

Message from Chief Executive Sarah Albon – My first International Workers' Memorial Day

This year, International Workers' Memorial Day (IWMD) feels more important than ever. It's my first time commemorating the day both as HSE's Chief Executive and personally, I can't help but think on it in the context of these extraordinary times.

Before I started at HSE, I wasn't that aware of the day. But clearly, it's significance for us, as the national workplace health and safety regulator, really can't be overstated. The opportunity to take a minute together (even virtually), to reflect and to remember those who've died at or because of work is so valuable and a clear reminder of why the Health and Safety Executive exists.

I believe firmly in our mission – that no-one should get ill, be injured or die because of work. And as I write this, I'm thinking about the key workers who are risking their own health and wellbeing during the coronavirus outbreak. I want to recognise them and their efforts which are so instrumental to the national effort. The extra levels of risk they're now exposed to at work are in some cases unavoidable but let me be clear that all risk must be managed appropriately. I'm proud of how hard HSE is working to make sure employers put sensible and pragmatic approaches in place, and keeping our guidance, based on science and evidence, updated. These efforts are a vital part of keeping essential services going. So to my colleagues, and all those duty holders adapting to the current circumstances, thank you.

As well as all those affected by the coronavirus outbreak, I also want to think about everyone else we've lost.

In 2019, 147 people died while at work in Great Britain. That number is still far too high. But our work is about more than numbers. Work-related deaths fracture families, they shatter communities, and so many of them can be avoided. In my short time as HSE's Chief Executive, I've seen first-hand, the continuing work by duty holders to assess and appropriately manage risk to their employees, to seek out guidance and to uphold the law so that no-one dies as a result of work in Great Britain.

Usually, we'd mark International Workers' Memorial Day with small ceremonies at our offices around the country. We'd invite many of our partners and in some cases the families of victims to join us, and together reflect on our shared work to make our country the safest place to live and work in the world. Unfortunately, this year, we can't do all of that in the same way.

Instead, we'll be commemorating the day using our social media channels to share our message as widely as possible – that no-one should die because of work in Great Britain. On Tuesday, using the hashtag #IWMD20, I hope you'll

help us spread that message.

I'd also like to invite you to join HSE and people nationwide observing a minute's silence at 11am on Tuesday to remember the people behind the numbers and all those who've been made ill, injured or died from doing their job.

Thank you.

Sarah Albon

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