

HSE SAFETY

CORNERSTONES

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Read about how a global energy firm's inadequate risk assessments cost a man his life, how a manufacturer failed to install safety guards on a machine and how an international construction firm did not implement several basic construction safety procedures.

Provided by
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The Importance of Health and Safety Audits

The responsibility to ensure that employees have comprehensive health and safety protection rests on the shoulders of the company. Failure to fulfil that responsibility can result in prosecution, fines and significant reputational damage. In fact, according to the most recently collected data, workplace injuries and ill health cost the British economy £14.2 billion from 2012-2013. To avoid incurring some of that cost, your organisation should consider incorporating regular health and safety audits.

Health and safety audits allow companies to take an in-depth look at potential hazards that employees and customers may be exposed to. In addition, audits are effective in determining what preventive measures have been taken to reinforce safety. This type of comprehensive review is valuable as it ensures that your company is prepared and protected from potential legal repercussions.

When preparing to conduct a health and safety audit, a company has two options:

1. Have one or more employees certified in safety management. (For more information on the training programme, visit www.rospa.com/safety-training/work/safety-auditors.)
2. Hire an auditor. (For more information on where to hire a safety management certified auditor, visit www.britsafe.org/audit-and-consultancy/audit-and-consultancy.)

Regardless of whether the audit is being conducted in-house or by a certified third party, there are six best practices that your company should adopt to minimise health and safety risks.

1. Make safety a focus within the workplace, and reinforce that with a zero-tolerance policy regarding actions that promote or encourage unnecessary risks.
2. Regularly review and update the company's documented health and safety policy and procedures. In addition, ensure that copies of the policy and the procedures are easily accessible to all staff members.
3. Document each potential risk that both employees and customers could be exposed to, along with what steps have been taken to mitigate these risks.
4. Regularly conduct a comprehensive series of risk assessments, record the findings and take action to shore up any identified deficiencies.
5. Clearly define and outline the responsibilities of each employee in the company's documented health and safety policy and procedures.
6. If an incident is to occur, regardless of severity, it should be reported in a timely manner to the appropriate senior-level manager within the company.

By following these best practices, your company is making a long-term commitment to health and safety for its employees, investors and customers.

4 Ways to Bolster Health and Safety

While your company may already have an established scheme to address workplace health and safety issues, both your company and your employees could benefit from additional protection. For that reason, here are four ways you can effectively arm your business with the tools necessary to bolster any existing workplace health and safety schemes.

The SafeTea Break

3M developed the SafeTea Break toolkit as a way to begin a dialogue about health and safety between employers and employees. By completing the materials provided, your company should be able to shore up any weak areas in your current scheme and develop new solutions to previously unknown problems. For more information, visit <http://safetynetwork.3m.com/blog/safetea>.

Proud 2b Safe

As a way to examine companies' current safety schemes, Proud 2b Safe uses a real-life story about an employee who was injured on the job. By reshaping statistics and facts into a more personal narrative, your employees should be able to reflect on current safety procedures and internalise the programme's health and safety lessons. For more information, visit www.p2bs.org.

Cutting Red Tape

The Cutting Red Tape programme acts as a liaison between the government and your business in order to identify unnecessary regulation, its poor implementation and ways to reorganise it. This partnership should allow your business to streamline and reinforce your current health and safety scheme. For more information, visit <https://cutting-red-tape.cabinetoffice.gov.uk>.

V-MAC and MAC Tools

The variable manual handling assessment chart, or V-MAC, is a tool that supplements the manual handling assessment charts, or MAC tool. Used together, the tools help you figure out and plan manual handling operations to ensure that your employees are not being exposed to any unnecessary risks. For more information, visit www.hse.gov.uk/msd/mac/vmac/index.htm.



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NEWS AND PROSECUTIONS

Global energy firm fined £1.4 million after worker dies in fire

Total UK Limited, a global energy firm, was fined £1.4 million and ordered to pay £34,084.05 in costs after a 24-year-old employee lost his life in an oil refinery fire. The employee was working near a crude oil distillation unit when the fire broke out. In its investigation, the HSE found that an uncontrolled release of crude oil was responsible for the fire. Had the firm conducted regular and thorough risk assessments, the fire and death could have been avoided.

Manufacturer fined after worker suffers head injuries

Rotork UK Limited, a Bath-based manufacturer, was fined £15,000, ordered to pay £1,741.12 in costs and a victim surcharge of £120 after a worker was struck in the head by a machine chuck key. The 30-year-old worker was working at a lathe when the chuck key was ejected and struck him in the face—fracturing his right eye socket, damaging several teeth and causing bruising to his brain. In its investigation, the HSE found that the manufacturer failed to install proper guards on the machine—which breached Regulation 11(1) of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 and Section 33(1) and 33(2) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

Building contractor sentenced over unsafe working practices

Betcat International Limited, an international construction firm based in Spain, was fined £40,000 and ordered to pay £3,761 in costs after multiple construction safety offences were discovered. The firm was hired to refurbish and alter an existing building in London, but upon conducting its investigation, the HSE found multiple safety violations: improperly installed scaffolding, lack of guard rails, no dust and particle protection and no fire alarms. These offences violated Section 2(1) and 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and placed the workers, subcontractors and visitors in danger.