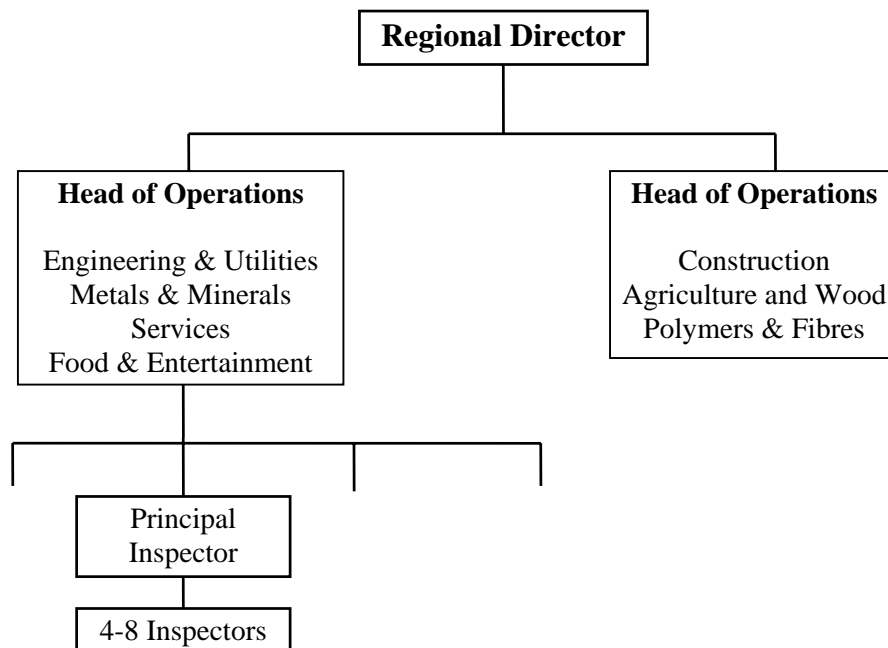


Keynote Address by John Ewins, Head of Operations, HSE Midlands Region.

John started his address by talking about the changes in structure had resulted in a 30% reduction in senior managers within HSE. His role in the Field Operations Directorate (FOD) was the nearest in the new HSE structure to that of the obsolete Area Director. There are six other directorates covering Major Hazards, Health, Science & Technology, Offshore, Mine, Railways and Nuclear safety. There are now seven regions in the FOD, each with a Regional Director. The Midlands Region is located in three main offices; the Regional Office in Birmingham with two others, one in Nottingham and the other in Northampton. The FOD is organised as follows:-



In addition there are two teams in the Midlands who combine the work of the old National Interest Groups (NIGs) and liaise with colleagues in other regions across the UK to agree standards, set up policy and ensure consistency.

Another innovation was in the Field Consultancy Group which now contracts out 25% of its work to AEA Technology. The same approach is now being considered with EMAS.

A sign of these changes was seen in a recent recruitment drive, when there were 6000 applicants for just 21 graduate trainee jobs. Although 27 were finally appointed (with 9 for the Midlands) they only replaced losses of experienced staff and will not be as effective for some time.

Inevitably, the new structure has resulted in new methods of working with:-

- Sector Strategic Plans with
 - 3 Year Rolling basis
 - Agreement with Industry
 - An Inspection Agenda
- An increasingly Management Systems Approach, which test employers' ability to control risk.
- Various ways to influence small firms:-
 - Mailshots
 - Seminars
 - Use of Large Firms

- Enforcement Procedures. The new Notice of Intent to serve an Improvement Notice is hoped to encourage firms to make a faster improvement and, at the same time, keep them free from formal enforcement which gives them a bad record. First indications are that Industry has responded favourably.
- HSE Infoline - 0541 545500. This acts as a filter between employers and the inspectors.

Another important initiative is the "Good Health is Good Business" campaign, Phase 1 of which dealt with Noise, Musculo-Skeletal Disorders and Respiratory Sensitisers. Work-related ill-health affects 2.2 million people each year at a cost of £4-5billion. Phase 2 is now being launched at Dermatitis, Occupational Asthma and Carcinogens. Phase 3 is due to be launched in April 1998 and will deal with Hand/arm Vibration and Solvents. Free booklets about the campaign can be obtained by telephoning 0345 181819.

Finally, John spoke about a subject very close to the fundamental objectives of BHSA - how large firms can help small firms to improve their safety management performance. He said that there are about 3.5 million businesses in UK employing less than 50 people and a recent HSC Discussion Document had shown that:

- 98% Think that Health and Safety is important, rules are necessary and should be based on magnitude of risk NOT size of firm.
- 89% Thought HSE Inspectors gave good advice.
- 88% Want to be told what to do.

There was evidence, he added, that small firms struggled to quantify the true costs of accidents and HSE, instead, always emphasised the benefits of good safety management. To try to learn from the market leaders, HSE had launched two initiatives:-

- The Rimmington project - looking at blue chip firms such as Esso, Northern Foods, Rolls Royce, GKN, Pilkington.
- The Loughborough project - examining firms which win safety awards.

Networking between firms such as these and small firms stood a real chance of success if it resulted in simple, realistic advice.

In conclusion, John reported from the HSE Annual Report for 1995/96 that the number of fatalities was unchanged from 94/95 at 272. More impressively the number of deaths to the public was at an historic low at 90 (104 in 94/95). He also mentioned that this year saw the **first immediate prison sentence of 3 months** for a health and safety offence. This was the owner of a demolition firm removing asbestos from a building.

After some questions from the floor, the Chairman thanked John for his thought-provoking address.