



TACKLING OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE

The HSE has set up a new occupational disease community site, designed to encourage the promotion and exchange of ideas and initiatives for tackling occupational ill health.

According to the HSE, in 2011/12 there were an estimated 1.1 million working people suffering from a work-related illness, with around 450,000 new cases of occupational-related ill health and a further estimated 12,000 deaths each year caused by past exposures to harmful substances at work.

The safety watchdog says that traditionally, health issues in the workplace have been, and still are, harder to tackle than safety issues because cause and effect are often not clearly linked.

Many serious occupational diseases also have a long period of “latency”, some up to 30 years, between exposure and development of ill health or disease, making the links even more difficult to establish.

However, where the link is established and exposure can be measured, then interventions and activities aimed at raising awareness and creating behavioural change can work to reduce exposures and prevent ill health and disease.

The new occupational disease community site is intended to encourage organisations to get involved in reducing the burden of occupational disease and, in particular, share their approaches and knowledge in this regard. The primary focus of the site is on promoting initiatives aimed at reducing the incidence of occupational cancer (from all routes of exposure) and respiratory diseases (including asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and silicosis).

The community is open to anyone who has an interest in reducing the incidence of occupational disease and would like to promote their work or seek ideas.

Visit www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/occupational-disease/index.htm for more information.