

HSE appoints experts in gig economy and mental health to Workplace Health Expert Committee

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has appointed two new experts to its independent Workplace Health Expert Committee (WHEC).

WHEC is a scientific and medical expert committee which provides independent, expert opinion to HSE by identifying and assessing new and emerging issues in workplace health.

Dr Joanna Wilde and Dr Paul Litchfield will join WHEC in September where they will support the publication of accounts of the latest evidence to support of HSE's work on health issues.

Dr Wilde has specialist expertise in the behavioural and social sciences and is a leading expert in the effect of psychosocial factors on workplace health. A Fellow of the British Psychological Society, her current research focuses on the health problems inherent in new structures of working relationships, often described as the 'gig economy'. Joanna also brings personal experience to the role as she has suffered from chronic ill health through her working life.

Dr Litchfield was Chief Medical Officer for BT and has been active in the field of workplace health and safety for more than 35 years. Paul has been involved in UK and European initiatives aimed at promoting good physical and mental health to improve rehabilitation back into work and to reduce the stigma of mental ill health. In 2015 he was appointed Chair of the UK's What Works Centre for Wellbeing, which is dedicated to understanding what can be done to improve wellbeing across society.

Professor Andrew Curran, HSE's chief scientific adviser said:

"I'm very pleased to announce that two experts, Dr Joanna Wilde and Dr Paul Litchfield, are joining WHEC from September 2018. They both bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the committee, and we welcome the unique perspectives they will bring to the committee's work on health issues."

WHEC considers chemical and physical hazards, and human, behavioural and organisational workplace factors which lead to physiological and psychological ill health.

The committee assesses the evidence base and seeks to effectively and appropriately communicate the resultant health risk.

Working under the leadership of an independent Chair, Professor Sir Anthony Newman Taylor, in recent years the committee has prepared reports on health issues including sedentary work, the risk of lung cancer from exposure to respirable crystalline silica, bakers' asthma and work-related stress.

Notes to Editors

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. www.hse.gov.uk
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: www.legislation.gov.uk/
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
4. More information about WHEC can be found here: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/meetings/committees/whec/index.htm>
5. WHEC does not consider wellbeing, sickness absence management or rehabilitation as these issues are dealt with elsewhere in government. Nor is it able to consider individual cases of ill health

Tata Steel fined after worker fell into open pit

A steel company has today been sentenced for safety breaches after a worker fell into an open pit.

Sheffield Crown Court heard how, on 26 February 2014, Mr Steven Ayres was working at Tata Steels Billet Mill in Stocksbridge when he was tasked with emptying a skip at the bottom of an open pit. With the assistance of an overhead crane, operated by a driver, Mr Ayres removed two floor plates that fully covered the pit; removed the skip out of the hole; emptied it; replaced the skip into the pit; and lastly began replacing the floor plates.

When replacing the first plate onto the top of the pit using the crane, the plate swung out of position slightly. As the second plate was lifted by the crane, Mr Ayres positioned himself out of the way in case this too swung out of position. As the second plate was being moved, Mr Ayres stepped back and fell approximately 3-4 metres into the pit. Injuries sustained included damage to his kidney and ribs.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found a risk assessment had been completed by Tata Steel UK Limited in October 2012, 16 months before the incident, which had identified the need to provide a barrier round the pit when the floor plates had been removed to empty the skip. A barrier was not provided round the pit until after the incident occurred.

Tata Steel UK Ltd of 30 Millbank, London, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and was fined £450,000

with £32,099 costs.

After the hearing, HSE inspector Mark Welsh commented: "This incident could so easily have been avoided if Tata Steel UK Limited had actually acted on their own findings and provided a simple but effective control measure in the form of guardrails to prevent a fall and by using safe working practices.

"A fall from this height into a pit containing various metal objects could easily have resulted in a fatality. Companies should act swiftly if and when risks are identified and relevant control measures should be put in place when working at height."

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2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: legislation.gov.uk/^[2]
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>^[3]

Journalists should approach HSE press office with any queries on regional press releases.

[Council fined after workers exposed to asbestos](#)

Kent County Council (KCC) has today been fined £200,000 after asbestos was disturbed at Lansdowne Primary School.

Canterbury Crown Court heard how, on 6 November 2014, an environmental health officer was carrying out a routine food inspection when they noticed what looked like asbestos rope hanging from the ceiling.

A prohibition notice was served on the now independent educational trust. An investigation found that the asbestos flue and rope were disturbed when it was under the control of the County Council 18 months beforehand.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the flue and gasket rope were attached to a steriliser unit that was removed by the caretaker. The

investigation also found that neither the caretaker nor the head teacher had any asbestos management or awareness training. The council failed to effectively to prevent exposure and failed to provide suitable training to those liable to be exposed to asbestos.

Kent County Council pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 10 (1) of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 and was fined £200,000 and ordered to pay costs of £21,500.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Kevin Golding said “The Council had implemented a system, but they had failed to take the simple step of checking to ensure it was being rigorously adhered to, resulting in employees not receiving the appropriate training. Organisations should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standards.”

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2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: www.legislation.gov.uk/
3. Guidance for managing asbestos in schools: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/asbestos.htm>
4. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

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[HSE investigating supply to schools of metal gauze mats which contain asbestos](#)

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has been made aware that two UK laboratory supply companies have supplied schools and potentially other users with gauze mats which contain asbestos. The metal gauze mats are designed for use over Bunsen burners.

A HSE spokesperson said:

“While we assess the overall risk of exposure to be low, we have taken swift

action. We have ensured that both of the supply companies concerned immediately ceased supply of the gauze mats and are overseeing arrangements to contact affected customers and provide precautionary advice on how the mats should be disposed of safely.

“We are working closely with Department for Education, education departments in Scotland and Wales as well as CLEAPSS (Consortium of Local Education Authorities for the Provision of Science Services). This will help us ensure that schools, colleges, local regulators, and others who may have supplied or purchased similar products are directed to our advice.

“We are also investigating how these particular gauze mats came into circulation. Breaches of the restrictions on the supply of asbestos are taken very seriously by HSE.”

About HSE

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Manufacturer fined after workers exposed to asbestos

A machining manufacturer has been fined after workers were exposed to asbestos fibres whilst demolishing an internal wall.

Birmingham Magistrates’ Court heard how the workers were asked to remove the internal wall by their manager. There was no asbestos survey or an up to date asbestos management plan for the premises.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that asbestos insulation sheets were removed unsafely without proper precautions and by unlicensed individuals from the company without any safeguards in place to prevent the spread of the asbestos fibres.

Birmingham Specialities Ltd of Moor Lane, Birmingham pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The company has been fined £20,000 and ordered to pay costs of £2,454.40.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Tariq Khan said: “Asbestos in buildings needs to be managed or removed by competent contractors. Those in control of work have a responsibility to devise safe methods of working and

to provide the necessary information, instruction and training to their workers in the safe system of working. The company needed to follow the proper procedures by carrying out an asbestos survey and formulating an asbestos management plan as well as training those responsible for managing asbestos”.

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3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
4. Further information about managing asbestos in premises can be found at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pUbns/priced/hsg227.pdf>

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