



South Cumbria District
Manchester & NW
Districts' Branch

Joint meeting
Next meeting reminder,
November 2010 Minutes & Notices



South Cumbria
Occupational Health
& Safety Group

Next Meeting

Topic: Working at Height
Speakers: Jim Tongue, Director Accounting 4 Safety &
Jason Anker, Lecturer, Behavioural Safety
Date: 13.30, 9 December 2010
Venue The Netherwood Hotel, Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria LA11 6ET

November Meeting Minutes

Topic: Lone Working
Speaker: Johanna Beswick, Senior Psychologist, H&S Laboratory Buxton
Date: 1330, 18th November 2010
Venue: The Netherwood Hotel, Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria LA11 6ET

The names of those attending our meetings are recorded, if you need proof of attendance please contact Carol Stearne Joint Minutes Secretary (contact details in the programme)

Martin Fishwick, Chairman SCOHSG and South Cumbria IOSH District welcomed everyone, especially Sarah Bates from HSE Bootle. He explained that she was visiting us because she is HSE's lead Policy Adviser on lone working and she was interested to hear about HSL's research on lone working and that she had also brought copies of the latest HSE guidance on *Lone Working* (recently updated) for members. Martin then gave details of the emergency arrangements.

Before introducing our speaker Martin presented Val Kennedy, our Vice Chairman, Programme Secretary and Web Champion, the *IOSH President's Distinguished Service Award*, in recognition of all the work that she had done on behalf of South Cumbria IOSH District over many years.

Martin then introduced Johanna Beswick, Senior Psychologist, from the Health and Safety Laboratory (HSL), Buxton, to talk about lone working.

Johanna began her presentation by saying that working alone is not against the law and it will often be safe to do so. However, the law requires employers and others to think about and deal with health and safety risks before employees are allowed to work alone. There will always be some tasks where a Risk Assessment shows that lone working is not an option.

Examples of work scenarios which could involve lone working:

- Petrol station
- Shop
- Security staff
- Agriculture
- Health (care workers, health visitors etc...)
- Social workers
- Home Workers

Johanna explained that when an employee is lone working they are likely to encounter 'conventional' working hazards but there may be an increase in the severity of the possible consequences of these. For instance, not having any work colleagues within shouting distance may increase an employee's vulnerability to some hazards. Similarly, a lack of supervisory support may increase the likelihood of an emergency situation arising therefore some high risk activities

may never be suitable for lone working eg working with electric conductors, working at height etc...

Johanna then went on to talk about how to assess and control the lone working risks. She identified key ways of minimising the risks faced by lone workers:

- **Involve staff in the Risk Assessment process:** employees undertaking the work are more likely to understand the potential risks and suggest practical ways of coping with them.
- **Check control measures:** It is important that lone workers and their line managers:
 - Are given appropriate instruction, training and supervision and understand how to check and maintain any PPE that they are expected to use.
 - Understand the 'reporting-in system' including what happens if a lone worker does not 'report-in' as required.
- **Review:** It is very important to review *Risk Assessments* annually, or, after significant change
- **Help and back up:** must be provided if a *Risk Assessment* shows that is not possible for risks to be controlled properly without extra support.
- **Working on another employer's premises:** If a lone worker is working at another employer's workplace the lone worker's employer should make the owner of the premises of the potential risks and required control measures.

The presentation then moved onto the issues of violence related to lone working. She explained that the effect of potentially violent situations on lone workers varies depending on their individual stress, anxiety, depression and psychological state as well as their ability to defuse potentially difficult situations. She explained that it is important that employers address lone worker's potential exposure to violence and have policies in place to minimise the risks (including appropriate training), because, if a lone worker does become a victim of violence the impact on the business could include future retention and recruitment problems, long-term sickness absence and have detrimental effects on work productivity. She said that it is also important that self employed people take measures to protect themselves from potentially violent work situations when lone working.

