

H&S in Waste & Recycling

Debrief



for

HSE / COI

April 2005

Background

- **The HSE and COI Strategic Consultancy are developing a communication strategy for the waste and recycling industry to inform personnel of the risks of injury / ill health and enable a positive change in work practices.**
 - A challenge for any written communication is conveying good practice guidelines in a clear and simple manner as it is suspected that among workers there may be a number of people who have poor literacy skills.
 - Particular hazards of relevance to this sector are: musculo-skeletal injuries from handling loads; slips and trips, workplace transport injuries and cuts / lacerations.



objectives

Overall Objectives

- **To understand how H&S is seen in the waste / recycling industry**
- **To identify what messages need to be communicated to whom, how best to execute and channel these to the target groups**

Objectives: Detail

- **To understand the waste and recycling ‘front line’ worker’s perspective...**
 - Awareness and understanding of appropriate risk control measures
 - (muscular-skeletal injury, slips & trips, workplace transport & cuts/lacerations)
 - Salience of issues: do workers (& managers) in the industry take H&S seriously?
 - Current training provision for / communication of correct procedures
 - Awareness of HSE and how credible it is as a source of advice in this area

Objectives: Detail

- **To learn what, if anything, managers do to promote safe working practices**
 - Views on how best to communicate with those in the industry
- **To get an overview of H&S from waste industry trade associations**
 - What they believe are the key issues affecting workers
- **And of local government procurement officers...**
 - Extent to which health and safety record of companies impacts on tendering
 - are specifications regarding safety of employees and the training of employees in safe techniques a requirement of the contract?

Objectives: Detail

- **Across these targets, to explore communication opportunities...**
 - Reactions to different communication 'formats' and potential effectiveness
 - Optimum channel for reaching the targets
 - Extent to which relationship between management and workforce can provide opportunities / barriers for the channelling communication



Sample

- **There were four audiences in this research...**
 - **1) Refuse Workers:** the primary target
 - **2) Managers** in commercial waste firms: insight into the rapport
 - **3) Trade Associations:** views on the issues affecting workers
 - **4) Local Government Procurement:** H&S impact on supplier choice

Sample - Refuse Workers

- **6 x group discussions with Refuse Workers...**
 - 5-6 in each group
- **All were...**
 - Working kerbside in refuse collection (I.e. not back office / support)

Sample - Refuse Workers

- **Sample split by...**
 - Region: South vs. North vs. Midlands
 - Length of service / experience / seniority
 - ‘Senior / Long Service’ vs ‘Junior / Recent Service’
 - Longer Service = over 1 year
 - Recent Service = under a Year including recent recruits
- ***Spread within groups of...***
 - ***Local Government employees vs private contractor employees***
 - ***Different private contractor companies***

Sample - Managers in Refuse Firms

- **4 x depth interviews with Managers...**
- **All were...**
 - Liaising / working / in contact with Refuse Workers
 - 'In the know' re company policy for staff in the field
 - In terms of job titles...
 - In cases, to be personnel / training / HR
 - Had a formal H&S element to their role
- **Spread within this sample of...**
 - Different companies and regions

Sample - Trade Associations

- **5 x depths with senior Trade Association personnel...**
 - Senior personnel involved in developing / implementing H & S for industry
 - Otherwise put - best placed in organisation to comment
- **Drawn from a list of nominated organisations...**
 - *Environmental Services Association*
 - *Institute of Waste Management*
 - *GMB (Trade Union)*
 - *Local Authority Employers Association*
 - *E.C.T./ Social sector organisation*

Sample - Local Govt. Procurers

- **3 x depths with Local Govt. Procurement officers...**
 - alongside broader desk research to find out policy
- **All were...**
 - Involved in procurement from suppliers with H & S implications
 - Otherwise put - best placed in organisation to comment

