

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS
DELIVERED BY JUDITH HACKITT (HSE CHAIR)
AT THE LONDON LAUNCH EVENT ON 19 JANUARY 2010**

1. Thank you for that introduction [*slide 1 showing on the screen*]

2. I'm really pleased to see such a good turnout today. I know you are all busy people, so I'm very reassured to see that you must share my view of the importance of health and safety in waste and recycling to have made the time to be here today. I'm also pleased that invitations have been extended to ESA members and locally-based operation staff from HSE. It's important that we all develop a common understanding of these issues – not least because HSE inspectors will be using the guidance being launched today as a compliance benchmark standard in their future inspections.

3. I am personally committed to this HSE initiative, which is why I was delighted to be offered the opportunity to make this keynote address. This is the first event in a series of 8 regional and national launch events, and it's both unusual and expensive for HSE to go to such lengths to launch guidance materials. I hope you pick up two messages from this – one is the importance we are obviously investing in the content of this particular guidance, and the second is the importance we place in making sure you are all fully aware of it.

4. There are a number of issues I intend to cover in this address, and these include: the role of local authorities more strategically as major employers, clients and role models in the GB health and safety system; the degree of attention that HSE is giving to the performance of the waste and recycling industry and, combining the two, why we place such importance on the role of the local authority as client in the procurement and management of waste and recycling services. I'll also be drawing your attention to a couple of newsworthy developments along the way, and will close by indicating what HSE is expecting to do on related fronts in the future.

5. I'd like to preface what I'm going to say on the main substance of today's event by restating something that local authority colleagues may have heard me say before – and I make no apology for repeating myself on this. If we are to retain public confidence in, and respect for, the occupational health and safety system in GB, we need to be relentless in pressing home the 'sensible risk' message at every opportunity. This involves us all being seen to be addressing the real causes of work-related harm (and health and safety in waste and recycling is certainly one of those), and to be seen to be distancing ourselves from those that clearly don't – the

‘conkers bonkers’ stories and the petty minded people who hide behind health and safety when they aren’t prepared to declare their true motives.

6. I know that local authorities are key opinion formers in your communities, in your local press, and through your actions. I therefore look for local authorities to show leadership in such matters, to demonstrate your commitment to the sensible risk agenda by exhibiting good practice without going ‘OTT’ [over the top], and to be seen to be an exemplar in your client role on those issues that kill, maim and harm the health of workers and, in some cases, members of the public too.

7. This brings me to the waste and recycling industry. This industry has seen considerable growth in the last 10 years or so, as the Landfill Directive has begun to bite, and regrettably the industry’s accident numbers also grew over the earlier part of this decade, although I’m pleased to say that this has subsequently plateau’d and begun to dip a little.

8. HSE’s response to the industry’s injury profile has included commissioning specific research to get a much better handle on the accident numbers and rates, being an active member of the highly regarded WISH Forum, and to prioritise this industry into being one of only three where we report progress quarterly to DWP Ministers – the others being Construction and Agriculture. The HSE Board has also formally agreed a second 4 year plan for HSE’s engagement with this industry.

9. Whilst the waste and recycling industry is wider than just municipal household collections, collection activities overall account for around 70% of all the workers in this industry, and 80% of all the injuries. This graph [*slide 2 showing on the screen*] of the industry’s overall RIDDOR injury rates over the past 10 years is therefore generally representative of your own performance as well. You will see that the published RIDDOR rates for the construction industry are superimposed onto the chart as a comparison. More pointedly, this next slide [*slide 3 showing on the screen*] shows the number of RIDDOR-reportable fatalities for the waste and recycling industry overall during past decade. This chart records 130 deaths, and 23 of these were to members of the public.

10. I’d like to update this slide for you with emerging data related to the last 9 months. If any of you have been following the monthly updates that HSE provides on in-year fatalities you’ll be aware that there have been just 4 waste and recycling fatalities recorded in the first three quarters of this year, and that none of these have been related to household collections. [*slide 4 showing on the screen*]. I hasten to add that this is unpublished data and should not be considered as ‘official statistics’ from HSE, and that I’m obviously concerned that these four deaths have occurred. The overall improvement that this shows is nevertheless very encouraging, and we clearly want this trend to be maintained for the rest of this year, and into the future.

But this won't happen by wishful thinking, which is why this new guidance is so important.

11. So why do we put such emphasis on the local authorities' client role? Quite simply to reflect the significance of the influence you hold in practice. You specify the service you require, you monitor the key performance issues around its delivery, and you need to respond to emerging issues in liaison with the service providers – irrespective of whether they are in-house employees or contractors.

12. We'll be hearing in due course about the content of the guidance in a little more detail, and how it has been brought together, but I'd like to highlight the obvious importance of the client role now. In specifying the content, the client is determining the terms in which it is delivered. In defining the process and metrics through which it is monitored and reviewed, the client is revealing its own real priorities. And in setting the terms for contract variations the client is showing its preparedness to be responsive, and to be an active partner in facilitating and developing a safe service.

13. None of this is to say that the client is responsible for how the operator delivers the service on the ground, on a day to day basis, however – and HSE will continue to focus on those actually employing the waste and recycling workers when it comes to establishing their safe operating systems, monitoring and supervising their staff, etc. But this isn't the best place to start – safety by design starts with the specifiers – and he who pays the piper calls the tunes.

14. Given this necessary emphasis on the procurement process, I'm particularly pleased that the Chartered Institute of Wastes Management has recently reviewed its standard clauses for local authority procurement contracts. The revised clauses relating to health and safety responsibilities have now been agreed upon, making the nature of the contractual relationship much fuller and clearer, and this now reflects the client's duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act. I'm delighted to announce that the CIWM has agreed that we can include this revised text in the guidance that we are launching today.

15. As I approach my close, let me just say something about HSE's future plans. In relation to this guidance, we'll obviously give you time to assimilate and reflect on the content, and then in 6 to 9 months we'll begin to adopt it operationally as the benchmark for Section 3 compliance that we are looking for. Obviously you won't all be letting new contracts within this period, but the guidance has something to say about in-contract monitoring and contractual relationships, and we'd expect to see aspects of these starting to be adopted within your existing arrangements – whether the service is contracted out or provided in-house.

16. Your ESA colleagues are represented here today, as are HSE's regionally-based operational inspectors, and I'm sure they'd be interested to hear your thoughts about how you might start putting this into practice. I too will be looking forward to reading case studies about how beneficial this has proved to be in practice!

17. I'm sure a number of you will have been listening to me and thinking about other services for which your local authority is also the client, and where you have equally important roles to play – such as in construction, and in health and social care. We have deliberately chosen to treat these three activities separately because although there are similarities in the role you play, there are also important differences. For waste and recycling, for instance, you have environmental legislation and targets to figure into your service requirements, and with construction there are specific client duties under the CDM Regulations. We have therefore decided to start our focus on local authority client roles in relation to waste and recycling, but we shall be following through with similar guidance and expectations in relation to other services in due course.

18. Finally, I'd like to say how pleased I am to see the collaboration involved in agreeing this guidance, and arranging these events. The LGE [*WLGA and COSLA*], ESA [*WESA and SESA*] and Defra [*WAG and SE*] have been actively involved in the writing of the guidance and the case studies, and I'm particularly pleased that LGE and ESA are speaking here today. Colleagues from the trade unions, the Chartered Institute and elsewhere have all contributed to the bigger picture behind today's event, and I think it is a real credit to everyone involved.

19. Thank you for inviting me to attend. I am thoroughly looking forward to hearing all of today's speakers, and to gauging your own reactions as the morning unfolds.