

Construction firms targeted in new health inspections

Construction firms across Great Britain will be targeted on their health standards by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) it has been announced.

These inspections will be the first time the regulator has targeted the industry with a specific focus on respiratory risks and occupational lung disease, looking at the measures businesses have in place to protect their workers' lungs from the likes of asbestos, silica and wood dust.

Inspectors will be visiting construction businesses and sites across the country throughout October and will specifically be looking for evidence of construction workers knowing the risks, planning their work and using the right controls, and if necessary will use enforcement to ensure people are protected.

HSE's Peter Baker, chief inspector of construction said:

"Around 100 times as many workers die from diseases caused or made worse by their work than are killed in construction accidents. Annually, work-related cancers, mainly linked to asbestos and silica, are estimated to kill 3,500 people from the industry. Thousands of others suffer life-changing illnesses from their work. Not all lung diseases take years to develop. Some, like acute silicosis or occupational asthma, can occur more quickly.

"As a result, we've launched this inspection initiative to find out what exactly businesses in the construction industry are doing today to protect their workers' health, particularly when it comes to exposure to dust and damage to lungs.

"We want construction workers to be aware of the risks associated with the activities they carry out on a daily basis; be conscious of the fact their work may create hazardous dust; and consider how this could affect their health, in some cases irreversibly. We want businesses and their workers to think of the job from start to finish and avoid creating dust or disturbing asbestos by working in different ways. We want to see construction firms encouraging their workers to firstly keep the dust down and wear the right mask and clothing.

"Ultimately, we want construction workers' lungs to be protected from ill health, so they can go home healthy to their families and enjoy long careers in this important industry."

For more information on the programme of inspections and to download our free #DustBuster selfie cards visit: <https://bit.ly/2QWLYib> and follow the campaign on Twitter at @H_S_E, on Facebook @hsegovuk and @SaferSites. You can also join the conversation at #WorkRight

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors:

1. During the upcoming programme of inspections, while the primary focus will be on health, if a HSE inspector sees any issues of concern, they will take the necessary enforcement action to deal with this.
2. 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
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>