Sample - Summarised

Type	Service	Method	Location
Refuse Workers	> 1 year + recent	Group	South
Refuse Workers	> 1 year + recent	Group	Midlands
Refuse Workers	> 1 year + recent	Group	North
Refuse Workers	< 1 year + senior	Group	South
Refuse Workers	< 1 year + senior	Group	Midlands
Refuse Workers	< 1 year + senior	Group	North
Refuse Company Manager	NA	Depth	South
Refuse Company Manager	NA	Depth	Midlands
Refuse Company Manager	NA	Depth	North
Refuse Company Manager	NA	Depth	South
Trade Association	NA	Depth	Varies
Trade Association	NA	Depth	Varies
Trade Association	NA	Depth	Varies
Trade Association	NA	Depth	Varies
Trade <i>Union</i>	NA	Depth	Varies
Local Govt. Procurer	NA	Depth	South
Local Govt. Procurer	NA	Depth	Midlands
Local Govt. Procurer	NA	Depth	North

Trade Associations: The Industry View

Trade Associations

- **Overall, at senior level, strong sense that the industry *is* taking H&S seriously**
 - General recognition of need for improvement - stung by fatalities, poor reputation
 - Some mention of recent BOMEL report
 - Wary of costly ‘no win no fee’ litigation from employees – and related fines
 - Keen to be seen to be upholding corporate responsibilities

“A lot of us were quite troubled when we dropped below construction in terms of our Health and Safety record”

Trade Associations

- **Moreover, H&S widely seen as a ‘hot topic’ in industry discussions**
 - Familiar to some via *WISH* forum discussions
 - A concern in the ‘community’ of professionals in the industry
 - Sense that reflecting a recent cultural change in attitudes

“Two years ago we wouldn’t be having this discussion. A lot has changed”

Trade Associations

- **As such, the large national companies appear to be engaging with the issue**
 - Generally putting greater resources behind H&S
 - Ensuring companies themselves are covered
 - Tightening procedures and supervision; exploring own communication
 - *E.g. SITA*: instituted Manual Handling support groups across estate
 - E.g. More recently, *Onyx* internal campaign: ‘Don’t bin your back’
 - *E.g. ESA*’s members’ opt-in ‘to Charter 2010’ - committing to tackling H&S
 - E.g. companies working with vehicle manufacturers to promote safer machinery

Trade Associations

- **That said, all see an important role / opportunity for (more) communication**
 - To get the message across to front line staff *“Because we don’t always get it right”*
 - To tackle ***smaller operators*** - harder to reach and less compliant than members
 - Acknowledgement that - to date - industry has not effectively achieved this
 - Sense that *how* is precisely the challenge ‘6 million dollar question’
 - “It would do no harm if HSE were to produce something to communicate”*
 - “Get through to the two-man outfit with their van in the Yellow Pages”*

Trade Associations

- **While some acknowledge the scale of the task to change kerbside behaviour...**
 - Refuse Collectors themselves are seen as a challenging audience to reach
 - Seen as having particular communication needs *“They won’t read anything”*
 - Often long established in their roles *“Old dogs...new tricks”*
 - And - some willingly admit - whole task is hindered by common working practices
 - In particular - the realities of ‘Task and Finish’ working hours
 - “Task and Finish is the bane of our lives. I’d get rd of it tomorrow if I could”*
- **This is discussed in detail below....**

Trade Associations - Other

- **Meanwhile Union / Local Government views echo industry concerns about H&S**
 - Sense of particular risk for migrant workers / workers without a full command of English
 - Sense particularly that casual / fluid nature of refuse collection work, and prevalence of *agency staffing* can mitigate against good H&S practice...

“I am particularly concerned about agency staff who don’t appear to get proper training because they don’t understand it. Some of them end up under the wheels”

Trade Associations - Other

- **By contrast, the *Social* sector appears less immediately affected as on the fringes**
 - Sense that not faced with the volumes / pressures that municipal collection entails
 - Don't have the large fleets; unpaid / voluntary staff working at a far 'easier' pace
 - Generally more concerned about staff welfare internally - given voluntary intake

“Nothing on that scale has affected us. No one's going to get crushed to death here”

Refuse Collectors: The View from the Kerb

Refuse Collectors - the target

- **As per recruitment, a broad audience in terms of experience...**
 - Wide variation in length of service: from 'recent months' to 25 years
 - Varying intentions: some 'staying for a few months', others see selves as 'lifers'
- **NB worth noting though, none in groups had problems with spoken English**
 - Anecdotally – sense that increasingly common - especially via Eastern Europe
 - That said, lack of interest in reading (likely literacy issues) noted

Refuse Collectors - the target

- **In spite of this, few notable sample differences of relevance to H&S...**
 - All have generally received similar training and training ‘refreshers’
 - Little variation in the actual nature of the job across region
 - Strong peer pressure ‘on the job’ means little variation in individual behaviour
 - Most notable difference is between in-house public vs private contractors
 - When compared in groups that H&S taken more seriously in *public sector*
- **In all then, a very consistent audience...**

“You don’t get one [in a team] who’s very careful & others who aren’t”.

