

Regulator's report on "forever chemicals" published

A report published on Tuesday 4 April has set out in detail the extent to which so-called "forever chemicals" are used in Great Britain.

It has analysed how "forever chemicals" or PFAS (Poly- and perfluoroalkyl substances) are used. The report has also included exposure from everyday items such as food wrappers, cleaning products, and furniture coatings.

PFAS are pollutants that are slow to degrade. They are often called "forever chemicals" because they do not naturally breakdown and can stay in the environment for decades.

In the most comprehensive British analysis of these chemicals ever, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has identified the most common and most harmful uses of PFAS and what measures could be put in place to control and manage them.

The [HSE report](#) makes a number of recommendations including to limit the use of PFAS-containing foams used by firefighters to put out fires, as well as the use of PFAS in textiles, furniture, and cleaning products.

It has been published under UK REACH, the framework for managing the risks from chemical substances in Great Britain. HSE, the regulator for UK REACH, has worked with the Environment Agency.

Dr Richard Daniels, director of HSE's chemicals regulation division, said: "PFAS are a global issue of concern. We have looked at responses around the world, but it was vital we gathered the right information and evidence on how PFAS are used in Britain specifically.

"This has helped us work out where the right action could be taken to limit the use of PFAS and control exposures to people and the environment in this country.

"The reality is that PFAS substances, due to their persistent properties, will continue to be detected for many years – despite measures being taken to limit restrict or ban their use.

"We will now look at the availability and risks posed by alternatives to ensure maximum long-term protections can be gained."

One of the key proposals is that, due to more comprehensive information being available, fire-fighting foams are prioritised for action. This will be founded on scoping work with stakeholders including industry, firefighters and those with expert knowledge of alternative foams. Similar exercises will take place for other commercial uses of PFAS substances.

Dr Daniels continued: "There is evidence of occupational exposure and

environmental harm that can come from current fire-fighting foams, and we can understand the concerns among firefighters. We encourage all affected to work with us in the scoping exercise.”

The analysis published today is a regulatory management options analysis (RMOA), a preliminary step used within the UK REACH framework. It collates, combines and analyses information to understand the nature and extent of exposure to chemical substances, in this case PFAS. The analysis considers existing laws and also how PFAS substances are being managed around the world, including Europe, Asia and the USA.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said: “By improving our understanding of the potential risks posed by PFAS, we will be better equipped to tackle them.

“The HSE’s analysis is a key part of our efforts to protect us from these persistent chemicals – our Plan for Water recognises this and we will begin developing proposals to restrict PFAS in firefighting foams this year.

“This will build on our action to increase monitoring and support a ban or highly restrict specific PFAS both domestically and internationally, so that we can reduce the amount of PFAS entering our natural environment.”

HSE, as the Agency for UK REACH, will work with the Environment Agency and the Appropriate Authorities (Defra, Scotland and Wales) to consider the recommendations and how action on these recommendations will be set out in the forthcoming UK REACH Work Programme for 2023-24.

Environment Agency executive director John Leyland said: “Today’s analysis is a significant milestone in the UK’s efforts to protect people and the environment from the potential impacts of PFAS.

“Building on actions taken since the 2000s, we are rapidly expanding our monitoring to build a clearer picture of PFAS chemicals and their potential risks.

“By working closely with our partners, we will broaden our understanding to better inform decision-making so that we can safeguard the public and our environment for future generations.”

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. [hse.gov.uk](https://www.hse.gov.uk)

2. HSE is the Agency for UK REACH and therefore has responsibility for the majority of the regulatory functions under UK REACH. In the delivery of these functions, HSE is supported by and/or reportable to a number of other government organisations.
3. HSE news releases are available at: <http://press.hse.gov.uk>.
4. As part of the UK REACH Work Programme, it was agreed with the appropriate authorities for UK REACH (i.e. the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Scottish and Welsh Governments) that HSE and the Environment Agency would prepare an RMOA for PFAS.
5. An RMOA is not a legislative or legally binding document. It typically provides an assessment of the likely health and environmental risks associated with the use of a substance or group of substances, alongside the existing regulatory framework and any specific controls relating to them. If there is evidence of significant risks, it concludes with preliminary recommendations for any additional measures within REACH to manage them. Should action be considered appropriate, a detailed risk assessment and legislative proposal for regulatory action will follow an RMOA.
6. For the PFAS substances considered in this RMOA, the available data do not indicate a clear association with any adverse health risks. However, the long-term effects of exposure to these persistent chemicals are not well understood, and toxicological data are limited. The underlying chemistry of PFAS (strong C-F bond) contributes to their persistent nature, which in turn leads to greater potential that they could cause serious and/or irreversible damage to the environment.

