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risk management solutions

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E-newsletter

ARTICLES:- SECURITY GUARD DIED FROM CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

A security guard died from carbon monoxide poisoning inside a makeshift office at a construction site in Scotland, which didn't have adequate ventilation.

Alpha Group Security Ltd had been contracted to provide security for a new housing development at Ann Street, Burnbank, Hamilton. The company had installed a portable petrol-power generator inside one of the flats, which was being used as a base for employees.

The generator was operated inside the flat without appropriate ventilation and on 6 February 2008, one of the firm's security guards, Thomas Fraser, was overcome by a build-up of carbon monoxide fumes and died. Alpha Group Security appeared at Hamilton Sheriff Court on 4 June and was fined a total of £7000. No costs are awarded in Scotland.

Following the incident the firm immediately removed the generator and ensured that the site's developers restored mains power to the flat. HSE inspector Adrian Tinson said: "This tragic incident should never have happened. It is the clear duty of those who create risks to manage them and to implement safe systems of work. This means clear instructions should be provided to contractors and operators and checks made to ensure they understand them. Responsible management of risk should have ensured the safe set-up and use of the portable petrol generator in a well-ventilated area, which could have avoided this unnecessary death."

MAN KILLED WHILE TESTING A HIGH-PRESSURE VALVE

A 21-year-old man was killed while testing a high-pressure valve, in an incident that led to his employer being fined £150,000. Lewes Crown Court heard that Philip Locke was employed by Flowserve (GB) Ltd, a company that manufactures pumps, valves and seals, and automation for the power, oil, gas, chemical, and other industries.

Philip Locke was carrying out a quality-control test on a valve to make sure it didn't leak. It is thought that during the test, the vent valve became detached from the pressure-testing machine and hit Mr Locke at high speed in the chest.

The pressure in the system as Mr Locke was carrying out adjustments to the valve was around 380 bar. HSE inspector Russell Beckett said: "The company thought that they were testing the valve just under hydraulic (water) pressure but, actually, half of it was full of air, so there was an increased amount of energy inside the test valve." He explained that even had the tests been purely hydraulic-based, the company should have taken increased precautions, as there is still a danger of loose parts "missiling". Under pneumatic (air) testing, if the valve has a fracture, parts can even shatter and explode under the forces.

The HSE investigation found that the company had failed to carry out a sufficient risk assessment. Had it done so, it would have been alerted to the fact that the machine contained both air and water, said the inspector. The vent valve had not been installed correctly and there was no guard in place on the rear of the machine, which would have prevented the vent valve injuring Mr Locke when it separated from the machine at high pressure. According to the inspector, the company should have looked at ways to protect workers from the risk of "missiling" incidents by, for example, segregating areas more effectively, or installing guards. On 4th June, Flowserve (GB) Ltd was fined £150,000 and ordered to pay full costs of £66,838.

ASTON VILLA FOOTBALL CLUB FINED FOR H&S BREACHES

Aston Villa Football Club has been fined £1350 after a drainage worker fell through a roof during the redevelopment of its training ground.

Stratford on Avon Magistrates' Court heard that Mechanical Cleansing Services Ltd had been contracted to drain fuel tanks on a roof during the demolition of an old building at the Bodymoor Heath complex near Sutton Coldfield, on 27 July 2007.

The fuel tanks were located in the roof's plant room, but a ladder in the building was blocked, preventing access. As a result, Mechanical Cleansing Services' director Damon Roe, decided to use a ladder against the outside of the building to access the plant room. But both he and the football club failed to warn the workers that there were fragile roof lights on the roof.

Having finished cleaning the tanks, one of the pair of workers headed towards the ladder to climb down, but he fell through a roof light. The 34-year-old fell three metres and broke bones in both of his heels. He was unable to return to work for more than six months.

HSE inspector Carol Southerd said: "Work at height can be very dangerous if not properly planned and although the victim's injuries were severe, they could have been much worse. If the internal ladder had been used, then this incident would not have happened. A simple conversation with the club was all it would have taken to arrange for the blocked ladder to be cleared.

