

## ARTICLES:-WORKERS EXPOSED TO TOXIC MERCURY FUMES

A Yorkshire recycling company (Electrical Waste Recycling Group Ltd) in Huddersfield and one of its directors failed to protect workers from exposure to toxic mercury fumes. It used to recycle electrical equipment, fluorescent light tubes containing mercury and lead –containing television sets and monitors. The light tubes are compressed in a crushing machine which causes mercury to vaporize before passing through a filter, which collects residual dusts.

However, there was not a filter in place to contain the vapour, which allowed the vapour to spread throughout the factory. Workers, one of which was pregnant at the time were found to have levels of mercury within their system which were above the legal UK guidance levels. Workers were also being exposed to lead through handling the television sets. The HSE in August 2008 issued five Improvement Notices and a Prohibition Notice. Workers had no relevant PPE, no correct waste procedures and insufficient welfare facilities.

The company was fined £140,000 and ordered to pay £35,127 in costs. Following the notices served, the company employed two safety officers to monitor health and safety on site and to ensure that all workers are equipped with suitable PPE.

## CORPORATE MANSLAUGHTER CASE – FIRST OF ITS KIND

This spring sees the first case under the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act. This case is scheduled at the Bristol Crown Court for the prosecution of Cotswold Geotechnical Holdings. All eyes will be on the level of fines imposed due to this case relating to a death at work, whether this case will act as a deterrent or whether such a result will only act as a dent in profits for larger firms and voluntary liquidation routes for smaller firms.

Of course this decision may come to nothing depending on the outcome of the general election, as various promises or threats (depending on your point of view) have been made by all parties regarding health and safety.....watch this space!

## ENFORCING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The Environmental Agency has now been granted new enforcement powers. The aim is to give the enforcer more flexibility to enforce environmental law. This will include fixed and variable monetary penalties, and stop notices to prevent a business from continuing to carry out an activity until steps have been taken to ensure compliance.

## CHECK YOUR ARRANGEMENTS FOR:-ACCIDENT REPORTING

### ACCIDENT BOOK

All accidents resulting in personal injury must be recorded in the organisation's accident book (B1510). This should be located in a central position within the premises and contains information that must be recorded under law.

The accident book should be reviewed regularly by senior management to ascertain the nature of incidents that have occurred in the workplace. This review will be in addition to an individual investigation of the circumstances surrounding each incident. All near misses must also be reported to management as soon as possible so that action can be taken to investigate the causes and to prevent recurrence.

### PROCEDURES

Written accident reporting procedures need to be in place for employees who have had an accident, for managers who have

had an accident reported to them, visitors and contractors who may have an accident on your company premises or site and for reporting accidents that may have occurred to a member of the public.

An accident reporting policy should be in place to ensure that all procedures are followed correctly.

## REPORTING ACCIDENTS TO THE HSE

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR) require the “responsible person” to report the following instances to the relevant enforcing authority:

- Deaths
  - certain major injuries
  - injuries that cause absence for more than three days (including days that are not normally worked, eg weekends)
  - certain diseases and dangerous occurrences.
- The “responsible person” will either be an employer, a self-employed person or someone in control of the premises.
  - Reports under RIDDOR can be made to the Incident Contact Centre or the local office of the enforcing authority.
  - Reports must be made by the quickest practicable means, which is usually a phone call.
  - F2508 is the official form that should be used for the reporting of injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences.

## TRAINING

Employees and managers should receive training to raise their awareness of the need to report all incidents and the procedures to follow. Managers should also be trained in RIDDOR to know when accidents need to be reported to the HSE and when accident investigation is required.

You also need to check that your first aid procedures are in place taking into account locations of fully stocked first aid kits and First Aiders and Emergency First Aiders at Work are suitable trained and have had the appropriate refresher training.

## MONITORING ACCIDENTS

A monitoring system should be in place to ensure that all accidents, diseases, dangerous occurrences and near misses are reported.