Refuse Collectors - perceptions

- Overall, *safety is seen as very relevant to Refuse Collectors themselves*
 - Often feel they are doing a potentially dangerous and physical job
 - Sense that requires vigilance and ‘plenty of common sense’
 - The dustcart itself often seen as a risk *“A potential killing machine”*
 - Hence many have anecdotes or personal experience of injuries...

“I’ve had needles, I’ve been hit by a car and shot at with an air rifle”

“The public are often the worst part of it - drivers and...people”

Refuse Collectors - perceptions

- **Most common 'front of mind' hazards for Refuse Collectors tend to be...**
 - The risk of being hit by cars ***“On the roads...it's like Deathrace 2000”***
 - Lacerations / needles from bags: otherwise known as 'sharps'
 - Harassment and confrontation from the public

“Cars, ‘sharps’ and people”

“I was pricked with a used needle. It was terrifying”

“You get some very nasty people who hide glass in the bag because you don't put their wheelie bin back on the spot they like it... that sort of thing”

Refuse Collectors - training

- **In practice, Collectors are clearly made aware of H&S at a broad level**
 - H&S is main focus at induction of new staff, besides vehicle operation
 - Seen in action in rules on PPC, High-Vis, footwear, on-board-CCTV, etc
 - Forms signed by employer & employee after H&S training / briefing
 - Leaving an accurate 'paper trail'

Refuse Collectors - training

- **That said, duration / depth of training varies somewhat by company...**
 - Typically, training is a half day on site...followed by on-the-job training
 - ‘In-house’ council collectors generally given more; contractors *less*
 - Long-service staff generally less open vs recent recruits
 - Anecdotal evidence that *least* attention given to ‘agency’ and foreign staff

Refuse Collectors - training

- **Specifically, the H&S 'training' given tends currently to embrace...**
 - Importance of H&S-related clothing: PPC, boots, high visibility kit
 - Machinery: dangers of the crusher and lifting mechanisms; risks of road traffic
 - Movement: walking vs running; descending ladders; exiting the cab correctly

Refuse Collectors - training

- ***Muscular-Skeletal* risks (MSI) are part of this, but are lower priority / recall**
 - Instructions given on *kinetic lifting* of objects, number of bags / items carried
 - Sense that this is also a relatively *recent* feature - newer rules, a 'softer issue'
 - Ranked low priority, given the more immediate risks / threats to consider

Refuse Collectors - training

- **Re channels & formats, communication tends to take the form of...**
 - Most commonly: short induction **videos** - shown to new employees
 - Some mention **CD-Rom** demos, supported by multiple choice tests
 - **Memos** issued after serious H&S incidents - sometimes in video form
 - *Infrequent* face-to-face **demonstrations** to groups of staff from H&S officials
 - NB All administered rigorously and formally: followed by mutual signatures
 - More generally, mention too of posters / notice boards - at head office

Refuse Collectors - H&S in practice...

- In practice though, the critical finding of this research is that formal H&S is widely ignored at 'kerbside' by Refuse Collectors.
- Several key barriers explain this...
 - **'Task and Finish'** : an overwhelming institutional barrier to good practice
 - A dismissive **mindset**
 - **Communication**: much in the past has tended not to 'talk' to the target
 - Rather, Collectors are at best selective - adhering to own 'common sense'

Refuse Collectors - H&S barriers

- Specifically, **Task & Finish** hours appear to be *the* primary barrier
 - A.k.a. the right with municipal collection to *'knock off when you've finished'*
 - In many ways, the resulting shorter hours are *the* essential perk to the job
 - Means that Collectors working as **fast** as possible: to leave *hours* earlier
 - As a result, corners are often cut and 'softer' H&S rules are often ignored

Refuse Collectors - H&S barriers

- This *alone* means communicating/altering behaviour faces a very hard task

“‘Job & Knock’ makes a badly-paid 9 hour day a much better-paid 6 hour day”

“If you would do everything by the book, you’d be home at 9pm”

“It’s fantasy land. It’s Never Never Land!”