[Company fined after worker's leg crushed by forklift truck](#)

A manufacturing company has been fined £600,000 after a worker's leg was crushed by a forklift truck.

The man was working for AkzoNobel Packaging Coatings Limited when the incident occurred at the firm's Birmingham site on Bordesley Green Road on 8 May 2018.

He had been walking across a pedestrian crossing at the site when a forklift truck, being driven by another worker, collided with him, crushing his leg and ankle. The driver did not slow down while approaching the pedestrian crossing and his vision was restricted as the forklift truck was carrying multiple intermediate bulk containers (IBCs).

The injured worker required surgery and skin grafts following the incident.

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation into the incident found AkzoNobel Packaging Coatings Limited failed to provide an adequate risk assessment nor a safe system of work. There was also a lack of appropriate supervision. This led to the adoption and development of an unsafe custom and practice on site.

AkzoNobel Packaging Coatings Limited, of Wexham Road, Slough, Berkshire, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £600,000 and ordered to pay costs of £3,188.60 at Birmingham Magistrates' Court on 3 April 2023.

HSE inspector Marie Wheeler said: "This incident could so easily have been avoided by the employer adequately assessing the risks and ensuring a suitable workplace transport system was implemented with correct management and supervision in place.

"Companies 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. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

[HSE's Working Minds campaign supports Stress Awareness Month 2023](#)

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE), through its Working Minds campaign which aims to prevent work-related stress and promote good mental health in the workplace, has compiled a list of resources to assist employers and workers during stress awareness month this April.

HSE and its twenty-two partner organisations across Great Britain have come together to urge workplaces to take action on work-related stress and mental health.

Launched in November 2021, Working Minds has grown from nine to 22 partners,

with the next two members the Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH), and See Me – Scotland’s national programme to end mental health stigma, both joining this month.

The campaign is reminding businesses the law requires all employers to assess the risk of work-related stress, and to assist employers to prevent or tackle any work-related stress to support good mental health in their workers. To assist them and workers achieve this and access support they may require, HSE has collated multiple resources into one simple document which is accessible [here](#).

Liz Goodwill, Head of the Work-Related Stress and Mental Health Policy Team at HSE, said: “Stress Awareness Month is an opportunity for employers to check in and support their staff’s mental health. Working Minds helps employers to follow five simple steps based on risk assessment. They are to **Reach out** and have conversations, **Recognise** the signs and causes of stress, **Respond** to any risks you’ve identified, **Reflect** on actions you’ve agreed and taken, and make it **Routine**. It needs to become the norm to talk about stress and how people are feeling and coping at work.

“There are six main areas that can lead to work-related stress if they are not managed properly. These are: demands, control, support, relationships, role and change. Factors like skills and experience, age, or disability may all affect someone’s ability to cope.”

Helpful resources

- Visit [the Working Minds campaign website](#)
- Visit the HSE’s work-related stress webpages
- [Listen to our podcast with Professor Cary Cooper, one the world’s foremost experts on wellbeing](#)
- Watch our [stress and mental health at work video](#)
- See [HSE’s Stress Management Standards](#)
- Download a [Talking Toolkit](#)
- Download our [prevent stress at work poster](#)
- Download a [risk assessment template](#)
- Download the [mobile app](#)
- [Stress Indicator Tool](#)
- [NEBOSH stress training qualification & training course](#)
- Mind helpline (open 9am-6pm weekdays) – 0300 123 3393

Andrew Berrie, Head of Workplace Wellbeing at Mind, says: “Paying attention to workplace mental health has never been more important. Whoever you are and whatever you do for work, Mental Health at Work has plenty of tools, resources, and stories to support you and your teams.”

Francoise Woolley, Head of Mental Health and Wellbeing at Acas, said: “This month is an opportunity to reflect on how organisations are supporting the wellbeing of their employees and addressing the causes of stress at work. Leaders and managers play a huge role in recognising and responding to signs that someone might be struggling, and creating an environment where employees feel safe to speak up about their concerns.”

