

KEEP IT SAFE

BFFF QUARTERLY HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE

JANUARY 2009 EDITION



BRITISH
FROZEN FOOD
FEDERATION

Welcome

Welcome to the BFFF quarterly Health and Safety newsletter 'Keep it Safe'.

Many of you will have noticed the launch of our health and safety column in 'The Bulletin'. The Bulletin will contain headline information on health and safety topics; 'Keep it Safe' will provide more comprehensive information relevant to our industry.

This edition will include information on the following topics:

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We do hope you enjoy our improved health and safety information service. Please contact BFFF on 01400 283090 or email hazelcranidge@bfff.co.uk if you would like to raise any health and safety issues.

1. Legislative Update

i. The Health and Safety (Offences) Act 2008

The Act

The Health and Safety (Offences) Act 2008 received Royal Assent on 16 October 2008. The Act amends s.33 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (HASAWA) and will come into force in January 2009.

Although it does not actually create any new offences or legal duties, the legislation will increase penalties and provide courts with greater sentencing powers for those who flout health and safety legislation. The maximum penalties that can be imposed for breaching health and safety regulations in the lower courts have been raised from £5,000 to £20,000 and the range of offences for which an individual can be imprisoned has also been broadened.

In Practice

In the past, a prison sentence following a conviction under Health and Safety law was generally given out only where a workplace fatality occurred and the person in charge was shown in court to be grossly negligent.

Once the new Act is in force, Directors and Senior Managers who are shown to have been negligent or have consented or connived with the commission of an offence could now face imprisonment. One such example would be if a Director or Senior Manager directs an employee to bypass the guard on a machine, which is shown in court to have resulted in a serious injury or fatality.

Individual employees who commit an offence under Section 7 of HASAWA by failing to take reasonable care of fellow employees such as accidents as a result of horseplay or failure to follow training or H&S procedures are also covered by the new legislation.

The new Act will inevitably result in higher fines and more prison sentences for negligent bosses following serious or fatal accidents that occur from January. As ever, it is vital to the health of a business to ensure that standards of Health and Safety are kept high (especially during the recent problems with the economy) or, at the very least, the minimum legislative requirements are met.

Support for the Act

Welcoming the announcement, Judith Hackitt, the Chair of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), said, "The new Act sends out an important message to those who flout the law. However, good employers and good managers have nothing to fear. In fact, they have much to gain."

However, she also took the opportunity to reassure employers. She said, "I want to remind businesses that there are no changes to their existing legal duties and that important safeguards are in place to ensure these new powers will be used sensibly and proportionately."

Lord McKenzie at the Department of Work and Pensions said, "These changes will ensure that sentences can now be more easily set at a level to deter businesses that do not take their health and safety management responsibilities seriously and further encourage employers and others to comply with the law. Furthermore, by extending the £20,000 maximum fine to the lower courts and making imprisonment an option, more cases will be resolved in the lower courts and justice will be faster, less costly and more efficient."

Don't chance it

CHANGE IT



2. HSE Campaigns

Each year HSE plans a series of campaigns based on particular health and safety topics aimed at reducing the incidence of work-related fatal and major injuries.

During each campaign, Inspectors visiting premises will focus on the key campaign areas and assess the standards, offer advice and enforce applicable legislation. It is also common during major campaigns that certain businesses will be targeted for inspection based on their activity i.e. if their work area is relevant to the current campaign.

i. What HSE Inspectors Will Be Looking At In 2009

HSE visits to food manufacturing sites will concentrate particularly on the following:

- Musculoskeletal Disorders (particularly prevention of back injuries and WRULD)
- Slips and trips
- Workplace transport
- Falls from height
- Occupational asthma
- Safeguarding packaging machines and conveyors

Other topics covered at HSE visits during 2009 may include:

- Noise
- Occupational dermatitis
- Work-related stress

ii. Future Events

During the course of the year, HSE has significant involvement in several events.

We have taken the opportunity to highlight below a recently announced event to take place in 2009 that may be of interest to members. The full events calendar for HSE is available from:

www.hse.gov.uk/campaigns/conferences/main.htm

iii. Food And Drink Manufacture Conference

'Delivering the message', the 2009 national food and drink manufacture health and safety conference will take place in Nottingham on 29-30 September 2009.