"When working at height all workers must have adequate instruction, training and equipment. It is vital that risks are adequately assessed and managed before employees undertake tasks in hazardous locations. There was a clear failure to warn the victim or his colleague of the dangerous condition of the roof, or to provide safe access to the tank."

CHECK YOUR ARRANGEMENTS FOR:-HEALTH SURVEILLANCE

WHO NEEDS HEALTH SURVEILLANCE?

The starting point is your risk assessment. Through this, you should have found out the health hazards in your workplace, identified who is at risk and taken measures to do something to control the risk. Where risks remain, you will need to take further steps, one of which is to consider health surveillance. But remember that health surveillance IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR CONTROLLING HEALTH RISKS AT WORK.

In particular, ask yourself whether any of your employees is at risk from:

- noise or hand-arm vibration
- solvents, fumes, dusts, biological agents and other substances hazardous to health
- asbestos, lead or work in compressed air
- ionising radiations or diving

For exposure to some other health risks such as manual handling, work-related upper limb disorders, work that might give rise to stress-related diseases and symptoms from whole body vibration, there are no specific legal requirements for health surveillance but it is deemed good practice to monitor and implement surveillance where ever necessary to prevent ill health.

HOW IS THIS DONE?

Health surveillance is the routine monitoring of the health of employees to detect adverse health effects arising from hazards in the workplace. People must be competent to undertake such health techniques.

An effective prevention and control programme will routinely monitor employees' health, and, if necessary, the health of their families, friends and neighbours, to determine if any detrimental health effects arising from work exist.

Initially, health surveillance involves employees checking themselves for signs or symptoms of ill health. BUT THESE SELF-CHECKS CAN ONLY BE CARRIED OUT WHERE THEY ARE PART OF WIDER HEALTH SURVEILLANCE PROGRAMME. They will only work where employees have been properly trained on what to look for and know to whom to report symptoms. An example would be employees noticing soreness, redness and itching on their hands and arms, where they work with substances that can irritate or damage the skin.

The format of health surveillance may include the use of questionnaires to determine symptoms and may also involve clinical examination or measurements, eg lung function testing, hearing tests or biological sampling.

A responsible person can be trained to make basic checks such as skin inspections for signs of rashes and could, for example, be a supervisor, employee representative or first aider. For slightly more complicated assessments, an occupational health nurse can ask about symptoms or carry out an examination.

The examination of specific records (eg accident, ill health, absence and pension records) may reveal valuable information regarding health and safety and recurring health problems in the workplace.

KEEPING RECORDS

You must keep health records of all health surveillance carried out for up to fifty years (such as for potential exposure to lead, asbestos, ionising radiation and compressed air. Otherwise records need to be kept for as long as health surveillance is being carried out (usually forty years).

FREQUENCY OF HEALTH SURVEILLANCE

The level of risk determines the frequency of health surveillance programmes. Where the risk is thought to be low, only baseline data will be required and staff should report to the team leader if any problems are experienced. Baseline data will usually be gathered at the employment health interview.

If the risk is thought to be more significant, periodic health surveillance for all exposed staff should take place. In most cases this will be annual, but in some high-risk areas a more frequent programme may be agreed.

More frequent surveillance may be required where a person's medical history suggests a particular vulnerability. The responsible person or occupational health nurse will make this decision and manage the recall process.

WE OFFER:- PROCEDURES AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR YOUR HEALTH SURVEILLANCE

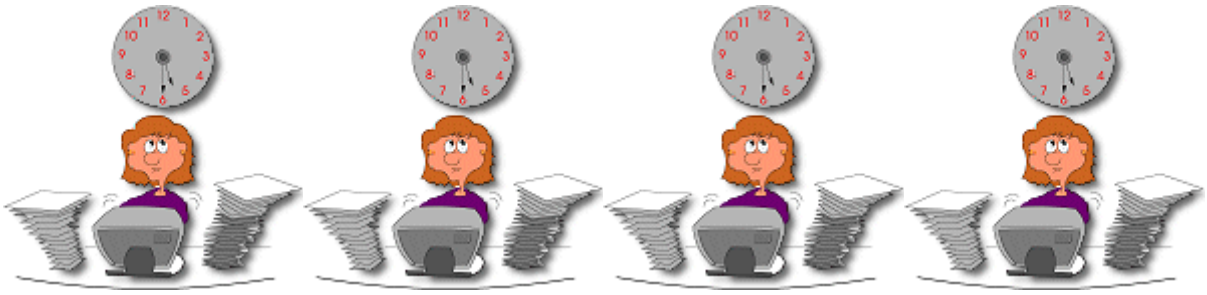
All your arrangements and procedures need to be up to date and relevant to your workplace. We can review and compile health surveillance arrangements and procedures to ensure that your company is compliant with Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002, Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. This is available as a separate service or can be incorporated into your Risk Management Package as part of your policy review.