“They used to have ‘Time & Study’ (sic) so they’d know how long a round was”

Refuse Collectors - H&S barriers

- **Beyond, Task & Finish, a rather dismissive 'mindset' is a lesser barrier**
 - MSI risks are often quite low down on their personal list of concerns
 - *Other more immediate concerns: 'Cars, 'sharps' and people'*
 - Many make light of H&S rules vs own experience *"Use your common sense!"*
 - Minority apathy too: the view that injury is a risk of such a 'very physical' job
 - "There's no such thing as a job where you don't injure yourself"*

Refuse Collectors - H&S barriers

- **Some suspicion of Health & Safety 'culture' in place too...**

- Some feel that simply a case of 'covering employers' backs'

"There'll be an incident, then a purge, then back to normal again"

- Sense that driven by people who haven't done the job, and don't know the job

- Some machismo re adherence to rules *'You won't last long on the dustcart'*

"If someone's too slow we'll ring up and say we can't work with him"

"This bloke came in to do a presentation. He had a bag of potatoes in a bin liner. We couldn't help laughing at him. It was really funny"

Refuse Collectors - H&S barriers

- And **communication** re H&S also appears to have been a barrier...
 - In the past **tone of voice** and **message** has often missed the mark
 - Sometimes seen as patronising ‘manager-speak’; ‘their’ point of view
 - Lacking credibility: unrealistic simulations; ‘1970s training videos’
 - Literacy issues / dislike of reading materials: ‘boring’, ‘in the bin’
 - Anecdotal feedback re poor communication with agency and foreign staff
 - Language barriers an added factor here...and expected to increase

Refuse Collectors - H&S barriers

- In all then, while Collectors are *conscious* of H&S, current barriers are
 - ‘**Task and Finish**’ working - enshrines corner cutting
 - Sense of a dismissive and sometimes suspicious **mindset** re H&S
 - **Communication**: much in the past has tended not to ‘talk’ to the target
 - Relatively **low priority of MSI** in spectrum of perceived hazards

Managers in Refuse Companies

Managers

- **Managers tend to echo the industry view of H&S as a ‘growing concern’**
 - Sense that ‘nowadays’ H&S being taken more seriously
 - Conscious of systems / procedures in place ‘kerbside’ for dealing with this
 - Able to give useful feedback on nature of target and official training
 - NB some have past experience as Refuse Collectors: *“I know the job”*
 - *Mixed blessing: understand the target – but often ‘over pragmatic’*

Managers

- **But being closer to the ‘front line’, they tend to be more complacent / inert**
 - Often cite the systems *are* in place for staff to ‘get the message’
 - Often overseeing an array of procedures with relevance to H&S
 - Can appear somewhat defensive to the suggestion that H&S is a ‘problem’

Managers

- Specifically, many are *confident* that Collectors are being told about H&S
 - E.g. Shown a *house video* and given a *portfolio* to read at induction
 - Signatures always taken after every new communication / training for H&S

“They sign for it precisely so that we know they are covered”

“They can’t start working until I have shown them the video”

Managers

- **Nevertheless some acknowledge that a ‘gap’ exists between how *Collectors* are told to work - and how they do work in reality...**

“The lads do respect the rules . Most of the time”

“Officially they’re supposed to wear steel toe caps. But they wear trainers because they run. So we tell them off. And they behave for a few weeks”

“They’re supposed to finish at five thirty. But they finish at 1.30”

Managers

- **In practice, the rapport between Managers & Collectors is often variable**
 - Often surprisingly limited contact - since no 'clocking in' / off in place
 - Often see selves as enforcers as contact often centres around *discipline*
 - Some sense of a 'them and us' culture...

