

Agency Staff – The Corporate Risk and Mitigation

Malcolm Copson, Geopost

Malcolm told us that his company distributed parcels from a distribution hub in Smethwick. Due to the highly cyclical nature of the work, his company made intensive use of Agency Staff to supplement their direct labour resource. This workforce consisted of a high proportion of foreign labour, giving rise to language problems, very different experiences of H&S regimes in their own country, poor motivation to work for an extended time in UK and low skills. The employer could never be confident that workers would reliably turn up for work and benefit from any training.

Against this background of a fluctuating workforce, Geopost training had to be carefully structured to deliver essential H&S training as soon as possible on appointment, followed by supplementary training in line with job progression. Some work, for instance, involves working with powered, extending conveyor systems posing a high crushing risk and there are high risks of injuries from transport on the site roads.

Malcolm outlined the training syllabus, which included essential Information, Instruction and Supervision: -

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction to depot• Location of Work• Employee's job• Performance standards expected• Hours of Work• Welfare Facilities• Safety Instructions/Site rules• Fire procedures/Alarms• First Aid arrangements• Accident Reporting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uniform/Locker arrangements• Manual Handling Techniques• Housekeeping• Search/ Alcohol/Drugs Policy• PPE – Mandatory!• Company H&S Policy• Safety Representative• Instruction on use of Work Equipment (penetrator conveyors!)
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All of this was arranged in collaboration with the Insurers, so there was no misunderstanding about the real risks covered and there was a sound defence of employers' Liability Claims. All Business Unit Managers and supervisors were trained to the same standard so that they knew what the workers had been told and there was no argument about standards to achieve.