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HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

**A Paper by Colin Douglas
Advisor(s): Shelagh Molloy
Cleared by Colin Douglas**

Issue

1. This paper summarises progress since the last update in June 2004.

Timing

2. This is second in a series planned as quarterly updates, which overcrowded HSC meeting agendas have not allowed.

Recommendation

3. HSC to note developments

Background

4. The Communication strategy agreed by HSC is built on objectives and milestones about:
 - Promoting the case for health and safety
 - Presenting a clear picture of HSC/E's role and focus
 - Building partnerships
 - Putting in place effective internal communications
 - Establishing a strategic communications approach
 - Developing a communications culture

Promoting the case for health and safety and raising our profile

5. Our strategy identified key target audiences and messages. Work to achieve this new focus – on national government and key stakeholders - has included:
 - Work to prioritise our key corporate stakeholders
 - Rollout of a toolkit to help HSE teams focus their work with stakeholders
 - A new emphasis on political and parliamentary target audiences, exemplified by the Commission's party conference fringe meetings
 - Testing, validation and development of our key messages.

6. **Corporate Campaigns.** Towards the end of the year we shall start to expand our target audience focus with a campaign on the business benefits of health and safety aimed at Directors. The campaign will make use of new case studies, advertising, an event at the Institute of Directors April conference and will culminate in a new health and safety award as part of the National Business Awards in November 2005.

7. Our target audience from April 2005 on will include employers and employees and we plan a major campaign on MSD in July followed by a Slips and Trips campaign at the start of 2006. We shall hang on the campaign peg – where we can - some ‘sensible health and safety’ messages and reinforce them (for example with a web debate, speeches and simpler risk messages) during the year.

8. **Media relations.** The trade and regional media profile has remained positive. The loss of rail was covered reasonably factually. Some good FT coverage on stress but the Mail attacked us and didn’t publish our response. Sir John Stevens had a go in the Evening Standard. Overall a concerning increase in ‘banned activity’ articles, with some blame to HSE and some to insurers. Our current programme of action includes:

- a pilot in Yorkshire to test the impact of focusing more effort and resource on proactive media work
- media evaluation – first monthly analysis received end November will be reported at meeting
- [progress in building a stronger Press Office presence on HSE’s website]
- continuing rebuttal of inaccurate coverage

9. The Chair and Deputy Director General (Operations) met with the Editor of The Times, and his senior Leader Writers, to explain how we work and set out the case for sensible health and safety. The meeting was constructive.

10. Current plans include a round table event in January with key journalists and stakeholders.

11. **Online activity.** HSC at their open meeting expressed an interest in web readership. At least 50% of the population now have access to the web. Each month, more than half a million people visit HSE Website 3 times – and download 8 million pages. The figures have trebled since April 02. The way forward is about providing accessible guidance and support:

- **Informing** - guidance, case studies, videos, research, statistics etc. in familiar categories (e.g. by Industry) - working closely with Infoline to provide access by phone for those who prefer it.
- **Interacting** - tools to make it easier and more convenient for people to self assess – or carry out routine tasks and statutory duties.
- **Involving** – on-line communities for people with a common interest to share ideas, experiences, documents etc.
- **Influencing** – through support for publicity campaigns (e.g. Stress) - or as a deterrent by naming and shaming those who break the law.

The Online Team is also revising standards to ensure information is accessible by as wide an audience as possible; and implementing new evaluation techniques to learn more about who is using the site (and who is not), and how useful and usable they find it.

Building Partnerships

12. Our work with the Central Office of Information (COI) to develop a coherent approach to engaging stakeholders is about improving focus - evidence collected by COI indicated that we had been spreading our resource too thinly. We are working on 3 levels:

- **cross cutting corporate stakeholders.** These have been prioritised; a senior official has been appointed as lead contact for each and plans are being drawn up.
- **strategic programme stakeholders.** A toolkit supplied to HSE teams provides a process for identifying, segmenting, prioritising and planning stakeholders. The process recognises the importance of keeping 'lower' priority stakeholders involved. COI are also working with HSE teams on stakeholder maps and messages for certain high priority programmes (construction, Local Authorities, potential of Primary Care Trusts to provide occupational advice).
- **geographic stakeholders.** A workshop on the toolkit for stakeholder managers in Scotland, Wales and the regions will help them develop communication plans for coming years,

Internal Communications

13. Work already undertaken:

- A strategy roadshow of 30 events reached 1200 staff – 71% found it useful and staff liked the chance to ask senior managers questions.
- A weekly e-bulletin to all staff has been well received for its brevity and intranet links
- New system of cascade briefings is welcomed in principle but delivery is not yet consistent; there is also more work to do on content.
- A revamped staff journal (Express) work has prompted mixed responses –mixed feedback on content and redesign (size) and no consensus
- A Pulse panel with 80 members provides regular feedback on topical issues
- A new staff Directory now launched responds to widespread complaints about its predecessor

14. Next steps include more engagement with middle managers on 'one HSE'; extending the reach of cascade briefings; stronger news features in Express; and team presentations of work to DG and Chair.

Strategic Communications

15. Initiatives to build a new infrastructure to coordinate and achieve more impact from our communication activity are well underway:

- the Board have agreed that DIAS should evolve into the Communications Delivery Service (CDS) without further significant outsourcing

- the division was restructured from October with greater emphasis on On-line Services; a new Commercial Team charged with generating income from a range of information that we produce; and a Creative Services team bringing design, editorial and publicity resources together
- new Account Managers within the Communications Directorate to manage relationships with internal 'clients'
- Communications Directorate and CDS working to develop new planning, information sharing and budget management arrangements for Publicity and Information budget
- the new brand design is being implemented on publications (eg. Accident Book, HSC 30th anniversary booklet, Managing sickness absence), stationery, promotional material (eg CBI, TUC, CIPD, HELA conferences)
- the brand will be transferred to the website by March 2005 and most of the Intranet, and to the new Merseyside HQ building signage
- a research programme to underpin communications to meet targets in specific sectors (eg construction, waste & recycling), to support market testing (eg stress CD ROM, asbestos promotional materials) and evaluation of communication initiatives

Developing a communications culture

16. Other activity to raise the profile and effectiveness of communications in HSE includes training for the Senior Civil Service in February/March to raise awareness of the power of strategic communications and the benefits of 'media neutral' communications planning.

Consultation

17. PEFD, CDS

Presentation

18. None

Costs and benefits

19. Our resources on communications are allocated to communications activity within programmes and core work aimed at changing awareness, understanding, attitudes and behaviours, and to building a sound platform for that activity by creating a positive public image for HSC/E, good relationships with stakeholders, and effective internal communications.

Financial implications for HSE

20. Spend on Communications Directorate payroll and admin costs, plus support from the Government News Network for regional media coverage totalled £1.04m to end October. Spend on publications, publicity, and promotional activity to end-October (excluding CDS staff costs) was £1.55 m (£994K on information and publicity; £112K on online services, £439K on print and publications). Committed spend on research so far

this year is around £900K. We expect to remain within budget to year end. Staff costs of CDS were £924K to end-October. Details on income generated will be provided with the next update.

Environmental implications

21. None