"In the old days there was a canteen and clock in / clock out – which helped mark the day. Nowadays we talk much less often"

"If the public complains about them – they'll be in"

"We get on - but they know not to cross me"

Managers

- Hence potential of *Managers* as a **channel** for communication vary...
 - Managers *themselves* generally open to being intermediaries...
- **NB attitudes to managers from *Collectors* often less favourable...**
 - Common ‘Them & Us’ culture, meaning many are dismissive of Managers
 - “*We know how to handle poison in our job. Our supervisors are poisonous*”
 - That said, respected managers who have ‘*done the job too*’ often heeded
 - Clearly, likely to be highly subjective

Local Government Procurement

Local Government Procurement

- **Overall, clear sense that, echoing industry, H&S has grown in importance**
 - Seen as a concern *for LG's own staff "All the way down to your office chair"*
 - Welfare of contracted workforce a theme of current administration (e.g. *TUPE*)
 - Felt to have been accelerated by 'bad experiences' of CCT
 - Parallel concerns about local authority's own liability
 - *NB a very hard to reach target*

Local Government Procurement

- **And sense that H&S is now being factored into tendering...**
 - Most common in *construction / waste / transport* “Where people get hurt”
 - Officers generally ‘in the know’ re recent fatalities / crises in these sectors
 - NB but **none** had experienced any notable problems with H&S *re waste*
 - Indeed, sense from some that takes more energy than is sometimes merited

“I sometimes wish the big IT contractors could be as easily rapped for botching something up.

They seem to create more havoc than waste”

“I heard about the fatality...in Lincolnshire...and was interested who it was”

Local Government Procurement

- **In practice, H&S is part of contract conditions and pre-qualification**
- **Typically, the following were in place in this sample...**
 - Verifying company's experience and record over past 3 years
 - Seeking background details: of H&S training and accreditation
 - Seeking details of past cases of grave misconduct
 - Details any H&S breaches found by tribunal in past 3 years
 - Checking that satisfactory *monitoring* systems for H&S are in place

Local Government Procurement

- **This practice has become essential due to 'Best Value' principles**
 - Aimed at including in 'social costs' into contracts vs costs
 - Overall mission instituted by the ODPM and enforced by NAO
 - Guidance on putting this into practice from a a range of sources: OGC, NAO
 - Also procurement reflecting Local Govt.Act and EU Procurement Directives

Local Government Procurement

- **NB however, that this is a small sample...**
 - Practices of different councils / boroughs / authorities thought to vary widely
 - Best practice and standards are common...
 - ...but reality is that many councils may not be quite as up to speed

“I get the impression that many authorities aren’t up to scratch with Best Value”

Communication

Communication - overall

- As discussed above, **communication** re H&S has been a barrier in the past...
 - Recognised by industry as a priority now
 - Often reported back by Refuse Collectors themselves
 - Widespread lack of enthusiasm / interest in general among Refuse Collectors

Communication - overall

- **Specifically, sense form Refuse Collectors that this has missed the mark, in terms of *tone of voice & message...***
 - Often seen as ‘patronising’ ‘manager-speak’; from ‘their’ point of view
 - Lacking credibility: unrealistic ‘simulations’; dated ‘1970s training videos’

“It’s often very hoity-toity” “ Like something from the Blue Peter studio”

 - Undeclared literacy issues/dislike of reading materials: ‘boring’, ‘in the bin’
 - *“I’ve seen videos where the guy approaches a bag like he’s trying to surprise it”*

Communication - overall

- **This appears even more pronounced for agency and foreign staff**
 - Language barriers an added factor here...and expected to increase
 - Anecdotally, sense from Collectors that they often *“Don’t know the score”*
- **That said, some positive learnings from past communication**
 - Benefits of face to face contact
 - Cut through of ‘respected’ role models

“If they have someone decent in who knows what they’re talking about you do listen - as long as you’re being paid. If you’ve finished, you don’t!”

