

Consultation opens in January on RIDDOR changes

The Health and Safety Executive have agreed a plan for the publication of consultation documents on proposed changes to the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR).

In his report on health and safety, Lord Young recommended that RIDDOR be amended 'by extending to seven days the period before an injury or accident needs to be reported'. In line with commitments made in the Government's formal response to the report - HSE will open a three month consultation in January 2011. Under current rules when an employee is absent from work for more than three days following an incident or injury at work, employers are required to report the incident to the relevant enforcing authority - either HSE or the local council.

The proposed amendment increases this 'over three day' period to over seven consecutive days. This change would align the incident reporting threshold with that for obtaining a 'fit note' from a GP for sickness absence, and would ensure that someone who has suffered a reportable injury has had a professional medical assessment.

Judith Hackitt, HSE Chair said;

"The Board discussed the proposals at length, and asked for some additional work to be done prior to the launch of the consultation in January.

"Whilst there will be some obvious advantages in reducing the reporting requirements on business, there will be other factors which need to be taken into account. We hope that interested parties will use the consultation exercise to provide the range of perspectives we need to consider in order for us to advise the Government appropriately."

Energy provider pays heavily for cable death

ScottishPower has been forced to pay out almost £180,000 over the death of a young man hit by a fallen electricity cable.

An investigation into the death of Simon Lines, from Prees in Shropshire, found that the live cable was attached to a wooden block on the side of a house which had part rotted, so the cable anchors had detached from the building.

ScottishPower was fined £130,000 and ordered to pay £48,000 costs at Shrewsbury Crown Court after pleading guilty to breaching Regulation 4(2) of the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989, by failing to adequately secure the cable.

Lines was fatally wounded moments after he ventured out on to Whitchurch Road in Prees to warn motorists that the cable had sagged because of high winds.

The cable was then struck by a passing van and fell onto the road, where a car drove over it, causing it to fly up into the air and hit him in the face.

The 20 year old died in hospital eight days after the accident, from injuries caused by being struck by the cable, rather than electric shock.

Since the incident, back in January 2007, Scottish Power has removed this type of cable anchor fixing arrangement from its network.

John Steed, an HSE specialist electrical inspector, stressed that overhead power lines can be dangerous and need to be treated with caution, especially if they appear to be damaged.



BT sentenced following fatal ladder fall

Communications company BT has been fined £300,000 following the death of a worker who fell from a ladder while carrying out installation works. Power construction engineer David Askew, 52, from Braintree, Essex, suffered fatal head injuries after falling from a wooden ladder at London's Canonbury Telephone Exchange on 27 October 2006.

British Telecommunications Plc (BT) was prosecuted after an investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Southwark Crown Court heard Mr Askew was installing distribution boards and running cabling as part of his work and would have been working at a height of than four metres. He fell from a nine-step wooden ladder, sustaining a serious head injury and died 18 days later.

The HSE investigation found a number of issues including a failure to ensure the work at height was properly planned, and that Mr Askew was provided with suitable access equipment for work at height.

Two wooden ladders found at the scene had not been subject to an annual inspection, contrary to BT's own health and safety policy.

BT, based in Newgate Street, London, were found guilty of breaching section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 at a previous hearing. They were fined £300,000 and were ordered to pay costs of £196,150

Nicola Maisuria, HSE inspector, said:

"The fact that this incident was entirely avoidable makes Mr Askew's death all the more tragic." "The dangers posed by work at height are well known, yet BT failed to create the conditions to ensure this task was carried out safely and the appropriate access equipment was used.

"Employers have a responsibility to ensure that work at height is properly planned and organised."

Council-owned housing company fined for asbestos exposure

A company set up by Rotherham Council to manage and improve council houses has been fined, after allowing a plumber to be exposed to up to 50 times the legal limit for asbestos. The firm, 2010 Rotherham Limited, was prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) for a breach of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

Rotherham Magistrates heard that the company employed a subcontractor, Nugas of Barnsley, to remove an old bathroom and install a level-access shower room at a house in Orchard Place.

Despite an asbestos survey carried out for 2010 Rotherham on a similar property next door eight weeks earlier that highlighted the presence of asbestos in the bathroom, the results were not passed on to Nugas.

The result was that their worker unknowingly removed tiles bonded to a wall of asbestos insulating board (AIB), causing significant damage to the wall. He was not wearing any protective clothing nor respiratory protection.

At the same time, a licensed asbestos removal company was in the process of removing the same wall in the flat next door after being appointed by 2010 Rotherham Ltd.

The court was told that the company had received previous advice and enforcement action regarding the risks from asbestos during refurbishment work including two enforcement notices in 2005 and 2008.

The company pleaded guilty to breaching the Health & Safety at Work Act and was fined **£7,000 with £3,418 costs**. After the case, HSE Inspector Dave Bradley said: "The method of removal of the tiles by Nugas's plumber, and the subsequent cleaning and bagging of the debris, are liable to have resulted in a significant exposure to asbestos fibres.

"It is imperative that information on the location of asbestos is provided to contractors before they are allowed to begin work. In this case 2010 Rotherham could have done this as they had the results from an asbestos survey on an identical property next door, and probably entirely prevented the asbestos fibre exposure.

"It is not enough for companies to have asbestos surveys carried out, they must take the necessary action and telling the contractor you employ is an obvious first step."

Asbestos is the biggest single cause of work-related deaths in the UK, with an estimated 4,000 people dying every year.

Information on working safely with asbestos is available at www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos



£50,000 fine for Gregg's following serious fire safety breaches

Gregg's the bakers has been fined **£50,000** and ordered to pay a further **£20,326** in costs after pleading guilty to serious fire breaches at one of its stores.

Gregg's plc, was prosecuted by the London Fire Brigade following an audit of one of their shops in Brentford in November 2008.

Fire safety investigators found a number of contraventions including corridors that were partially blocked by plastic crates and a fire exit that was locked by four padlocks. At the other side of the fire exit was a security door which was also locked.

Appearing at Isleworth Crown Court on 13 December, Gregg's pleaded guilty to two breaches of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. These were under article nine, for shortcomings found in its fire risk assessment, and article 14, which concerned emergency routes and exits.

A notice sent to the company in January 2009 highlighted the need for a review of its fire risk assessment, an emergency plan and appropriate staff training.

Chairman and leader of London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority, councillor Brian Coleman said: "In these tough economic times it is important that companies do not take their eye off the ball when it comes to making their business safe from fire.

Fire safety is a key part of good business management and responsible persons must comply with their legal obligations under the fire safety order, in order that employees and the general public are as safe as possible from the risk of fire. Failure to comply with the law can, as this case has shown, result in a prosecution."

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