## WE OFFER:- ACCIDENT REPORTING PROCEDURES AND INVESTIGATION SERVICES

All your arrangements need to be up to date and relevant to your workplace. We can review and compile accident reporting and investigation arrangements and procedures to ensure that your company is compliant with RIDDOR and the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. This is available as a separate service or can be incorporated into your Risk Management Package as part of your policy review.

We are also able to offer an accident investigation service should this be required. All accidents should be investigated, however these need to be thorough and detailed when involving a serious incident, accident or near miss. We can also carry out injured persons and witness interviews and compile accident reports revealing root causes and recommended actions to prevent re-occurrence.

Northants Risk Management Solutions also liaise with the enforcing authorities on your behalf regarding the reporting and investigation of accidents. We also offer a fully comprehensive health and safety policy which will have arrangements and procedures in place for emergency situations, accident reporting and accident investigations.

We can also offer a gap analysis review of your training requirements and offer simple solutions for health and safety compliance.

## UP DATE: - FIT-NOTE SYSTEM TO COME INTO FORCE THIS SPRING



From 6 April this year GP's will be required to issue those suffering from ill health with fit notes rather than sick notes, following the introduction of new regulations that aim to support more people with health conditions to return to work.

Doctors will have to declare patients "not fit for work" or "maybe fit for some work" – they will not necessarily have to be "100% fit for work". The aim of this new legislation is to make savings in the NHS and reduce long term sickness absence. Also to place more responsibility on both the employer and the employees to work together to find appropriate solutions which should give a positive impact on reducing number of days lost to sickness each year in industry.

## TOOL BOX TALK OF THE MONTH: – WORKING AT HEIGHT



The Working at Height Regulations came into force in 2005. Falls account for 50% of fatal accidents and 4,000 major injuries last year.

### The regulations applies to anyone, anywhere at any height and includes:

- All employees, sub contractors and self employed
- Working at any height, not just above 2m

### It requires risk assessment and hierarchy of control:

- Avoid working at height in the first place
- Do everything possible to prevent a fall
- Minimize the consequences of a fall

### Correct selection of equipment

- There are many different products and equipment on the market and for hire that can be used to reduce risks whilst working at height. Such as scaffolding, working platforms, podiums, stabilised ladders and hand rail systems.

### Assessment requires the correct use of equipment

- All operatives involved in working at height should have the relevant working at height training and for safe use of equipment.

### Encourage collective responsibility

- A range of communicative aids are available, such as training DVD's, posters and leaflets
- All training and working at height must only be completed by competent persons.

## Before working at height

- Before any work or access onto a roof, fragile materials should be identified and precautions decided.
- Roof-edge barriers (or scaffolds) must be erected to prevent people and materials falling.
- Access ladders must extend at least 1 metre above the stepping-off point and must be secured.
- Where access ladders rise above 9 metres, a safe intermediate platform must be provided.
- Ladders must be rested at the correct angle (1 unit out for 4 units up).

## Hazards of working at height

- If there is a risk of falls, guard-rails and toe-boards should be erected or an alternative means of fall prevention should be considered.
- Hazards resulting from adverse weather conditions must be anticipated, and suitable precautions taken.
- Too much material on a working platform decreases access and egress and must not exceed the safe working load.
- Don't allow rubbish to accumulate as this is liable to cause accidents. Use a chute or lower materials properly.
- Wet, windy or icy weather can seriously affect safety.

## Safe working on roofs

- Only competent operatives may be used for roofing works.
- Crawling boards or ladders must be provided and used where the roof is liable to collapse under a person's weight or the roof is sloping with a pitch over 10 degrees. Where work is of short duration and the provision of guard-rails and toe-boards is impracticable, safety harnesses must be used with suitable anchorage points provided. Other safety provisions such as working from a safe mobile elevated working platform (cherry picker or scissor lift) and/or installation of safety nets, should also be considered
- If using bitumen boilers, they require a drip tray.
- Openings must be covered or guarded; if removed for the passage of workers or materials, replace immediately.