Communication - tone

- On consideration, the optimum **tone of voice** for communication for most therefore tap into the 'mindset', across formats / channels....
 - Preference for credible, gritty 'straight-talking', non-managerial tone
 - "Talking like a working class person who has got their hands dirty"*
 - "Someone who has done it...not a celebrity in a donkey jacket"*
 - 'Realistic' / credible in spirit: real incidents, real simulations vs 'studio' H&S
 - Frank / unsentimental about H&S: given suspicions that it's about 'covering backs'
 - Where possible, respectful / deferent: given ingrained views that *operatives know best*
 - I.e *"Not teaching your grandmother to suck eggs"*

Communication - format

- While in terms of the ideal **format** of any communication, a number of ingoing barriers are apparent...
 - Many are be dismissive of ‘traditional’ ‘boring’ communication in general
 - *“I’m not going to read any more leaflets!”*
 - Literacy issues...and rather limited attention given to written materials
 - Preference visual / verbal approaches, seen to effect with videos / CD-Roms
 - Appeal of (rare) face-to-face communication e.g. visits by experienced staff

Communication - format

- **Idea of *Short DVD* available to every refuse worker appeals**

- Summed up as *“A Rough Guide to the Dust”*
- Tonally, covering, ‘warts and all’, the risks on the job...by someone ‘in the know’
- Aimed at new recruits...but equally valid as a refresher for ‘old hands’
 - Liked as accessible and novel in itself: *“I would watch it”*
 - DVD is familiar as a format from induction

“If it was honest...and it said, hey, you’ve really got ‘watch your back’ - it’s common sense, then fine” “At least it would be a bit more realistic that way”

“A bit like the advice your mate would tell you if you were starting on the dust”

Communication - format

- **More generally, some appeal in face-to-face communication / presentations / talks**
 - Importantly, fronted by a respected ‘hand’ ‘who’s done the job’
 - Crucially, conducted in work hours (a challenge for ‘Job & Knock’ employees)
 - With similar ‘real life’ tone of voice

“I don’t mind if it’s not some graduate trainee in a suit”

Communication - format

- **Also, Non-traditional 'ambient' formats draw positive reactions...**

- e.g. calendars, stickers, cards...vs leaflets

- Communicating 'top line' risks e.g. *"Top 10 Hazards"* *"Danger of the Month"*

- Appeal in fact that these are accessible...and may be placed in the cab / office

- Indeed, many feel that that the more 'risque', the more engaging

"You should do Top Trumps" *"Calendar Girls. Miss Back Pain - January"*

"At last that sort of thing would get noticed"

Communication - format

- **Lastly idea of 'Shock tactics' (poster) communication draws some interest**
 - E.g. highlighting common hazards, and consequences of neglect
 - Analogies drawn by respondents with Anti-Smoking advertising
 - Adding to shock... *"How such and such a fellah got arthritis"*
 - Sense that likely to cut through, while less 'verbal' than generally expected

"We all heard about a bloke getting crushed up North a while ago...you hear about those things and they make you think a bit more"

Communication - message

- In terms of the optimum **message** for communication, most feel the strongest 'proposition' centres around the idea of 'common sense to keep you safe'...
 - *"Common sense to look after number one - from people who know the job"*
 - Echoing the following concepts put into research...
 - *"Better Health and Safety is for my own good"*
 - *'HSE empowers me to look after myself...in a way that I understand and trust'*

Communication - message

- **This ‘common sense’ slant resonates for the following reasons...**
 - Health and Safety is often understood by Collectors to be about common sense
 - Suspicion among many that Health and Safety culture doesn’t reflect ‘real life’
 - Re tone, widespread preference for ‘gritty’, ‘real life’...’common sense’ tone of voice

“It is all about ‘for your own good’. It’s good old common sense survival”

“I’ve been doing this job for years. You can’t come and wag the finger!”

Communication - message

- **Within this, among the range of H&S hazards, sense that optimum communication needs more generally to focus attention on behaviour that carries a muscular-skeletal risk...**
 - Currently, MSI is quite low down on the list of dangers from Collectors' perspective
 - Sense more generally that many more apparently more *urgent* 'hazards' exist

Communication - message

- **Sense that most effective contact is the Refuse Collectors themselves**

“Talk to us! Who else!?”