The conference programme will cover important and topical issues including behavioural safety, communication/multi-cultural issues, training of managers/supervisors, interacting with contractors and health surveillance/screening.

The conference is aimed at a wide audience such as directors, factory managers, site managers, plant designers, health and safety officers, occupational health professionals, HR/personnel managers, process development managers, technical managers, supervisors, trade union safety representatives etc.

More details are available at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/food/events.htm>

iv. Managing Stress In The Workplace

The HSE has published: Managing the Causes of Work Related Stress: A step by step guide using the Management Standards

Work-related stress is a major cause of occupational ill health, poor productivity and human error. That means increased sickness absence, high staff turnover and poor performance in your organisation and a possible increase in accidents due to human error.

Based on the Management Standards, this new guide will help you, your employees and their representatives manage the issue sensibly and minimise the impact of work-related stress on your business. It might also help you improve how your organisation performs. More information available at:

www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg218.htm



3. Health & Safety Statistics

i. A Study carried out by the BFFF Health and Safety Working Group yielded the following statistics:

	Rate of injury per 100,000 employees for the sector (Years 2006/07)		
SECTOR	2006	2007	CHANGE YOY
	Average	Average	%
PRODUCERS – All Accidents	23646.1	19342.4	-18.6
PRODUCERS – Reportable only	1888.3	1208.7	-36.0
WHOLESALERS – All Accidents	13999.3	14799.9	5.7
WHOLESALERS – Reportable only	1893.2	1886.2	-0.4

The statistics above are derived from the collated accident/ injury information provided by BFFF members. 10 food producer companies and 10 wholesale companies took part in the study

An initial study of accident statistics undertaken by members of the H&S Working Group indicated that the majority of accidents occurred in the Slips, Trips and Falls category.

The Group agreed to survey the wider BFFF membership to see if this trend continued.

The results of the membership study agree with the initial study with the majority of accidents being attributed to Slips, Trips and Falls.

The Health & Safety Working Group are now looking to investigate the figures in more detail for this category. Members who contributed towards the study have been

asked to provide a breakdown for the three sub categories of Slips, Trips and Falls together with any information relating to causes plus case studies.

Once all the information has been collated, the group will review the findings at its next meeting in March 2009, to agree how BFFF can proceed to campaign to reduce the numbers of Slips, Trips & Falls.

All information provided by members will be looked at on an overall basis and confidentiality will be maintained.

The sharing of information is a key part of the service that BFFF offers and we are delighted that our members have kindly created such useful benchmarks.

ii. HSE Releases 2007/2008 Accident Figures

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has published its latest statistics for 2007/08 which the safety body says reveal a reduction in the numbers of people killed, injured or made ill by work during the period. The statistics for 2007/08 include the following.

With regard to ill health, 2.1 million people were suffering from work related illnesses.

- Over 136,000 workers suffered injuries such as amputations, burns or fractures.
- A total of 34 million working days were lost in Britain due to injury and ill health.
- There were 229 people killed at work.
- With regard to enforcement, 1,028 offences were prosecuted by the HSE and local authorities prosecuted 354 offences.

Overall, the HSE says that reported major injuries at work fell by around 9% since the start of the decade and this trend continues.

The HSE says its figures indicate that work-related ill health has also fallen across the period, although the rate of improvement in this area has not been as great as hoped. Workplace deaths fell by around 5% to 229.

Commenting on the figures, Judith Hackitt, Chair of the HSE said, "Any improvement in the number of people being injured or made ill by work must be welcomed. However, there is a need for a step change. Of particular concern are the agriculture, construction and waste and recycling industries. I am also concerned that slips and trips, which can have an enormous impact on peoples' lives, are still not reducing."

The HSE is currently working on developing a new strategy that seeks to renew

commitment from all those involved in health and safety to tackle the key challenges.

The statistics can be found at www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/hssoct08.htm

iii. Safety Statistics: "A Reason Not To Cut Back On Safety"

The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) has released a statement regarding the latest set of health and safety statistics, recently published by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), commenting that the figures illustrate the need for employers to keep investing in essential health and safety protection for workers, even during the economic downturn.