Carole Spiers, Chair of ISMA UK, said: “We are pleased to support Stress Awareness Month, increasing public awareness about the causes of stress and how to help combat it. Prolonged and intense stress in the workplace can result in burnout, negatively impacting employees’ mental and physical health.

To prevent this, it’s essential for employers to engage in open discussions with their employees about stress.”

Emma Mamo, Assistant Director of Workplace and Business Development at SAMH, said: “Regardless of the size of your organisation, promoting mental health should be a key priority. We know that a mentally healthy workplace is more productive, has lower staff turnover and fewer absences, with added benefits including higher staff morale and improved working relationships.

“Through our partnership with Working Minds, we aim to raise awareness and help empower people in workplaces across the country. This is also a key component of SAMH Workplace training, which develops the confidence and capabilities of participants, equipping learners with the tools and resources they need to improve the mental health and wellbeing of themselves and others.”

Wendy Halliday, Director of See Me, said: “HSE’s Working Minds campaign is an important partnership for us at See Me.

“The last few years have been tough for workers across the country, and we know that more needs to be done to enable people to feel comfortable speaking about their mental health.

“Mental health stigma continues to be a major barrier for people in the workplace, with nearly 40 per cent of Scottish workers telling us that they think colleagues are unlikely to speak about a mental health problem at work for fear of losing their job. This means that people aren’t asking for help when they need it, which can lead to bigger issues for employers.

“By encouraging staff to speak more openly about mental health, and providing employers with the tools and resources they require to support their employees, we can create more mentally healthy workplaces, free from stigma and discrimination.”

Whether it’s a small business or a large corporation, the law requires all employers to prevent work related stress to support good mental health in the workplace. They have a legal duty to protect workers from stress at work by doing a risk assessment and acting on it.

If employers don’t do anything about it, it will cost. That cost might be productivity, sickness absence, losing a valued member of the team if they’re not able to stay in work or from litigation costs such as an Employment Tribunal.

The Working Minds resource list is available [here](#).

Notes to Editors

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2. To read more about HSE's Working Minds campaign click here: <https://workright.campaign.gov.uk/campaigns/working-minds/>
3. HSE launched a major campaign, Working Minds, in November 2021 to remind employers of their legal responsibilities to assess and tackle risks at work and provide practical tools to support their employees' mental health.
4. Working Minds campaign partners include Mind charity, Acas, International Stress Management Association, Mental Health Productivity Pilot, Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH), Farm Safety Foundation, Composites UK, British Plastics Federation, Make UK, Lifelines Scotland, The Civil Engineering Contractors Association, Mates in Mind, The Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity, Nation Body Repair Association, Commercial Vehicle Body Repair, Independent Garage Association (IGA), Ben automotive charity, The Burnt Chef and British Aggregates Association.
5. Since 2019, The total annual cost of poor mental health to employers has increased by 25%, costing UK employers up to £56 billion a year – according to a [report by Deloitte](#). Figures show employers can see a return of £5.30 on average for every £1 invested in mental health.
6. For press and media enquiries please contact media.enquiries@hse.gov.uk

[McLaren fined as worker dies after falling at Formula One facility](#)

Automotive group McLaren has been fined £650,000 after a father-of-five from Portsmouth fell to his death carrying out an inspection.

David Oldham's widow, Patricia, says she has been "robbed" of her husband following the tragedy. The couple had been married for 14 years and lived in Hereford.

Fifty-five-year-old David worked for Zurich Management Services Limited. He was carrying out a structural inspection of McLaren's Paddock Brand Centre, a hospitality unit used by its Formula One racing team, when he fell from one of the upper floors. He later died of his injuries.

The incident happened on 18 October 2016, while the structure was undergoing maintenance at one of McLaren's warehouses on Vanwall Road, Maidenhead.



McLaren Paddock Brand Centre

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found McLaren had failed to properly assess the risks and to put measures in place to prevent workers falling from height at its Paddock Brand Centre.

Falls from height remain the biggest cause of fatal accidents involving workers. In the five-year period between 2017 and 2022, 174 workers in Great Britain – a quarter of those killed in accidents at work – tragically fell to their death. HSE guidance can be found at: [Work at height – HSE](#)

David's wife Patricia Oldham said: "Davey was my husband for a short 14 years, although we had been together for 18 years. We had a happy time together and loved each other very much. He took care of me and I in turn took care of him.