- Some mention of Driver as a possible contact
 - Often respected...and generally the most senior on the team
 - In some cases, ‘Untainted’ by associations with management - part of the team
- Trade Union contacts sometimes endorsed, where front of mind
 - Though, in reality, many have limited exposure / involvement here

Communication - message

- Views about the potential of *Managers* as a **channel** for communication vary...
 - Attitudes to managers among staff vary widely according to individuals
 - Common ‘Them & Us’ culture, meaning many are dismissive of Managers...
 - “*We know how to handle poison in our job. Our supervisors are poisonous*”
 - That said, respected managers who have ‘*done the job too*’ are heeded
 - That said, Managers *themselves are* generally open to being intermediaries

Communication - HSE

- **Re *HSE* itself, limited awareness of the organisation among Collectors**
 - Trace awareness via perceived involvement in railway investigations
 - Assumed to be responsible for monitoring and originating H&S rule
 - Some assume that a ‘government body’ / ‘official’
 - Some inevitable interest in ‘Health’ and ‘safety’ as impacts personally on them
 - Sense that in principle, communication ‘from HSE’ might be listened to
 - NB despite suspicions re H&S ‘culture’, few negative issues with HSE

conclusions

conclusions

1. Overall, at a *senior* level, strong sense that the Industry *is* taking H&S seriously

- General recognition of need for improvement - stung by fatalities, poor reputation
- Wary of costly 'no win no fee' litigation from employees – and related fines
- Keen to be seen to be upholding corporate responsibilities
- Sense that attitudes have changed quite recently: more enforcement, more serious
- H&S increasingly seen as relevant to kerbside work

conclusions

2. Refuse Collectors in this sample *are generally aware* of H&S at a broad level

- H&S is main focus at induction of new staff, besides vehicle operation
- Forms signed by employer & employee after H&S training/briefing: a ‘paper trail’
- **That said, duration / depth of training varies by company and individual...**
 - Typically, training is a half day on site...followed by on-the-job training
 - Anecdotal evidence that *least* attention given to temp agency / foreign staff

conclusions

3. But formal H&S is often not taken seriously at kerbside, due to several key barriers

- Foremost here is overwhelming institutional barrier of **'task & finish'** working
- A dismissive **mindset** : where only operatives know what's best for operatives
- **Communication**: much in the past has tended not to 'talk' to the target
- Rather, operatives are at best selective - adhering mostly to their own 'common sense'

conclusions

- 4. Specifically, **'Task & Finish'** hours appear to be *the* huge barrier to change
 - In many ways, the resulting shorter hours are *the* essential perk to the job
 - Means that operatives are working as **fast** as possible: to leave *hours* earlier
 - As a result, corners are often cut and 'softer' H&S rules often ignored
- This *alone* means efforts to communicate / alter behaviour face a very hard task
- Beyond this, other lesser barriers also of note...
 - The common 'dismissive' kerbside **'mindset'**
 - Past **communication**: has often missed the mark, re **tone of voice** and **message**

conclusions

5. The optimum *tone of voice* for communication would therefore tap into the ‘mindset’, across formats / channels....

- Preference for credible, gritty ‘straight-talking’, non-managerial tone
 - ‘Realistic’ / credible in spirit: real incidents, real simulations vs ‘studio’ H&S
- Frank / unsentimental about H&S: given suspicions that it’s about ‘covering backs’
- Where possible, respectful / deferent: given ingrained views that *operatives know best*

conclusions

6. While the following mooted formats researched well among Refuse Collectors...

- 1) Short **DVD** available to every refuse worker “*A Rough Guide to the Dust*”
 - Tonally, covering, ‘warts and all’, the risks on the job...by someone ‘in the know’
- 2) Broader **face-to-face** communication / presentations / talks
 - Importantly, fronted by a respected ‘hand’ ‘who’s done the job’
 - Crucially, conducted in work hours (a challenge for ‘Job & Knock’ employees)
- 3) Non-traditional **‘ambient’ formats** e.g. calendars, stickers
 - Communicating ‘top line’ risks e.g. “*Top 10 Hazards*” “*Danger of the Month*”
 - Appeal in fact that these are accessible...and may be placed in the cab / office
- 4) **‘Shock tactics’** poster communication
 - Sense that likely to cut through via shock