A source at IOSH also expressed concerns that unscrupulous firms may slash health and safety spending as a result of the slide into possible recession, which could be deadly for workers.

Commenting on the figures, Ray Hurst, the President of IOSH, said, "Last year 229 people were killed in Britain's workplaces. For employers to make major cut backs on health and safety would be both irresponsible and also dangerous for the future of our economy, which is already entering a really testing period."

He added, "Nearly 299,000 workers suffered serious injuries and over 2 million developed illness they put down to work. These failures cost British business 34 million lost working days. That's just like pouring money down the drain. All this is quite apart from the human misery caused. And it is something we can stop — if everybody is willing to act."

The IOSH President did concede that the fatal accident figures were better than last year. However, he expressed concern at the many preventable deaths in the construction industry.

He said, "The risks in this industry are well known, yet 72 workers were still killed in this sector last year. Similarly in agriculture, the risks are well known, yet 39 workers died last year."

Finally, he made a comment directed at the HSE, noting, "I think these figures reinforce the need for the HSE to continue to bolster the number of inspectors they have. We need to keep reminding business to ensure health and safety is on their agenda. We cannot, and must not, take a backward step to the days where 1000 people were killed in British workplaces each year."

iv. Accident Rates in the Food and Drink Manufacturing Industry

The accident figures released by the HSE also highlight a drop in accident rates within the food and drink manufacturing industry.

The statistics show that, in food and drink manufacture; there have been further significant reductions in injuries during 2007/08. The overall injury incidence rate (i.e. injuries per 100,000 workers) fell by a further 6% during 2007/08 although the 'major' injury rate (e.g. broken bones or requiring hospitalisation) remained unchanged following a significant fall of 10.3% the previous year. Long-term trends now show:

- 52% reduction in the overall injury incidence rate for all food manufacture injuries reported to HSE since 1990/91
- 33% reduction in the 'major' injury incidence rate in food manufacture since 1996/97 when RIDDOR95 came into force
- fatal injuries in food manufacture (excluding contractors) reduced by 70% since 1990/91

Look out for a brand new version of the HSE website: www.hse.gov.uk/stress in Spring 2009.

v. BFFF Launches Health & Safety Pledge

The BFFF Health & Safety Working Group agreed that a Health & Safety Pledge, which outlined the values members committed to, would be a benefit for members.

The BFFF Health & Safety Pledge seeks to promote the benefits and emphasise the importance of complying with all current health and safety legislation and of striving to improve standards of health and safety through continuous improvement. We would encourage all members to seriously consider the benefit of signing up to the Pledge.

We have had a fantastic response already with over 30 members signing up to the Pledge including: 3663, apetito, Ardo UK, Associated Packaging Technologies, John Bean Technologies, Birchall Catering Supplies, Freshpack, Headland Foods, Holdsworth, ICS Industrial Cooling, Norbert Dentressangle Logistics UK, Palmer & Harvey, Polarcube, The Ice Company, R&R Ice Cream UK and TICCO.

"Freshpack are convinced that by committing to the BFFF Health and Safety Pledge and by sharing information with other members that all will benefit." Ann Horne, Technical Director Freshpack

"At apetito we see world class health and safety provision within our broader corporate responsibility agenda as the only way to do business. We are therefore delighted to endorse the BFFF pledge and support promotion of its standards across the frozen food industry and all workplaces." - Paul Freeston, Chief Executive apetito UK.

"Polarcube, The Ice Company Ltd. are committed to the BFFF Health & Safety Pledge in striving to continually improve existing site safety performance and ensure Health & Safety compliance is achieved" - Ian Hancock, Group Health & Safety Manager.

Members wishing to sign up or for more details should e-mail: hazel@bfff.co.uk

4. Guidance

i. Average Cost of Ill Health at £10,100

In November 2008, the Economic Analysis Unit (EAU) of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) revised its estimates for the costs for an average case of ill health, to a new figure of £10,100.

A source at the HSE says that the estimates published for the average case of ill health now reflect the most up-to-date information available. The EAU appraisal values can be used to “estimate the benefits of proposed measures which aim to improve occupational health and safety, and to compare such benefits with the cost of government intervention.”