Johanna gave an example of the effects of violent passenger behaviour on the operations of a bus company. She said that it is often un-economic for bus companies to have more than one employee on most bus routes therefore bus drivers act as drivers and ticket collectors and may have to deal with difficult situations. Their key violence risks include:

- Alcohol and drug use by passengers
- Geographical location: eg some areas attract gangs, others sparsely populated
- Late evening and early morning shifts
- Nature of clients/customers
- Unpredictable situations encountered whilst doing the job.

It is impossible to eliminate all these hazards but it is possible to minimise the potential risks eg by installing CCTV on high risk routes, issuing drivers with mobile phones etc...

Effective consultation between line managers and lone workers will also help to ensure that all relevant hazards are identified and appropriate and proportionate control measures are chosen to minimise potential risks. Research has shown that workplaces in which effective consultation takes place between managers and lone workers are safer and healthier than those with poor employee communication systems.

Training and the provision of information are very important, to guide and help lone workers in situations of uncertainty. Training may be critical to providing people with the necessary skills to avoid panicking in uncertain situations. Lone workers should know that it is acceptable to management to make a decision not go into a situation if they feel at risk... They should be aware of the situation and the immediate surroundings and leave that situation if they feel threatened.

Johanna summarised some of the control measures that should be considered for lone workers:

(a) *Work Equipment and the Environment*

- **Communication:** use of mobile phones, pagers etc... check coverage!
- **Personal alarms:** will there be anyone to hear them?

- **Panic alarms:** when working in large building complexes; remember to train other staff what they need to do if they hear a panic alarm.
- **CCTV:** linked to a monitor – with clear instructions for operator of action required.
- **First aid kit:** suitable for task; lone worker trained to use it.
- **Access equipment:** suitable for use by one person

(b) *Job Design*

- **Doubling up:** some tasks may not be suitable for lone workers and require minimum teams of two.
- **Manual handling:** ensure lone workers are not expected to lift excessive weights - one person lift? eg delivery drivers.
- **Physical and emotional demands of task:** suitable for young persons and pregnant workers?
- **Dynamic risk assessments:** lone workers allowed to make decisions 'on the job' if faced with unexpected and potentially threatening situation.
- **Recruitment and selection:** important to select suitable people for lone working tasks (temperament and physical strength)
- **Communication:** is task suitable for lone workers whose first language not English if they have not mastered a reasonable level of communication in English?
- **Sanctions:** such as withdrawal of service, may be needed eg warn clients that violent behaviour is not acceptable if lone workers, such as care workers and service engineers, are going into their homes to provide a service
- **Prosecution** eg notices to warn bus passengers that they will be prosecuted if they threaten bus drivers or damage property.

The final part of Johanna's presentation related to Home Working, a type of lone working where employees (or the self employed) work solely from home. People may not be physically alone as other family members may be present, but there are not colleagues or management present and there may be times when no-one is present.

The benefits of home working were defined as:

- Cuts down on travelling time → reduced cost, reduced stress, reduced use of energy
- Aids flexibility → child care and family responsibilities
- Can aid work life balance

But, there are also potential disadvantages:

- A feeling of guilt of having a home contract, perception that others thought that you were being lazy and/or doing less work.
- Potential lack of support from employer and/or line manager
- Can be forgotten eg for training, up-dating on policies etc...
- Can be overlooked for promotions etc...
- Can be hard to maintain contact with work colleagues and others

Johanna explained that employers are expected to assess health and safety risks of home workers in the same way that they do in 'normal' workers. This should include a formal Risk Assessment of the home worker's work environment including:

- **Manual handling:** size of potential loads
- **Work equipment:** used for home working tasks
- **Electrical equipment:** used for home working tasks
- **COSHH:** substances and materials used for home working tasks
- **Display Screen Equipment:** work station design
- **Home contact:** managers should have regular contact with the home worker, via telephone and e-mail and preferably including home visits to show support.
- **Workplace contact:** home workers should visit their 'parent' organisation on a regular basis to undergo training, attend meetings and make contact with other employees with similar roles.
- **Risk assessments:** should be updated regularly

Johanna took final questions before Martin Fishwick presented her with a token of the Group's appreciation of her informative talk. Martin then told members that committee members had been

invited to attend a small dinner as a “thank you” for all their hard work over the past twelve months without which the interesting and informative programme of monthly meetings and the annual seminar would not happen.

