

Managing Occupational Health Risks

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- The term Occupational Health relates to the promotion and preservation of workers' physical, mental and social well-being through risk control and adaptation of jobs. However, it is often the case that workers are expected to adapt to the job.
- Failure to manage occupational health has high financial consequences – both to business and the country eg in the year 2016/17 there were 25.7 million working days lost per annum to work-related ill-health and 13,000 deaths each year are linked to past exposure to harmful substances.
- Work-related stress, depression and anxiety - largely due to workload - has overtaken musculoskeletal disorders. Main industries affected are within human health and social work. (Survey 2009-2012)
- 45% (229,000) of all musculoskeletal disorders affect upper limbs and the neck - a higher proportion of cases are within the construction industry. (Survey 2016/2017)
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) - results in 33% of occupational lung disease deaths annually.
- Members shared their workplace experience of health related issues:
 - Craig Neuin and Colin Hailing – face-fitting
 - Linda Ley – hand arm vibration
 - Wayne Bishop – overuse of thinners leading to sensitivity
 - Lee Dargue – drug and alcohol abuse
- Risk assessments, pre-employment screening, health surveillance programmes, competent advice and support were suggested as some of the key elements for managing occupational health risks.