

January 2000

Presentation on "The HSE Annual Report for 1999 and the Way Forward to the new Millennium" " by Ed Friend, Head of Specialist Group, HSE, Midlands Region.

Ed started his talk by looking at the local scene and, in terms of statistics, Accidents were reduced, the number of Investigations, Prosecutions and Prohibition Notices were all down. In part, the lower HSE activity was due to the reduction in number of Inspectors. But this would soon change because four inspectors had just finished training and a further eight were still in training.

David Matthey was leaving his post as Regional Director, to become the Chief Agricultural Inspector and special Adviser on Agriculture to the HSC. In his place, we would be welcoming another old friend of BHSA - **Linda Williams**, who last served in Birmingham as a Principal Inspector.

The **European Influence** was increasingly felt in the work of **the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work**. Although it has no formal role in legislation, it manages the H&S information in the Community. This is rather difficult because of variations in content in the various member states. The UK government is under some pressure to use EU parameters.

Elsewhere, we will see the publication of new directives for vibration and other physical agents, which are now to be published separately because they are too diverse to appear in one directive. There are also more than 165 harmonised standards in the UK as a result of EU legislation.

The HSC has developed strategic themes on the following lines:-

- 1 Suitable campaigns systems, procedures,**
- 2 Decide which occupational health issues should be targeted**
- 3 Provide relevant sound advice on occupational health**
- 4 Collect & make available essential occupational health information**
- 5 To raise awareness and make training & education available**
- 6 Provide systems to assess the effectiveness of action**
- 7 To gain commitment from all interested parties**

Underpinning this is the **Good Health is Good Business** campaign and the development of 'Partnerships' with intermediaries, like BHSA. There is also the increased use of the HSE website to publicise HSE involvements. The concept here is that it is a good policy to let **Employers** know what **Inspectors** are going to do - and when! This strategy is based on the knowledge that OH problems are underreported

and that deafness and vibration are far more costly than losing a finger! Therefore there is a move away from **Physical Safety to Good Occupational Health.**

Looking to the future, the strategy will include:-

1) **Modernising Government**

- How we work with others on policy making in overlapping disciplines. This is important between the HSE and Environment Agency which are now in the same Ministry.
- How we interact with the people we deal with. The Government wants Civil Servants to have a better contact with the public and to be more approachable.
- Coping with information. Wants to use IT more.

2) **Ministerial/HSC Strategic Appraisal**

- Statement in the Early part of the year.
- To put H&S policies into government working across a wider range of departments.

3) **New Chairman of the HSC.**

Bill Callaghan is a professional Trade Unionist and has strengthened external focus and introduced openness with these characteristics:-

- Political awareness.
- Openness
- Speedy Response.
- External focus
- Proactivity

In concluding Ed said that there would be more attention on 'Outcome Targets' for HSE, concentrating more on what is the effect of their work - not just on 'how busy they are'. The "Enforcement Management mode" (EMM) will determine the degree of enforcement

Members' Questions

Peter Evans of CGU asked if an allowance for under-reporting appeared in the figures for accidents and exposures. Ed replied that they did not, but that it was estimated that the level was about 45%.

George Allcock of GKN asked if a rigid formula would be applied to HSE work. Ed replied that they would not take away all discretion, but it was desirable that unnecessary, individual variations in approach by inspectors was to be avoided.

George also asked for clarification of the policy on Consultation with employees and the rights of Safety Representatives to issue Improvement Notices. Ed replied that good consultation leads to improvements in safety but he had no knowledge of any proposal for Safety Representatives to issue notices.

Mike Wilkinson of Marsh UK Ltd. asked what feedback the HSE had received of problems with the Millennium bug. Ed said that in the run up to Y2K there had not been any serious problems. He had heard that British Steel were concerned that they might cause an effluent discharge following a false screen message on their computers. They had retrained their key workers to recognise the wrong indication so that they reacted safely to it.

As there were no further questions, The Chairman thanked Ed for his interesting and informative talk and asked the members to show their appreciation.