

First-aid changes will save UK businesses millions

Amended guidance to the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 comes into force from 1st October 2009 which will see a major change in the training regime for first aid at work (FAW).

The mandatory four-day FAW training courses will be reduced to three days, while small businesses will have the option of a one-day course. All qualified workplace first-aiders will still have to undergo a two-day requalification course every three years.

The aim of the change is to save businesses time and money without compromising health and safety. The new guidelines were produced on the back of extensive consultation with and feedback from employers across the UK, who recognised the need for first-aid training but often found it difficult to release employees for the necessary four days. Savings in the first year of the new regime are estimated by the HSE to be **£52 million**. The new guidance also suggests that refresher training taken annually would be beneficial to first-aiders and their employers, with staff feeling better placed to deal with an incident in their workplace.

Dr Dil Sen, HSE Principal Medical Inspector, said: "First aid can help save lives and prevent minor injuries becoming major ones. The revised guidance will help employers get first-aid training that suits their business needs and saves them both time and money." To see the list, and for more information on the guideline changes, visit www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid, or you can call us here at Award who would be happy to advise.

Cowboys and Gas don't mix – If you use an un-registered gas engineer you could be putting your life at risk

Illegal gas-fitters in Great Britain are conducting a quarter of a million gas jobs each year, including fitting and servicing appliances, according to a study by Gas Safe Register, the safety body that replaced CORGI in April to oversee the work carried out by registered gas engineers.

Published on 17 September, the study estimates that **7500** illegal gas-fitters are carrying out jobs without the necessary gas-safety skills or qualifications. The research has enabled the watchdog to build an accurate profile of those most likely to be involved in illegal gas work. It is estimated that more than half (57 per cent) are sole traders, and a third work in companies employing fewer than four people. As well as carrying out gas work, 90 per cent also undertake plumbing jobs, 81 per cent fit bathrooms, 67 per cent install kitchens, and 43 per cent carry out general building or electrical work.

Gas Safe Register's national investigations manager, Phil Brewster, commented: "One in 10 of the illegal gas installations we investigated in the last nine months have been **'Immediately Dangerous'** and we had to disable the appliances straight away to make them safe. Over a third of these were leaking gas, and almost half had faults that could lead to lethal carbon-monoxide exposure. "So, with our research showing that illegal gas-fitters do 250,000 jobs in our homes each year, it's worrying to think how many of these were also left in a dangerous state."

Brewster is urging householders to check engineers' Gas Safety Register ID cards to make sure they have the right qualifications.

Worker lucky to survive power line shock and fall

Three contractors have been fined a total of **£44,000** after a worker collapsed and rolled off a poultry shed roof when he received a massive electric shock from an overhead power line.

Thomas Bates, the son of one of the contractors, was helping to construct the shed at a farm near Newtown in Wales when metal roofing material he was carrying either touched or came close to touching the 11kV power line directly above the building. As the shock threw him backwards, he fell around 2.5 metres off the roof to the ground.

He suffered severe burns to his body and broke several bones in his back.

Describing the incident as "entirely avoidable", the HSE's investigating inspector Chris Wilcox said that Bates was fortunate to survive the shock, let alone the subsequent fall.

The **HSE's** investigation found that the contractors involved had done nothing to protect men on the roof from the live overhead cable and there was no edge protection around the roof to prevent a fall.



Routine inspection at football club reveals basic safety failings

Blackpool Football Club has been fined **£8000** for failing to comply with an Improvement Notice.

In February 2009, environmental health officers (EHOs) from Blackpool Council carried out a routine safety inspection at the football club's Bloomfield Road stadium.

The council discovered the club had failed to carry out a risk assessment, or create a written health and safety policy, to cover non-match days.

The club was issued an Improvement Notice on 3 March and given 21 days to undertake a sufficient risk assessment, and create a written safety policy. During this period, the council supplied the club with advice and HSE guidance to help it meet the requirements. On 1 April, EHOs revisited the ground and discovered that no steps had been taken to adhere to the Notice. Blackpool FC appeared before the town's magistrates on 18 September and pleaded guilty to two breaches of s33(1)(g) of the HSWA 1974. It was fined £4000 for each offence and ordered to pay £500 in costs.

In mitigation, the club said its safety officer had left work in March after being diagnosed with throat cancer. It had not appointed a replacement to work on non-match days, and had assumed its match-day safety policy was sufficient. It has now employed a safety officer and is in the process of completing the required safety documentation.

Ministry of Defence pays £200,000 to pleural plaques widow

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has paid out **£200,000** in compensation to the widow of a worker who died from asbestos-related lung cancer after developing pleural plaques.

The fitter was exposed to asbestos daily while working at the MoD's Devonport Dockyard in Devon from the 1960s to the 1980s. He was not provided with any protection from the carcinogenic dust.

He was diagnosed with lung scarring caused by asbestos in 2003 and developed cancer two years later.

His wife said, "When my husband was diagnosed with pleural plaques we always knew the day would come when we would be told he had cancer. It was just a matter of time. When the doctors told us he had lung cancer we knew straight away that it had been caused by asbestos."

The 71-year-old died before a settlement was reached, but his wife received £200,000 in damages from the MoD.

Myth of the month

Tower scaffold death costs EDF Energy £180k

Major power provider EDF Energy has been fined **£160,000** after a maintenance contractor died dismantling a tower scaffold when he stumbled over the edge and fell five metres.

The energy supply and maintenance company had been contracted by West Sussex Council to maintain the heating and lighting in the sports hall of Worthing High School. A mobile tower scaffold had been erected to access the lighting and heating appliances in the hall ceiling and James Gordon was tasked with dismantling it.

The 63-year-old had removed the top working platform and was on an intermediate platform beginning to unclip the diagonal structural braces, when he lost his footing and fell from the platform to the hall floor below. He sustained fatal head injuries.

HSE inspector Russell Beckett said the accident was caused by a systemic failure. The scaffold had been erected incorrectly, without handrails to provide edge protection on the intermediate platform. At Chichester Crown Court, EDF Energy admitted contravening **Regulations 4(b) and 4(c) of the Work at Height Regulations**. The company was fined £160,000 and ordered to pay full costs of £24,594.

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Myth: Health and safety bans traditional school ties

The reality

The reality Quite rightly, few parents would see wearing school ties as a safety issue. After all, millions of kids have been wearing ties for years without any real problems. Taking simple precautions during laboratory work or around machinery makes sense. But if the concern is about kids fighting, although clip-on ties may help, the real issue is discipline.

So no, we don't ban school ties – it's down to the school to make decisions about uniform, not HSE.

