

International Women's Day: 'Louder voice' from women will help everyone at work, watchdog bosses say

Two of the Government's most senior officials regulating industry believe the 'louder voice' from a new generation of women will make everyone at work feel more comfortable.

Sarah Albon and Lisa Pinney MBE say that while progress has been made, women working in heavy industry today are still provided with ill-fitting protective equipment and unsuitable welfare facilities while working on site.

The chief executives of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Coal Authority respectively, regulating traditionally male-dominated sectors, were speaking ahead of International Women's Day.

"As more and more women join these industries, they'll become a louder voice," said Sarah Albon, who leads HSE.



Lisa Pinney (centre) with Sarah Albon (right)

"With just little bit of thought – and you see our best companies do this – more places can make those extra few steps, not to make a woman feel that she has to ask, or somebody is doing her a favour, but just to make her feel as comfortable and on an equal footing with all of her male colleagues," she continued.

Improving conditions on site will benefit men too, Sarah Albon added: "Because when I look at some of these sites, I'd say it's not suitable for anyone. But it's the fact that women are coming in and looking at it, perhaps with 21st century eyes and saying, 'you expect me to put up with that?' "

"Men have perhaps just become ingrained and used to it in those heavy industries over decades and decades. But that right to have dignity at work, it applies to all of us, men and women."



“You feel like you’re wearing a tent”

Lisa Pinney, chief executive of the Coal Authority, sympathised with how difficult not being comfortable at work can be. “It’s so much about confidence. If you’re meeting on site or if you’re doing something and you’ve got sleeves down to the floor and feel like you’re wearing a tent, it really affects your confidence in terms of being able to do the best job that you can do.”

Both women started their careers when they were in a significant minority, and overcame barriers to progress.

But the inequality once denied Lisa a job: “I didn’t get a job once because they didn’t have women’s toilets. I was the top candidate, but they wouldn’t have me on site.”

“We have come a long way”, added Sarah, “but we’ve still got a long way to go.”



A-Winning, in Derbyshire

Enabling Net Zero

A wide-ranging discussion between the pair covered a range of different topics including the role each organisation plays in protecting the environment. They were talking at a site run by the Coal Authority, where water from abandoned mines was being treated before entering the wider water system.

Sarah Albon said: “One of the things that we at HSE, and here at the Coal Authority we can offer is being really part of that next wave of technology, safe Net Zero technologies and thinking about how we can all do our bit for climate change – and doing that in a safe way.”

Lisa Pinney said: “Public safety is the absolute ethos of both our organisations.”

Marking big anniversaries

Over the next 12 months, both HSE and the Coal Authority will mark significant milestones. It will soon be 50 years since HSE was formed on 1 January 1975, and 30 years since the Coal Authority was borne out of the Coal Board.

Sarah Albon said: “We’re enormously proud that generations of people working in HSE over the last 50 years have made huge strides in improving the safety of Britain’s workforce – we’re one of the safest countries to work in now.

“As we push forward into the next 50 years, we’re wanting to bring that same effort into health as we’ve done in safety. We’re still seeing people unnecessarily made ill through the work that they do.”

Lisa Pinney said: “It’s about celebrating our journey. We were created to support the coal industry when it was privatised, and to deal with some of the challenges around that. Over the last 30 years we’ve seen so much change, things like treating mine water, protecting drinking water and into the future thinking about opportunities like mine water heat.”

The pair were speaking on visit to the A-Winning mine water treatment site in Derbyshire, a scheme operated by the Coal Authority, of which Lisa Pinney is the chief executive.

Their full conversation has been converted into a 15-minute podcast which can be found here: <https://spotifyanchor-web.app.link/e/g7IUK9WaxHb>.

About HSE

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

About the Coal Authority

The Coal Authority works to make a better future for people and the environment in mining areas. It manages Britain's coal mining legacy and, as a 24/7 emergency response organisation, responds to public safety and subsidence incidents caused by historical coal mining.

As part of the Coal Authority's work to enhance the environment, over 80 mine water treatment schemes are operated with the capacity to treat 220 billion of litres of water each year, helping to protect rivers and vital drinking water supplies.

The Coal Authority's work is helping to develop a new sustainable source of renewable energy for the UK. By harnessing the heat from the water within former mine workings, it hopes to play a key role in helping the UK to meet net zero targets by 2050.

Skills and information are also used to provide services to other government departments and agencies, local governments and commercial partners. By sharing knowledge and expertise, the Coal Authority supports the UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments to create safer, cleaner and greener nations for all.

More information on the Coal Authority and its work can be found at:
www.gov.uk/coalauthority

[Metal recycling company fined £200,000 after employee's arm severed](#)

A scrap metal recycling company in Essex has been fined £200,000 after an employee's arm was severed when it became entangled in a catalytic converter sampling machine.

Elena Troia was working for F.J. Church and Sons Ltd at its recycling facility in Rainham, Essex, on 12 June 2021 when she passed her hand through an unguarded rotary valve to remove a blockage.