Val Kennedy then made some local announcements and the meeting concluded with networking over tea or coffee and stickies.

A committee meeting to finalise the 2011 programme and review the recent day seminar followed the main meeting; then, most committee members attended the ‘thank you’ dinner.

NOTICES & NEWS HIGHLIGHTS FOR MEMBERS

Future events (*at The Netherwood Hotel unless stated otherwise*):

- | | | |
|-----|-----|---|
| Dec | 9 | Working at height
Jim Tongue, Director, Accounting for Safety, Barrow-in-Furness
Jason Anker, Lecturer, Behavioural Safety |
| Jan | 20* | CDM: what the Client needs to know, and managing occupational health risks
David Charnock, HSE Carlisle |
| Feb | 17* | Asbestos: a few things that you might not have heard about and some that you may already know!
Steve Shuttler, Director, SB Asbestos Management Ltd, Sedgewick |

* Followed by Committee meeting

Other websites with relevant information

HSE lone working publication: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf (downloadable .pdf file)

Other useful HSE web pages: www.hse.gov.uk/contact/faqs/workalone.htm
www.hse.gov.uk/treework/site-management/lone-working.htm
www.hse.gov.uk/violence/loneworkcase.htm

Joint Programme Cards for 2011

Hopefully these will be available for collection at our December meeting.

SCOHSG Membership (for companies and organisations):

SCOHSG membership entitles companies and organisations to send representatives to the joint meetings with South Cumbria IOSH District for H & S training and to meet H & S professionals for informal discussion. If your company would like to join SCOHSG please send your membership subscription to Heather Reed, Membership Secretary. Membership is open to organisations (not individuals); further information www.communicate.co.uk/lakes/SCOHSG

SCOHSG Membership certificates:

If your organisation has renewed its membership and you have not collected your certificate please collect it from Val Kennedy at the next Netherwood meeting.

HSE Myth of the month (November 2010): None! Normal service resumes in December

Government guidance

Clearing snow and ice from pavements yourself



There is no law stopping you from clearing snow and ice from the pavement outside your home, or from public spaces. It is unlikely that you will be sued or held legally responsible for any injuries on the path if you have cleared it carefully. Follow the snow code below when clearing snow and ice.

The snow code - tips on clearing snow and ice from pavements or public spaces

Prevent slips

Pay extra attention to clear snow and ice from steps and steep pathways - you might need to use more salt on these areas.

If you clear snow and ice yourself, be careful - don't make the pathways more dangerous by causing them to refreeze. But don't be put off clearing paths because you're afraid someone will get injured.

Remember, people walking on snow and ice have responsibility to be careful themselves. Follow the advice below to make sure you clear the pathway safely and effectively.

Clear the snow or ice early in the day

It's easier to move fresh, loose snow rather than hard snow that has packed together from people walking on it. So if possible, start removing the snow and ice in the morning. If you remove the top layer of snow in the morning, any sunshine during the day will help melt any ice beneath. You can then cover the path with salt before nightfall to stop it refreezing overnight.

Use salt or sand - not water

If you use water to melt the snow, it may refreeze and turn to black ice. Black ice increases the risk of injuries as it is invisible and very slippery. You can prevent black ice by spreading some salt on the area you have cleared. You can use ordinary table or dishwasher salt - a tablespoon for each square metre you clear should work. Don't use the salt found in salting bins - this will be needed to keep the roads clear.

Be careful not to spread salt on plants or grass as it may cause them damage.

If you don't have enough salt, you can also use sand or ash. These won't stop the path icing over as well as salt, but will provide good grip under foot.

Take care where you move the snow

When you're shovelling snow, take care where you put it so it doesn't block people's paths or drains. Make sure you make a path down the middle of the area to be cleared first, so you have a clear surface to walk on. Then shovel the snow from the centre of the path to the sides.

Offer to clear your neighbours' paths

If your neighbour will have difficulty getting in and out of their home, offer to clear snow and ice around their property as well. Check that any elderly or disabled neighbours are alright in the cold weather. If you're worried about them, contact your local council.