The EAU appraisal values give the unit costs to society for three kinds of workplace accidents and ill health namely fatalities, non-fatal injury accidents and an average case of ill health. The ill-health appraisal value seeks to offer the “unit cost to society” for “an average case of work-related ill health”. As with the injury values, the ill-health estimate is divided into three component costs, i.e. human costs, lost output and resource costs, as follows. The human costs estimate is calculated as a weighted average of the human costs of different cases of ill health categorised by length of absence. The definition of lost output for a case of ill health is calculated using the length of absence as the average number of days lost due to ill health.

The resource costs for a case of ill health include administration, recruitment and medical treatment. Using this methodology, an average case of ill health is estimated at £6700 in human costs, £2700 in lost output and £800 in resource costs. This is estimated at a total cost of £10,100 (the total does not equal the sum of cost categories due to rounding in the calculation process).

Further information on the subject can be accessed at www.hse.gov.uk/economics/eauappraisal.htm

ii. Stress, Overwork and Office Hazards – Top Safety Concerns

Stress or overwork, injuries and illnesses caused by the poor use of display screen equipment and repetitive strain injuries (RSI) top the list of workers' safety concerns, according to the biennial survey of safety representatives, recently published by the Trades Union Congress (TUC). The survey of union safety representatives indicated that 60% of safety representatives reported stress or overwork as a concern in their workplace.

In addition, concerns about stress were found to be most common in the public sector and in large workplaces, with the highest instances in central government (81%), education (74%) and health services (69%). Overall, stress was cited as the biggest concern in 10 of the 14 sectors covered by the survey. The survey also found that concerns regarding injuries and illnesses resulting from the poor use of display screen equipment have risen up the ranks, from fourth in 2006, to become the second most common issue, reported by 41% of safety representatives. Repetitive strain injuries (40%) are another commonly reported hazard. Other concerns on the increase since the 2006 survey included slips, trips and falls (up 6%), working alone (up 3%) and violence/threats at work (up 4%). There were also regional trends of note highlighted by the survey.

For example, workers in London are most concerned about stress (68%), while workers in Yorkshire and East Anglia are most worried about working alone (38%). Workers in the South East (33%) and London (32%) are significantly more concerned about violence and threats at work than the rest of the UK (26%).

Commenting on the survey results, the TUC's General Secretary Brendan Barber said, “Stress casts a gloomy shadow over far too many UK workplaces. And as the current economic crisis creates more anxiety about job security, stress is likely to increase.”



iii. Are Laser Printers Dangerous?

The Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Study

Much of the concern over office printers has originated from the study carried out by the QUT¹, the results of which were published in 2007 resulting in considerable media exposure.

The study examined the emissions from 62 laser printers, 17 of which were considered to be "high particle emitters" releasing high levels of tiny toner-like material into the air. Particles such as these are considered to be linked to negative health effects similar to those from cigarette smoke such as respiratory irritation, cardiovascular disease and cancer.

It is worth noting here that the study was not concerned with recording the actual health effects of this type of particulate although it did recommend that further study be carried out into such effects. Another important point is that the study dealt with laser printers and not inkjets, which utilise different technology.

Controlling the Hazards

Particulate from laser printers has not definitively been shown to be hazardous to health per se. The QUT study merely outlined that some such printers emit a high level of potentially dangerous particulate. More helpfully, the study did make common sense recommendations in order to limit the hazards from high-emitters such as:

- Locating laser printers away from workers.
- Ensuring suitable ventilation.
- Print documents in 'batches' rather than printing single documents over a period of time.

In addition the study also highlighted that the age of a printer may also affect emission levels, so it may be sensible to replace older models with ones known to be low in particulate emission² as part of the ongoing

business process of upgrading and replacing older equipment.

The main business issue here is managing employee concerns. Including toner cartridges in the company's COSHH inventory and assessments will be useful. Safety Datasheets are available for laser printers and toners from the websites of all major manufacturers, which explicitly state the adverse health effects from exposure to dust particles from their products. Ensuring good air circulation and replacement in the workplace will also help to reduce particulate levels.