conclusions

7. In terms of the optimum *message* for communication, sense that the strongest 'proposition' centres around the idea of 'common sense to keep you safe'...
- *"Common sense to look after number one - from people who know the job"*
 - Echoing the following ideas put into research...
 - *"Better H&S is for my own good"*
 - *'HSE empowers me to look after myself...in a way that I understand and trust'*
 - Meanwhile, among the range of H&S hazards, sense that worth focussing attention on behaviour that carries a MSI risk

conclusions

8. Views about the potential of *Managers* as a *channel* for communication vary...

- Sense that most effective conduit is the **operative themselves** or (seniors) driver
- Trade Union contacts endorsed: though many staff have limited exposure / involvement
- Attitudes to managers vary widely: common ‘them and us’ relations
- Managers *themselves* generally open to being intermediaries



way forward

way forward

- **Overall, we believe that there is a desire in principle to improve kerbside H&S in the waste industry...**
 - It is an growing concern and a subject of wide discussion
 - Common concern about about industry's current H&S standing
 - Kerbside staff themselves are generally aware of the risks they face (though MSI risks are low down on their scale of perceived hazards)

way forward

- But findings suggest that *however* effectively communication targets kerbside workers, its impact is likely to be quite limited given the realities of 'Task & Finish', which appears to make *cutting corners* endemic at this level...
 - The shorter working day is often central to the appeal of the job
 - To achieve this, Refuse Collectors work at high speed and often flout rules
 - This *barrier* far exceeds any communication gap

way forward

- **However, within the scope of this research, we believe that there is still a role for communication to play to raise and increase relative awareness and understanding of MSI risks ...**
 - Specifically, to raise the 'ranking' of MSI in the hierarchy of hazards
 - Communicating with 'contract workers' /and foreign language speakers

way forward

- We believe the optimum ***tone of voice*** for communication would therefore tap into the ‘mindset’, across formats / channels....
 - Preference for credible, gritty ‘straight-talking’, non-managerial tone
 - ‘Realistic’ / credible in spirit: real incidents, real simulations vs ‘studio’ H&S
 - Frank / unsentimental about H&S: given suspicions that it’s about ‘covering backs’
 - Where possible, respectful / deferent: given ingrained views that *operatives know best*

way forward

- **We recommend exploring the following formats ...**
 - 1) Short **DVD** available to every refuse worker “*A Rough Guide to the Dust*”
 - Tonally, covering, ‘warts and all’, the risks on the job...by someone ‘in the know’
 - 2) Broader **face-to-face** communication / presentations / talks
 - Importantly, fronted by a respected ‘hand’ ‘who’s done the job’
 - Crucially, conducted in work hours (a challenge for ‘Job & Knock’ employees)
 - 3) Non-traditional **‘ambient’ formats** e.g. calendars, stickers
 - Communicating ‘top line’ risks e.g. “*Top 10 Hazards*” “*Danger of the Month*”
 - Appeal in fact that these are accessible...and may be placed in the cab / office
 - 4) **‘Shock tactics’** poster communication
 - Sense that likely to cut through via shock

way forward

- We believe the optimum **message** is likely to centre around the idea of ‘common sense to keep you safe’...
 - *“Common sense to look after number one - from people who know the job”*
- While among the range of H&S hazards, it is worth focussing attention on behaviour that carries a muscular-skeletal risk to effectively raise the profile of these within the range of hazards known to Refuse Collectors ...
 - Currently, quite low down on the list of dangers from Operatives’ perspective

way forward

- We believe that using *Managers as a conduit for communication may carry risks...*
 - Most effective conduit likely to be the **operative themselves** or (seniors) driver
 - Attitudes to managers vary widely: common ‘them and us’ relations
 - Though Managers *themselves* generally open to being intermediaries

way forward

- **More generally, anecdotal feedback in this research suggests that further work may need to explore the experiences and attitudes of a ‘hard to reach’ targets in this audience...**
 - Recent migrants and non-English speakers
 - Small operators who stand outside the formal municipal system and big company ‘reform’
 - I.e. the archetypal: *“Two-man outfit with their van in the Yellow Pages”*
- **Sense that potentially, may be at greater risk as outside the ‘communication loop’**

H&S in Waste & Recycling

Debrief



for

HSE / COI

April 2005