plant Hire Ltd, held in Mullingar Circuit Court on February 23rd last, charged under Section 6 (2)(D) of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 1989. This prosecution followed a serious incident occurring in October 2004, which resulted in two electrical explosions.

While in the process of digging manholes, the court heard how ESB live underground cables were interfered with by operatives from Finnerty Plant Hire Ltd, leading to an explosion. Site workers were instructed to continue with the job and when the company failed to report the incident to the ESB, the power authority reset the trip switch on the cable. This resulted in a second explosion, with workers standing only feet away. The company entered a guilty plea and the Judge described the company's actions as hugely negligent, fining them €50,000.

€250,000 Fines for Fatal Accident

Fines totalling €250,000 and suspended jail terms of 2 and 3 years respectively have been imposed on two companies and two individuals as breaches of health and safety legislation resulted in the death of a worker.

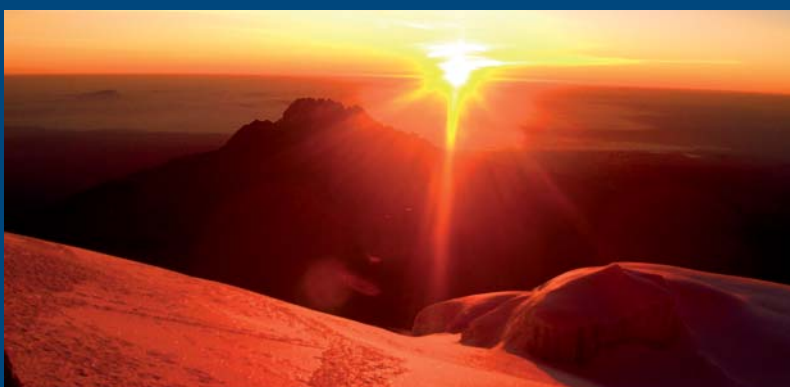
The Health and Safety Authority have welcomed the result of the case which involved charges of reckless endangerment against the directors of two companies involved in the incident.

This case arose out of a fatal accident on 19th of February 2003 where an employee of Kildownet Utilities Limited at an apartment development in Diamond Valley, Dargle Road, Bray in County Wicklow where the Project Supervisor Construction Stage (PSCS) was Cormac Building Contractors Limited.

Cormac Building Contractors Limited was fined €150,000 and similarly Kildownet Utilities Limited was fined €100,000. Both companies have been charged under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989.

The court heard that the issue of the existence of the power lines and the dangers associated with them had been highlighted on numerous occasions to both the site manager and director of the concrete subcontractor by the Health and Safety Authority, the ESB and Safety advisors to both companies. It was also pointed out that both individuals who were charged were on site on the morning of the accident and were aware of the risks associated with the pump operating in such close proximity to the power lines.

The Authority firmly believes that a case such as this carries a strong message to employers and supervisors to take safety issues seriously. This was, in many ways, a classic case of a tragedy caused because safety was not given precedence and warnings were ignored.



Our adventurous Inspectors

Two of our adventurous inspectors, Ronan Killgallon and Mark Madigan, did the Kilimanjaro Climb (19,340ft/5895m) in aid of various charities last January. The high climbing duo went with a group and specialist guides to the top of this amazing mountain. Well done guys on all your training, hard climbing, and of course all the money you both raised for charity.

Ronan and Mark have been living off the buzz of their exertions since they returned. They say they will never worry about taking the stairs to the 5th floor ever again. The intrepid climbers are seen here with some of their fellow trekkers (they are the two at the back).