Of course office printers are classified as work equipment under PUWER and are therefore subject to the general controls required by the Regulations such as ensuring that the equipment is suitable for the anticipated use, kept in good repair, information provided to employees as relevant etc. Printers should also be subject to PAT testing at the HSE recommended intervals.³

Conclusion

While the QUT study raised some valid concerns, the study should not be taken as proof positive that office laser printers are inherently dangerous to employees. Reports in the media have managed to raise awareness of a potential workplace health hazard but conversely have also helped to demonise the office laser printer, many of which were shown in the study to have little or no levels of particle emission.

While it is true that high emissions from certain printers may be potentially hazardous in the long term where there are high levels of exposure, we must remember that with a few sensible precautions they may be used safely and without any adverse effects. We should also ensure that the more obvious hazards such as electricity are not overlooked.

¹ Morawska et. al., Environmental Science & Technology, 2007

² Such information can be obtained from the product Safety Datasheets.

³ See HSE Publication INDG 236 "Maintaining portable electrical equipment in offices and other low-risk environments" for suggested initial user check/visual inspection/combined inspection and testing intervals.

iv. New Risk Management Standard Published

BSI has published a new document: BS 31100:2008 "Risk Management – Code of Practice". It will be of particular interest to those dealing with health and safety at a high level within an organisation.

The standard provides a guide to risk management principles, the purpose of which is to assist organisations to achieve their objectives through effective risk management of not just health and safety issues but also other business risk areas such as security, IT and business continuity.

The standard enables a unified approach to dealing with all aspects of business risk. It is available from the BSI at a cost of £100 (£50 for BSI members).

v. Doctors To Give Employees "Fit Notes"

The Government has unveiled plans for GPs in England to issue employee "fit notes", rather than the traditional "sick notes", as part of efforts to cut the amount of money lost to the economy from workplace absenteeism.

The idea is for the fit notes to spell out those tasks workers can perform rather than the sick notes, which focus on what they cannot do.

The plans were part of the Government's formal response to Dame Carol Black's March 2008 report into the health of Britain's working age population, entitled Working for a Healthier Tomorrow.

The Government's response, outlined in the report Improving Health and Work: Changing Lives, also suggested that the new fit notes could have an electronic format, rather than the traditional paper-based sick note.

Other suggestions to help people stay in work, "rather than drifting into extended sick leave", include pilots for "Fit for Work" services, designed to support people on a period of sickness absence to return to work.

The report also outlined measures to support disabled people or those who become ill to return to, or stay in work, by helping them manage their condition and get the right help to keep their jobs.

The Government also unveiled plans for:

- A National Centre for Working-Age Health and Well-Being, as an independent, authoritative body to provide functions related to the health and well-being of working-age people
- Health, Work and Well-being Co-ordinators, to stimulate action on health, work and well-being issues in their areas
- The piloting of an occupational health helpline for smaller businesses, offering access to professional occupational health advice
- A Challenge Fund to encourage local initiatives that improve workplace health and well-being.

Improving Health and Work: Changing Lives can be accessed at

www.workingforhealth.gov.uk/Government-Response



vi. Road Safety: The "Scandal Of Complacency"

The latest report from the Department of Transport, "Ending the Scandal of Complacency: Road Safety Beyond 2010" estimates that there were between 750 and 1000 work-related road fatalities last year and so has urged for more to be done to investigate deaths in work-related road accidents.

The report states that it is "anomalous" that the majority of work-related deaths are not examined by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), purely because they occur on the roads and that the Government should "review the role of the HSE with regard to road safety to ensure that it fulfils its unique role in the strategy beyond 2010".

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) has welcomed the report, and agrees that the HSE must be more involved.

Kevin Clinton, Head of Road Safety at RoSPA, said, "RoSPA has been campaigning about managing occupational road risk for more than 10 years and we believe the Health and Safety Executive could have a much greater part in this."

"It is important to make the correct selection of vehicles so that employees are using the right car or van for the job they have to do. But employers also need people, policies and procedures in place to manage occupational road risk as part of their mainstream health and safety policies."

The report recommends that the Government takes a systems approach to road safety, ensuring the vehicle, the road infrastructure, regulations and driver training are designed to similar safety and performance standards.

