

Health for Work FREE Advice-line

SMEs in Portsmouth, South Hampshire, East Sussex and Isle of Wight now have free access to professional occupational health advice to help with individual employee health issues.

The free 'Health for Work Advice line' for small business helps you to quickly and effectively address the issue of employee ill health, minimise the impact of staff illness and provide essential support to staff with physical or mental health issues. The free advice-line provides small business managers with the expert advice and support they need to help team members experiencing ill health. All managers will have experienced how the ill health of an individual impacts on their performance. What's more, with the increase of mental health issues such as stress, anxiety and depression, it is now more important than ever to:

- Find the advice and support you need today.
- Develop a plan to effectively and sympathetically deal with an employee experiencing ill health
- Establish how to deal with similar problems in the future, should they occur
- Think differently about your business and the investment you could make in a healthy workplace

It is widely recognised that the health of individuals is linked to their ability to effectively participate and contribute in their work. The impact of ill health on small businesses is significant.

Small business managers are busier than ever and often overlook the importance of staff health as they strive to deliver business improvement and growth. The Adviceline service recognises this and so provides free, quick and easy access to effective professional advice and guidance in this key area. For more information see www.health4work.nhs.uk Telephone **08000778844**

Tesco pays £119,000 for fire safety law breaches

Supermarket giant Tesco has been fined £95,000 and ordered to pay over £24,000 in costs after pleading guilty to five breaches of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO).

London Fire Brigade, prosecuting, said fire-fighters were called to a fire at Tesco's Colney Hatch store in Barnet on 14 October 2007. When they arrived found the premises locked but managed to gain access after attracting the attention of an employee who was restocking shelves. There had been a fire in the staff kitchen but it had been put out by staff using extinguishers and a fire blanket. There was still a significant amount of smoke in the kitchen, the corridor and staff locker rooms and crews had to ask staff several times to evacuate the premises.

This incident made officers concerned about fire safety in the store, so on the following day they inspected the premises. A number of breaches of fire safety legislation were found, including a failure to review the store's fire risk assessment, a failure to ensure escape routes were kept clear and inadequate fire separation due to doors being wedged open. An enforcement notice was subsequently served on 2 November 2007.

Tesco pleaded guilty to failing to keep emergency exits clear (£20,000 fine); failing to keep an emergency route clear (£20,000); two counts of fire doors being wedged open (£20,000 each) and storing flammable materials under an emergency stairwell (£15,000). Sentencing took place at Wood Green Crown Court on 20 April 2010.



Firm fined after potential asbestos exposure

A building firm has been fined after refurbishment work triggered the temporary closure of country club near Darlington over fears of exposure to asbestos.

Nationwide Building Contractors Limited was fined a total of £4,500 at Darlington Magistrates' Court over the incident. The company was found guilty, in its absence, of breaching Regulations 5, 11 and 16 of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006.

The company had been contracted to refurbish Hall Garth Hotel.

When HSE inspectors visited the site, they found that work was carried out without adequate checks for asbestos or asbestos-containing materials, and served a Prohibition Notice - immediately stopping construction work. Further investigations found large amounts of asbestos pipe lagging in walls and floor voids where work had been undertaken.

HSE worked with local Environmental Health Officers and the hotel management to ensure that asbestos fibres had not spread to the occupied areas of the hotel. The hotel was voluntarily closed while tests were undertaken. Fortunately the test results in the public areas were negative.

After the case, HSE Inspector Victoria Wise said:

"Construction and maintenance workers are the most at-risk groups from asbestos-related diseases due to the nature of their work. The widespread occurrence of asbestos as a product in buildings constructed or refurbished prior to 2000, means that inadvertent disturbance of asbestos-containing materials can be frequent and regular where asbestos products have not been adequately identified or managed".



Director's "scant regard" for safety prompts five-year ban

Safety breaches by a fuel storage tank manufacturer, including exposing workers to toxic paint, have led to a five-year ban for its director and a **£97,507** penalty for the firm.

HSE inspectors visited the Transtore plant in Stratford-upon-Avon, managed by Brian Nixon, after an employee complained about working conditions. They found "a complete flagrant lack of attention" to safety, with no protection for workers spraying lead paint and no fall arrest measures for employees working on top of two-metre-high fuel tanks.

The HSE investigation also discovered there were no safety measures to prevent half-tonne containers used to store or transport fuel, which were suspended from poorly maintained lifting equipment, falling and crushing staff painting the underside of the tanks. In the absence of safety training and instruction, employees had been left to devise their own systems of work.

Specialist inspectors took air samples at the plant and tested five workers for lead, which can enter the blood stream if inhaled and cause serious health issues, such as damage to the central nervous system and gastrointestinal problems.

The results showed that all the workers tested had higher than average levels of lead in their systems.

The HSE issued the company with four Prohibition Notices stopping unsafe work and served it with four Improvement Notices. But Nixon ignored the notice prohibiting work at height and instructed his staff to continue working on top of the tanks. Describing the situation at the factory as "lamentable", HSE inspector Peter Snelgrove said, "There was a gross dereliction of duty by the management of this company". At Stratford-upon-Avon Magistrates' Court, company director Brian Nixon admitted breaching Regulation 4(1) of the Work at Height (WAH) Regulations and Section 33(1)(g) of the Health and Safety at Work Act (HSW Act), for neglecting to plan and supervise a safe system of work at height and failing to comply with a Prohibition Notice. The court banned Nixon from directing a company for five years and fined him **£17,000 with £9169 costs.**

Award Open Courses to all, book now.....

Award Health & Safety Ltd are running these open courses:

- ◆ Emergency First Aid at Work on 17th of May (Portsmouth) 4 places left
- ◆ Asbestos Awareness Course morning & afternoon on 21st of May (Portsmouth) 3 places left in the am & 2 in the pm

Be sure to call us soon.

Providing Quality Training at Affordable Prices

For further information or to book your training course please contact the office, details are below.

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£3,000 fine after worker suffers electric shock

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) prosecuted Hickman Engineering Ltd after Ben Roberts (21) from Cannock was taken to hospital suffering from burns to his legs, chest, fingers and wrist. Stafford Magistrates Court heard how, Mr Roberts was working as a labourer at the site. He was helping to manually load the saw before his colleague cut a length of metal handrail. He was not involved in the operation of the machine, which wasn't even switched on at the time, yet he still suffered an electric shock.

HSE's investigation discovered that the saw's electrical cable had been unsuitably repaired with tape, reducing the protection and strength of the wiring. An Institute of Civil Engineers report suggested that corroded earth connections may also have played a part. The outer protective sheath was likely damaged, exposing the inner wires. There were also other electrical deficiencies with the saw that posed a danger as well as metal filings on the floor of the workshop which may have contributed to the shock.

Following the hearing HSE inspector Wayne Owen said:

"Ben Roberts was very lucky as faulty wiring and electricity can kill. Every year there are around 1,000 incidents reported to HSE involving electric shocks or burns, around 30 of them fatal."



Myth of the month

Myth: HSE still bans this, that and the other

The reality

We've said it all before, but there are still too many reports that HSE and health and safety law are responsible for all sorts of bans – cheese-rolling events, knitting in hospitals and even toothpicks!

In reality HSE has banned very little outright, apart from a few high-risk exceptions like asbestos, which kills around 4000 people a year.

Too often health and safety is used as a convenient excuse, but it's time to challenge this and remind people to focus on the real risks – those that are still causing people to be killed, injured or made ill at work. **Challenge the myths, tackle real risks!**