**REMEMBER – There is no safe height to fall from.**

*Date:* \_\_\_\_\_ *Company Name:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Site:* \_\_\_\_\_ *Completed by:* \_\_\_\_\_

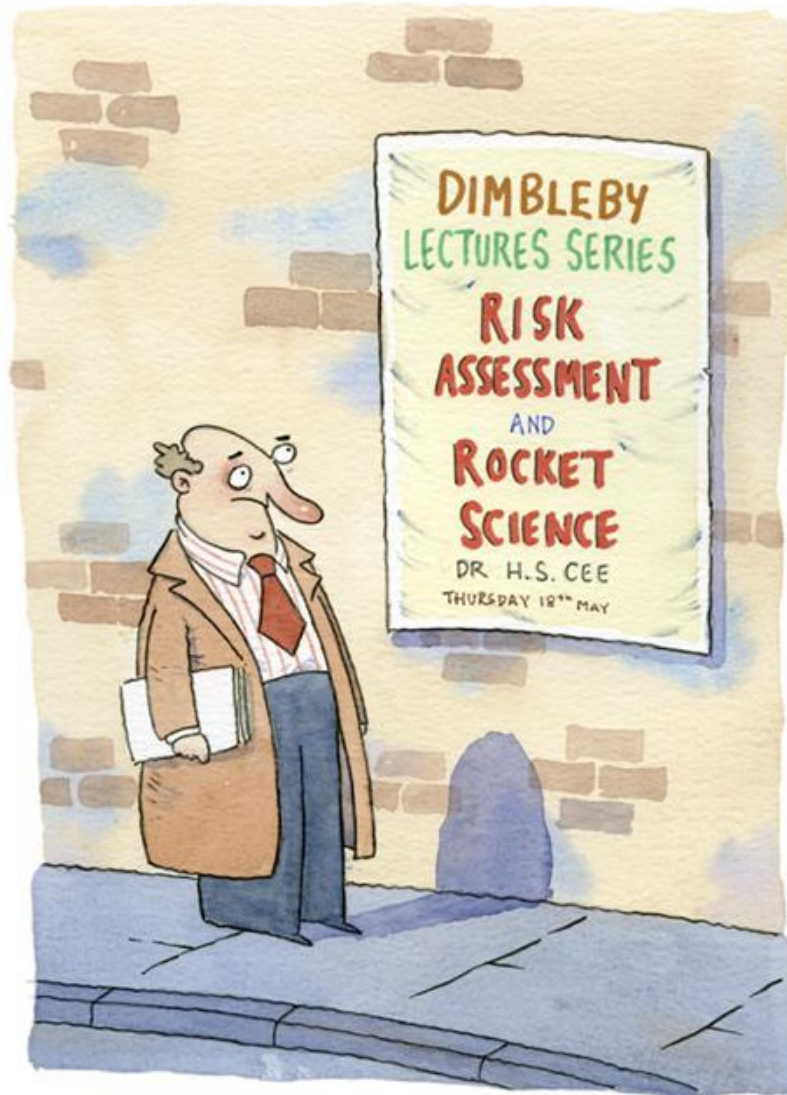
*The undersigned have attended:*

*Name* \_\_\_\_\_ *Signature* \_\_\_\_\_

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## MYTH OF THE MONTH:-

“RISK ASSESSMENT IS TOO COMPLICATED FOR ME TO DO”!



## THE REALITY

Carrying out a risk assessment should be straightforward. It's about focusing on real risks and hazards that cause real harm and, more importantly, taking action to control them.

**AND REMEMBER.....“DON`T LEARN SAFETY BY ACCIDENT”**

Suite 5 Green Lodge Barn  
Nobottle  
Northants  
NN7 4HD  
T: 01604 651091  
E: [enquiries@northants-rms.com](mailto:enquiries@northants-rms.com)  
W: [northants-rms.com](http://northants-rms.com)