Other recommendations include more 20 mph speed limits, a proactive approach to the

safety benefits of new technologies and a higher priority on the enforcement of drink/drug-drive offences.

According to the report, the Government should work with employers' organisations and trade unions on the issue of road safety, including an evaluation of its "Driving for Better Business" initiative. Fiscal and financial incentives are suggested to encourage employers to use vehicles with additional proven safety features, which could help increase safety features in the wider UK vehicle fleet.

RoSPA recently launched a research study aimed at helping young drivers to stay safe when they are on the road as part of their job and is seeking the views of managers who employ 17 to 24 year-old drivers. The research aims to lead to a better understanding of the safety issues involved with these employees who need to drive to make deliveries, get to meetings or travel between sites.

RISK ASSESSMENTS



Have you done yours? – it may be easier than you think!

The HSE website has a wide range of example risk assessments. Use these as simple guides to help produce your own.

Visit: www.hse.gov.uk/risk or telephone the HSE Infoline: **0845 345 0055** for advice and to order an information pack ref MISC837, containing a selection of samples.

5. Enforcement Action

For your information, we have stated below brief details regarding some of the latest examples of prosecutions categorised into some of the main causes of injury in the food and drink industry.

i. Chip Makers Fined After Man Loses Fingertip

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has warned companies to ensure their workers' safety after a man had part of his finger amputated when it got trapped in machinery at a Lincolnshire potato chip factory.

On 31 January 2008, an employee was investigating a fault on a tray-making machine, when he got his hand trapped in the drive pulley as the motor started up again.

The injuries were so severe they resulted in amputation of the first finger on the left hand to the first knuckle as well as the crushing of the middle finger so severely that the bones were broken and the skin split open. The other fingers were also cut and bruised and the employee had to undergo further operations subsequently.

The food company from Lincolnshire was fined £10,000 and ordered to pay the full amount of court costs of £3,587 by magistrates after breaching s.2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974 in failing to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that a safe system of work was in place.

Following the case, the local HSE Inspector said: "For a man who works with his hands and needs dexterity, these are the most debilitating of injuries but could have been avoided if the company had safe systems of work in place. The size of the fine shows how seriously the court has taken this incident."

ii. Machinery Warning After Man Severs Finger

The HSE has called on employers to ensure that machinery has proper safety guards, following the prosecution of a food manufacturing company after a worker lost part of a finger in a workplace injury. The prosecution followed an incident on 5 March 2008.

A blockage was detected on a packaging line and, in an attempt to check what was causing the problem; an electrical engineer placed his arm in an inspection opening. His index finger was sheared off below the first knuckle by a rotating valve, which should not have been accessible.

The company subsequently carried out remedial work to prevent recurrences, but the work did not meet the appropriate safety standard, which seeks to ensure that employers take effective measures to prevent access to any dangerous part of machinery. As a result, the HSE issued an improvement notice on 20 March 2008 to ensure further action was taken to prevent access.

The company was fined £3,000 plus costs of £2,446 after pleading guilty to breaching the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Commenting on the case, the local HSE Inspector said, "In this instance, the company failed to ensure that a risk assessment was carried out for the maintenance activity and that the appropriate procedures were in place and so relied upon inadequate and informal systems. The injured person will now have to live with the consequences of these failures for the rest of his life."

iii. Northallerton Firm Fined Over Workplace Injury

The HSE has issued a warning to ensure that machinery is properly guarded, following the conviction of a company after a worker lost part of a finger in a machine. The HSE brought the prosecution after an incident on 14 January 2008 at a food company in Northallerton.

A grain elevator that led to a bagging machine became blocked. The employee noticed the bagging machine was not filling bags, and concluded this was due to a blockage. He removed an access panel at the base of the elevator, and while a colleague went to fetch a vacuum cleaner to clear the blockage, he leant on the grain elevator.

The grain began to flow out of the open panel, clearing the blockage, and the elevator began to move, catching the employee's hand and removing part of a finger, which was later sewn back on in hospital.

The HSE's investigation found that the elevator access panel was not fixed to prevent removal while the dangerous parts of the elevator were in motion. It was inadequate to prevent employees from easily accessing the dangerous parts and had been so for at least 20 years.