"Our relationship was the kind that we could silently communicate to each other from the other side of the room. We used to work together and that is how we met and became good friends. Our wonderful, blended family consists of five grown up children, Chris, Dale, Nikki, Andy, and Simon. We have seven grandchildren and even a great-grandson! Dave loved his family and spoilt all of the grandchildren.



David and Patricia Oldham

"A few months before he was killed at McLaren's Paddock Brand Centre, we had taken all the grandchildren on holiday to Spain. We had an amazing time, especially poignant now given these circumstances.

"Dave was the kind of man who would help anyone if he could. He had such a big heart. His passion was golf, of which he enjoyed playing a round with his boys as well as myself and even to the extent of taking his grandchildren to the driving range. He used to like to keep fit and liked running, he did runs for charity.

"He used to make me laugh so much. Together we planned our retirement, where we would travel and see what new experiences we could explore together.

"I have been robbed of my husband, but poor Dave lost his life."

Following a trial at Reading Crown Court, McLaren Services Limited, of Chertsey Road, Woking, Surrey, was found guilty of breaching Sections 2(1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £650,000 and ordered to pay £110,132 in costs at Reading Crown Court on 31 March 2023.

HSE inspector Saffron Turnell said: "Patricia's powerful words make clear the impact David's loss has had on her life. This is a devastating tragedy and our thoughts remain with her and David's family.

"Work at height is a high risk activity and falls can result in life changing injuries and death. It's the number one reason why people like David didn't get home from work. Those responsible to ensure his health and safety failed to do so.

"It is very important that those in control of the work identify the risk, plan to eliminate it if possible, or where it is not possible, take appropriate precautions to safeguard workers and others. Good management will also include regular monitoring that the controls in place are keeping people safe."

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3. HSE news releases are available at: <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
4. HSE guidance and information about work at height can be found at: [Work at height – Occupational health and safety – HSE](https://www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/)
5. Falls from height deaths to workers: Year (number of deaths). Bold = biggest cause of work-related fatal accidents to workers during that year. 14/15 (**42**), 15/16 (**37**), 16/17 (27), 17/18 (**35**), 18/19 (**43**), 19/20

(31), 20/21 (36), 21/22 (29). Source –[RIDKIND – RIDDOR reported fatal and non-fatal injuries in Great Britain by kind of accident and broad industry group \(.xlsx\)](#)

6. Following a trial at Reading Crown Court, Zurich Management Services Limited was found not guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

[£600,000 fine for company after employee died while loading lorry](#)

An East Yorkshire garden landscaping company has been fined £600,000 after an employee died while loading a lorry.

Brian White, 59, was working for Kelkay Limited when he was operating a forklift truck at the company's site on Heck and Pollington Lane, Pollington, East Yorkshire, on 15 June 2020.

Brian was fatally injured when the lorry he was loading was moved by the driver, pulling the forklift truck over and trapping him underneath.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found Kelkay Limited's risk assessment failed to take into account the possibility of [lorries moving while they are being loaded](#). HSE also found that the systems of work provided for ensuring that vehicles were not moved during loading activities were inadequate.

Kelkay Limited, of Heck And Pollington Lane, Pollington, East Yorkshire, was found guilty of breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £600,000 and ordered to pay £20,848.71 in costs at Grimsby Magistrates' Court on 30 March 2023.



Brian White
was killed
while loading
a lorry

Brian's eldest son Barry said: "Not a day goes by without me thinking of my dad and how we have lost a massive part of our family. He was our rock who we could turn to for advice and help. We have lost a friend and a father and a grandad all in one go.

"He was a well-known part of the local area and his loss has affected many people around the community.

"We miss him so much. It still upsets me to this day and we will always remember him. Rest in peace dad."

Brian's partner Joan said: "Brian went to work on that day but didn't return home through no fault of his own.

"We had made plans for the future together but then everything was turned upside down on that day.

"My life was then a total disaster from that day."

HSE inspector John Boyle commented: "This incident could have been avoided by implementing the correct control measures and safe working practices."

"Companies 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 information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
4. HSE guidance on the dangers of loading and unloading vehicles safely is available.