The valve closed, trapping and severing the 34-year-old's right arm. Ms Troia's right arm was later amputated as a result of the incident and she has been unable to work since.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that F.J. Church and Sons failed to prevent access to dangerous parts of machinery, namely the rotating parts of a rotary valve inside the sampling machine.



HSE guidance states employers must take effective measures to prevent access to dangerous parts of machinery. This will normally be by fixed guarding but where routine access is needed, interlocked guards (sometimes with guard locking) may be needed to stop the movement of dangerous parts before a person can reach the danger zone. Further guidance can be found here: [Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 \(PUWER\) \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/l24/puwr/)

F.J. Church and Sons Ltd, of Centenary Works, Manor Way, Rainham, Essex, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 11(1) of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. The company was fined £200,000 and ordered to pay £5,125.37 in costs at Stratford Magistrates' Court on 5 March 2024.



HSE inspector Marcus Pope said: "Every year, a significant proportion of accidents, many of them serious and sometimes fatal, occur as a result of poorly guarded work equipment. In this case this was a wholly avoidable incident, caused by the failure to guard dangerous parts. Had the company added suitable guarding to the outlet of the machine, this life-changing injury would not have occurred."

This HSE prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Jon Mack and paralegal officer Lucy Gallagher.

Notes to editors:

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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.

[Company and director sentenced after employer crushed to death](#)

A company and its director have been sentenced following the death of an employee.

Robert Czachracz was crushed by two granite slabs while working for West Midlands firm Graniteland Limited on 30 November 2020.

The 46-year-old, who was from Poland, had been unpacking and moving the slabs onto storage racks, using an overhead crane, at the company's Lyde Green site in Halesowen.

Two of the slabs, each weighing 250kg, fell and crushed Mr Czachracz against a forklift truck while he was operating the crane's handheld pendant control.



Mr Czachracz was fatally crushed by two granite slabs

He died at the scene despite desperate attempts from bystanders at nearby businesses and the emergency services to save him.

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation found Graniteland Limited and its director, Mr Shu Lai Li, failed to implement staff training or develop safe systems of work for the unloading, loading and handling of concrete slabs. There was no evidence that employees had received training in the safe operation of machinery, including the overhead crane. The overhead crane and forklift truck had also not been thoroughly examined, as required by law, and that webbing slings, that could have been used during the unpacking process, were damaged.

HSE guidance states employers must manage and control the risks to avoid any injury or damage during lifting operations. More on this can be found at: [Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations \(LOLER\) \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/lifting/)

Graniteland Limited, of Lyde Green, Halesowen, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £18,000 and ordered to pay £4,196.03 in costs at Dudley Magistrates' Court on 6 March 2024.

Mr Shu Lai Li, of Lyde Green, Halesowen, pleaded guilty to breaching Section

37(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. He was ordered to complete 120 hours of unpaid work and pay £4,043.42 in costs at Dudley Magistrates' Court on 6 March 2024.

HSE inspector Mahesh Mahey said: "This was an entirely preventable accident. The risks of lifting and moving granite slabs were obvious, yet could have been controlled by relatively simple and inexpensive measures. The company and director failed to adequately control lifting operations which resulted in an employee needlessly and tragically losing his life."

This prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Andy Siddall and supported by HSE paralegal officer Rebecca Forman.

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[Manufacturing company fined after worker fatally crushed](#)

A manufacturing company has been fined £120,000 after a worker was killed after becoming trapped between two heavy steel beams.

In May 2019, Steve Rooke, 55, was working in the workshop at Mifflin Construction Ltd in Leominster, Herefordshire. The company manufacture and install steel components for the construction industry.

Steve, who had worked at the company for more than 27 years was using an overhead travelling crane to lift the middle of three beams to position it better on a trolley or 'bogey' which ran on rails in the workshop. The beam he was lifting was 18m long and weighed 1,800Kg. As it was lifted, it rotated in a sling, toppling sideways and trapping him against another beam causing fatal injuries.

Karen Rooke, Steve's wife said: "Steve's death has left a big hole in our lives. How can you move on when something like this has happened?"

"It's changed everything, every plan we had has gone and our future is

cancelled.

“He was good at his job, hard-working and conscientious and I still struggle to understand how and why this happened.

“I’ve lost a husband and the girls have lost a loving dad and he’ll have missed out on so many things to look forward to like becoming a grandparent.”

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the company had failed to ensure a suitable and sufficient risk assessment was conducted by a competent person to identify well known industry standard control measures. Suitable and sufficient information, instruction, and training was not provided to employees about lifting operations at the site. The company did not properly plan lifts and did not have a system for ensuring that there were adequately qualified supervisors present during lifting operations.

Businesses or organisations that undertake lifting operations or are involved in providing lifting equipment for others to use, must manage and control the risks to avoid any injury or damage. HSE has guidance on [lifting operations](#).

