

HSE Progress Report and Future Plans



**Nick Ratty, Head of Operations
HSE West Midlands Region**

As there was no further business, the Chairman closed the AGM and introduced the speaker, Nick Ratty, Head of Operations for HSE West Midlands. Nick started that although he was new to the job, he had been in the West Midlands before and knew of BHSEA's activities. In fact, on his very first day, the Regional director, Marcia Davies, had given Nick a copy of our 75th Anniversary booklet as part of his briefing on what was happening in the Region! He added that he had been in the HSE for about 25 years, partly in the Policy Directorate, working on Transport and Work at Height, and for some time had been a Principal Inspector on Construction in Manchester.

Nick focussed on the HSE future strategy, as he described the "Fit for Work, Fit for Life, Fit for tomorrow" campaign, referred to as "Fit 3". This encompassed: -

- The Public Sector (stress, return to work, managing sickness absence)
- Moving goods safely and Workplace Transport (Logistics HQs, pallet networks, road haulage)
- Falls (Facilities Management Companies, Ladders Week)
- Slips (Contract Cleaning Companies)
- Backs (Campaign early 2008)

This would be paired to a Major Hazards Campaign aimed at achieving Public Service Agreement (PSAs) Targets, by harnessing partnerships with Employer, Employee and Intermediaries. There would be less emphasis on major publicity campaigns!

Nick commented that in the public sector there was concern about stress and days lost from a range of ill-health causes. In the transport sector, he said that the campaign would focus on the supply chains and added that there were many pallet networks in the West Midlands that would come under scrutiny.

Regarding the Falls/Ladders initiative, he said the emphasis would be on facilities management companies who were "hard-to-reach" and would, therefore, probably be contacted for the first time by the HSE.

The reason for the "Slips" initiative was that the reduction in accidents had plateaued but there were a great number of days lost each year! It was special in that it was a pilot scheme for the West Midlands, looking at cleaning contractors, and that it would be followed by a national rollout!

The Fit3 initiative was also going to make use of “partnerships” for certain risk areas, such as the Royal Mail and Local Authorities for Slips and Materials Handling. The Waste Recycling Sector would be examined for safety in large plants and operations like kerbside waste collections. Nick went on to say that maintenance of large process plants would also be a target area, looking at mechanical hazards and access to high work and confined spaces. Agriculture would also be the subject for a new programme of SHADs, following the successful Construction experience and the food production chain would receive similar attention!

Disease reduction was also going to be a major operational concern for the HSE in 2008, with respiratory disease being given prominence in the motor vehicle repair industry, with widely-used Isocyanates receiving special attention. The metal fabrication, joinery and brick making industries would also be involved. Asbestos would continue to high priority, whilst dermatitis amongst dental nurses and technicians from use of resins, X-ray developers, cleaners and disinfectants would also be examined.

Another special risk in the West Midlands was Legionella Disease, where a large number of recent outbreaks were causing concern to the Health Protection Agency. There would be inspections in the plastics and health services, where the focus would be on the use of risk management systems.

Other Non-project work would involve Fairgrounds, where the focus would be on Noise and Vibration, with visits to suppliers of equipment and promotional work with users. There would be interventions with large employers and migrant workers in agriculture and the food industries would receive attention. Of course, Inspections would also continue to be a large feature of the HSE Work Plan!

In the Construction Industry, the major change in 2007 is going to be the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007 and BHSEA will be a major partner in the West Midlands with the full day event at the Motor Cycle Museum on 16th May 2007! HSE will be monitoring the new role of the Safety Co-ordinator, in particular, but there will be special attention paid to falls in facilities management activities and the use of ladders and access towers. The refurbishment sector will also be an important part of HSE activities.

The Major Hazard area would also be given new priorities, particularly after the Buncefield Report and pilot reward and recognition schemes would be developed. HSE would also seek to codify advice to Local Authorities on the use of land next to COMAH sites, to improve planning procedures. Nick mentioned Ray Cooke’s new project with Local authorities to align them with the HSE. He concluded by saying that HSE resources would be ‘recycled’ from existing deployments to other expanding industries like the Offshore Sector.

Members' Questions

Mark Hoare of Birmingham University commented on the recent TV reports of the National Coach crash, which showed a tarpaulin being placed on the wreck before removal and said that this sort of operation was still being done unsafely. Nick indicated that a solution might be provided by equipment suppliers. Mark went on to ask if the balance between Prosecutions and Advice would alter and Nick answered that there were likely to be more prosecutions.

Dennis Walley of Homeserve plc asked, if enforcement was to carry on as before, whether Insurance Companies were more influential than prosecutions because they would impose their standards in the workplace? Nick commented that he had to agree Insurance Premiums were a very persuasive motivation!

As there were no other questions, the presentation closed with a vote of thanks to Nick for a very comprehensive view of the year ahead and members gave the usual round of applause.