The company also had inadequate systems to make sure safety features on machinery were suitable for the safety of employees.

The company pleaded guilty at the Magistrates' Court to breaching the Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974 and were fined £2,500 as well as costs of £1,542.

Following the case, the local HSE Inspector said, "Dangerous parts of machinery should not be accessible. Safety guards and devices on machines are put there for a good reason — the safety of the machine operators — and they need to be appropriate for the risk."

iv. Company and Director fined £35,000 for exposing staff to Asbestos

The HSE has warned businesses to ensure they keep accurate details of asbestos in their buildings before any construction work takes place. Managers of non-domestic premises must also ensure they act upon any information about asbestos, which they may hold.

The warning follows a serious incident in which at least 15 tradesmen were exposed to airborne asbestos fibres during a major refurbishment. The company were fined £28,000 and a Director was fined £7,000 after pleading guilty to charges under section 3(1) and section 37(1) of the Health & Safety At Work Act.

Work included demolition of partitions, installation of a stairway, an extension to a mezzanine level and a new lift. All the work involved significant disturbance of the fabric of the building. Work continued on the project despite concerns being raised by the tradesmen about the possible presence of asbestos. Work was stopped by HSE after being contacted directly by a site worker.

The HSE Principal inspector said: "This was a very serious incident which allowed a significant number of tradesmen to be exposed to airborne asbestos fibres over an extended period. The effects of exposure to asbestos fibres can take as long as 20 - 30 years to manifest. Almost 4,000 people are dying every year due to unrecognised exposure to asbestos early in their working lives. Legislation came into force in May 2004, which requires the person in control of any non-domestic premises to identify and assess asbestos in those premises."

Both the company and the Director failed to establish if asbestos was present prior to allowing work to commence, despite being informed on at least two occasions that a survey had to be carried out.

www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/hiddenkiller/index.htm

BFFF Health & Safety Working Group

The Health & Safety Working Group was formed in March 2008 with a remit to provide a confidential health and safety forum for the membership, focusing on issues relevant to the frozen food industry, enabling the dissemination of pertinent health and safety information to BFFF members.

So far, the Group has produced the BFFF Health & Safety Pledge and have provided input and feedback on the HSE Work at Height guidance note PM28 - Working Platforms (non-integrated) on forklift trucks along with other H&S issues as they arise. The Group are currently focusing on accident statistics, in particular Slips, Trips & Falls and work will begin in earnest in the New Year to review this particular category and see what action they believe BFFF could take.

Our sincere thanks to each member of the group, without everyone's input the first year of the group's activities would not have been such an outstanding success and we look forward to maintaining momentum and building on the successes of the group next year.

Members

Shirley Duncalf	3663
Mark Lovett	Apetito Ltd
Chris Moore	Asda Stores Ltd.
Paul Harnetty	The Authentic Food Company Ltd.
Gary Sullivan	BakeMark UK
Mike Richardson	Brakes
Helen Taylor	British Seafood Ltd.
Mark Nugent	Delice De France Plc
Jason Allen	Delifrance (UK) Ltd.
Chris Travis	Greencore Frozen Foods
Stephen Dean	Iceland Foods Ltd.
Vince Craig	Meadowbrae Technical Services Ltd.
Adrian Cooper	Norbert Dentressangle Logistics UK
Gary Weatherhead	Palmer & Harvey Ltd.
Ian Hancock	Seguro Distribution Ltd. / The Ice Company (Polarcube) Ltd.

THE MYTH

Every possible risk needs a safety sign.

THE REALITY

Using too many signs just guarantees no one will read any of them.

Safety signs are useful when there's a significant risk, which can't be avoided or controlled in any other way. But that doesn't mean you should add a sign for every possible risk, however trivial.

Where there are serious risks in your workplace don't just rely on signs – take practical steps to deal with them. If you do need a sign, make sure it has the right symbol and is clearly visible.



British Frozen Food Federation

Warwick House, Unit 7, Long Bennington Business Park, Main Road, Long Bennington, Newark, Nottinghamshire, NG23 5JR
Tel: 01400 283090 Fax: 01400 283098 Website: www.bfff.co.uk