At Kidderminster Magistrates’ Court on 4 March, Mifflin Construction Limited of Worcester Road, Leominster, Herefordshire pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. They were fined £120,000 and ordered to pay costs of £50,000.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Steve Richardson said: “This incident could so easily have been avoided by simply carrying out 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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HSE builds construction support to protect workers' mental health

The construction industry has stepped-up its efforts to combat work-related stress and promote good mental health by joining Great Britain's workplace regulator campaign.

The Working Minds campaign, set up by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), welcomes six new partners in the construction industry to help reach trades and offer free support.

March sees the Contract Flooring Association (CFA) and the Chartered Institute of Plumbing and Heating Engineering (CIPHE), Asbestos Removal Contractors Association (ARCA), the National Federation of Demolition Contractors (NFDC), the Electrical Contractors' Association (ECA) and the National Federation of Roofing Contractors (NFRC) commit to the campaign.

Working Minds helps employers prevent stress and support good mental health, providing free online learning to show how to make it part of routine working life and culture. The new bitesize tool typically takes no more than an hour to complete and covers what the law requires of employers and what's needed to do to be compliant.

Users will walk through Working Minds' 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 on site.

Liz Goodwill, head of work-related stress and mental health policy at HSE, said: "We know that running a business in construction can be stressful with long hours, juggling intense workloads.

"We are delighted the Working Minds campaign is welcoming even more partners and they will no doubt help us in our efforts to raise awareness of ways employers across Britain's construction trades can help prevent and reduce work-related stress.

"The law requires all employers – whether you're a demolition firm or scaffolding business – to carry out a stress risk assessment and act upon the findings. The online learning shares all the tools you need to get started in one place, and you can come back as many times as you like."

According to Deloitte , the total annual cost of poor mental health has increased by 25% since 2019, costing UK employers up to £56 billion a year.

Help is available

If you or someone you know needs help or support, reach out and ask how they are feeling and coping. The Working Minds campaign sign-posts employers to a

wide range of tools and sources of support that can help on its [construction sector webpage](#).

Employers wishing to know more and complete the Working Minds online learning should register and get started today.

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2. Working Minds campaign partners include; Mates in Mind, Lighthouse Construction charity, Contract Flooring Association (CFA) and the Chartered Institute of Plumbing and Heating Engineering (CIPHE), Asbestos Removal Contractors Association (ARCA), the National Federation of Demolition Contractors (NFDC), the Electrical Contractors' Association (ECA) and the National Federation of Roofing Contractors (NFRC).
3. Steve Sadley, chief executive of the Asbestos Removal Contractors Association (ARCA), said: "We are pleased to support the HSE Working Minds campaign to address work-related stress, depression and anxiety. This is an important issue that employers in the asbestos removal industry should prioritise. There are compelling reasons for asbestos removal companies to prevent work-stress and promote mental health. This includes meeting legal responsibilities, enhancing business operations, and caring for employees." "The nature of asbestos removal work can be demanding, so it's critical to provide resources that equip teams to handle stress. The Working Minds campaign offers helpful tools and resources to help asbestos removal companies establish effective wellbeing strategies tailored to industry-specific needs. We encourage companies in this vital field to utilise these materials to foster positive mental health practices. By working together proactively, we can create healthier and more supportive environments for asbestos removal professionals as they safely deliver this essential service."
4. Paul Williams, HS&E Services Manager at Electrical Contractors' Association, said: "ECA is a proud supporter of Working Minds. Our work on mental health includes providing Mental Health First Aider courses, and awareness courses across our membership family. We strive to make conversations about mental health normal and destigmatise attitudes towards poor mental health."
5. Jo Lear, executive assistant to technical and training at the National Federation of Demolition Contractors (NFRC), said: "NFRC is proud to continue to support the HSE Working Mind campaign. It's an excellent resource that provides practical and useful tools to support our members mental health. NFRC is fully committed to supporting the wellbeing of our members and understand the importance of championing such great initiatives. The HSE Working Minds Campaign is positive step on a long road to improving the wellbeing and mental health of our roofing

workforce.”

6. Richard Catt, CEO at the Contract Flooring Association (CFA), said: “As the CEO of the Contract Flooring Association (CFA), I am proud to support the Health and Safety Executive’s (HSE) Working Minds campaign. Work-related stress, depression, and anxiety account for half of all work-related ill health cases, highlighting the urgent need for action. Employers should recognise three compelling reasons to prioritise mental health in the workplace: it’s a legal requirement, it’s beneficial for business and productivity, and the moral imperative.”By fostering a culture of openness, understanding, and support, we can create healthier, more productive work environments for all. Together, let’s embrace the principles of the Working Minds campaign and champion mental well-being in the workplace. It’s not just about compliance; it’s about creating environments where everyone can thrive.”
7. Kevin Wellman, CEO of CIPHE, said: “As CEO of CIPHE, I proudly endorse the Working Minds campaign. It’s crucial for employers to prioritise mental health in the workplace, and this initiative provides valuable resources and support to prevent stress and promote well-being. Let’s join forces to create healthier, more supportive work environments for all.”
8. To read more about HSE’s Working Minds campaign click [here](#)
9. For press and media enquiries please contact media.enquiries@hse.gov.uk