UP DATE: - NEW OPTICAL RADIATION REGUALTIONS



Workers are now being given more protection from the dangers of artificial light from the end of April. The Control of Artificial Optical Radiation at Work Regulations meet new Directives to protect workers from the harm from exposure to hazardous sources of artificial light. This can be via UV radiation and light from lasers, which can harm the skin and eyes if not managed correctly. Common source light such as from office lights, computers and photocopiers will not be included in this regulation.
For further details go to www.hse.gov.uk/radiation/nonionising/optical.htm

TOOL BOX TALK OF THE MONTH: – OFFICE SAFETY



You may think that since you work in an office you don't have to worry about being injured. However, offices can become dangerous because people don't anticipate the potential hazards.

Studies show that over one-fourth of office injuries are caused by falls. One-third of the falls incurred by women are due to wearing high heels, which make falls more likely. Consider wearing lower, wider heels. Other things that can cause falls are spills on floors, torn carpets or exposed carpet seams, electrical cords running across the floor, open desk or file drawers, boxes or supplies stored in aisles, or waste baskets placed where you could trip over them. Look around to see if you can spot any of these potential problems. If you find any, take the time to get them fixed.

If your office has stairs or steps, watch out! Falls on stairs cause more than 33,000 disabling work injuries each year. About 2/3 of the workers falling on stairs were not using handrails when they fell. Many were carrying objects, or slipped on something left on the steps. Accidents on stairs are usually serious - 80% of these falls result in lost work days. Use handrails, pick up anything you see on the stairs, don't use stairs for storage, and don't try to carry things when using stairs if you can avoid it.

Use common sense with chairs, and don't use them for anything except sitting. Straight-back chairs aren't recliners - so don't lean way back, the chair could flip over. Chairs should never be used as replacements for stools or ladders.

Most offices seem to have an intersection that needs a traffic light to keep people from bumping into each other. If there are blind corners, consider installing convex mirrors so people can see each other coming. Be especially careful while carrying hot drinks. Don't carry stacks of material so high that your vision is obstructed. Carrying this much material not only blocks your vision, but could also strain your back.

Watch out for avalanches if you pile "stuff" on top of filing cabinets. Even a carefully stacked pile may start sliding due to vibration from opening and shutting file drawers. Also keep an eye out for overloaded upper file drawers. This may cause the entire filing cabinet to tip over on top of you when you open the drawer. Re-distribute some of the weight to the lower drawers to reduce this chance, and check to make sure the filing cabinet is bolted to the adjacent cabinet, if it can be done.

These are just a few tips that can make your office area safer. Look around, and you no doubt will spot other problems that can be easily fixed. When you see a hazard, don't assume it is someone else's responsibility. If you don't do something about it, who will?

Date: *Company Name:*

Site: *Completed by:*

The undersigned have attended:

Name *Signature*

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MYTH OF THE MONTH:-

HEALTH AND SAFTEY RISKS STOP CHILDREN PLAYING “PIN THE TAIL ON THE DONKEY”

THE REALITY

It was reported that the traditional party game 'pin the tail on the donkey' is allegedly under threat because parents consider it a health and safety risk.

Not trusting children with drawing pins seems a little overprotective to us. After all, millions of children have been playing traditional party games like this for years without any problems.

Was this just a marketing ploy to drum up sales of party games?

AND REMEMBER……“DON`T LEARN SAFETY BY ACCIDENT”

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