

# Life€ savings

## Saving spree: IOSH's five-point action plan for government

The Irish economy loses billions in lost output, national healthcare and state benefits every year – all because of failures in health and safety. IOSH believes that as well as bringing the work death toll down, and saving thousands from leading blighted lives, the government could save up to €3.2 billion a year if it takes a few simple steps now. As part of our Life€ Savings campaign, we are calling on the government to put our five-point plan into action, and see massive savings for the cash-strapped economy.

### 1 Show them the money

We want the government to show businesses how managing health and safety can dramatically cut costs – as well as saving billions for the public purse.

Many businesses simply don't realise how much they're losing through accidents, illness, low morale and under-performance. And they don't know how easy it is to turn these losses into healthy gains for their staff, their business and the country. We're calling on the government to showcase the businesses that are getting it right – and encourage them to mentor those who aren't. We would also like to see the government take a lead in looking after its own staff, for example, focusing more on the health and wellbeing of Health Service Executive personnel.

### 2 Don't fall for a false economy

We want to make sure that national austerity measures don't damage people's health or lead to accidents, creating fresh costs.

As the country faces tough economic challenges, it's vital the government acts to make sure cost-cutting doesn't cost lives. Precious public spending, both from central and local government, should be wisely deployed to help maximise people's health and wellbeing. This means careful planning and management and making sure that policy-makers and budget-holders get the best professional health and safety advice. We'd like reassurance that government cuts won't undermine valuable proactive regulator work, particularly for dangerous industries such as construction and agriculture. We're also advising the government to promote the benefits of 'good work', which is good for health and wellbeing and can help support the economy.

### 3 Lead from the front

We call on the government to encourage improvements in health and safety – and bottom line cost savings – through promoting strong leadership and greater corporate transparency from directors.

In these cash-strapped and uncertain times, the country is looking more than ever to its leaders to show the way back to prosperity. These are the people heading up our private companies, our public services and our voluntary bodies – the forward-thinkers who win over hearts and minds and never forget that the buck stops with them. It is the leaders of these smart businesses who realise that health and safety is genuinely a 'win-win' – that good health and safety is also good for business. We urge the government to seek out and promote examples of strong health and safety leadership and do more to encourage public reporting on performance. We'd also like to see more businesses set improvement targets and share their progress on government websites – with government departments themselves leading the way.

#### 4 Get risk thinking right from the start

We want the government to make sensible risk thinking – ‘risk intelligence’ – part of every curriculum, from primary education through apprenticeships to professional training.

We believe there is a yawning gap in our education system that means professionals – including business leaders, doctors and teachers – can gain their professional qualifications without covering health and safety fundamentals. It also means teenagers and young adults can go on work experience or start apprenticeships without being taught sensible health and safety at school. Not only does this gap in knowledge and understanding mean that millions of people are ill prepared for the everyday risks they’ll face at work, it can also fuel the health and safety myths. We call on the government to start to create a more ‘risk intelligent’ society by embedding basic risk principles in our education and training system.

#### 5 Challenge myths and excuses

We want the government to promote health and safety as a force for good, by challenging myths and excuses.

Unfortunately, health and safety is sometimes used as an excuse not to do something. It’s blamed for concerts having a 10pm curfew, children not being allowed to run in the playground, and even for banning bicycles on a ferry. These myths damage the reputation of health and safety and undo the hard work of the profession. We call on the government to be more robust in challenging myths by ‘naming and shaming’ those that give the wrong advice.

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Discuss our five-point action plan with Richard Jones, Head of Policy and Public Affairs. You can reach him at [richard.jones@iosh.co.uk](mailto:richard.jones@iosh.co.uk) or on +44 (0)116 257 3100.

Find out more about our Lif€Savings campaign at [www.iosh.co.uk/lifesavingsireland](http://www.iosh.co.uk/lifesavingsireland).

#### **IOSH Ireland Branch**

A11 Calmount Park  
Ballymount  
Dublin 12

t 1800 331 331  
f 1800 331 331  
[www.iosh.ie](http://www.iosh.ie)