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HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

Height Aware Campaign May/ June 2006

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Issue

1. To inform the Commission of plans for a media, educational and inspection campaign to target falls from height in May and June 2006.

Timing

2. Routine.

Recommendation

3. That the Commission note the contents of this paper. The Commission will be informed of the main outcomes of the campaign once the evaluation is complete.

Background

Strategic Context

4. Workplace falls from height are the biggest cause of fatal injuries. There were 53 deaths in 2004/05 and nearly 3800 major injuries. Over half are caused by falls from below head height.

5. For this reason falls from height have been identified by HSC and HSE as a priority area forming part of the Fit3 Strategic Delivery Programme. The Falls from Height Programme aims to reduce the number of fatal and major injuries by 5% over three years from 2004/05, in line with wider PSA targets for injury reduction.

6. The Work at Height Regulations (WAHR), introduced in April 2005, have clarified the regulatory framework and the attendant publicity has helped raise the profile of the issue.

7. A falls campaign is being prepared for May and June 2006. The messages of the campaign – increasing awareness of the risks involved with work at height, increasing understanding that most injuries are from falls under head height, showing duty holders that introducing sensible measures will help reduce the risk of death and major injury – reflect HSC strategy on sensible risk management.

8. There is also an important inspection element involving HSE and Local Authority (LA) inspectors. Information will also be made available to stakeholders to enable them to address the risks.

Campaign Targeting

9. The campaign is aimed at people who work in the building and plant maintenance sectors in the widest sense, electricians, caretakers, window cleaners, painter and decorators. These sectors include up to 50% of people who sustain injuries while working at height, which equates to approximately 4100 major and over 3-day injuries each year. It will target both those who carry out the work and those who manage or procure it in England, Scotland and Wales. Many companies in this sector are construction based and the campaign will therefore have strong links to the work of the construction programme. It presents a real opportunity to take forward HSC's strategy on working in partnership, HSE are working with LAs, unions and stakeholders in industry during the campaign to improve work at height safety.

10. It was decided to target this audience as this is a fast growing sector where operatives often work alone away from their main workplace. Work at height is often incidental to the main task and therefore the risks are not always properly identified, especially when the work is below head height.

Height Aware Campaign

11. The campaign has 3 main elements;

- a targeted media campaign,
- a number of educational events involving HSE, Local Authorities and partners
- inspection of HSE and LA enforced premises.

Media Campaign

12. The detail of the media campaign is currently being finalised. It will run from 22nd May for 6 – 8 weeks, and will target workers and managers in the at risk groups and focus on increasing awareness of the risks, the cost to business and that planning and implementing sensible measures to manage the risks will prevent most major injuries.

13. The media strategy will include radio advertising and press advertising at national and regional levels and in selected trade press. There will be lead articles in relevant publications.

14. The working title for the campaign is "Height Aware". The objective of the campaign is to increase awareness of the risks of work at height and promote sensible measures to improve safety. The call to action for employees, "take a moment, not a fall", urges them to think about the work at height they are about to do and how to do it safely. A message to employers urging them to plan work and help make sure falls risks are managed properly is currently being finalised.

Events and promotional activity

15. HSE has committed to run 14 Safety and Health Awareness Days (SHADs) aimed at building and plant maintenance contractors and 21 smaller breakfast meetings aimed at clients, facilities managers and other duty holders in the targeted sectors. LAs are being encouraged to participate in these or to hold their own events for which some funding is being offered.

16. Hire companies such as HSS and Speedy Hire are committed to providing equipment and demonstrations for the events. A number of organisations have offered to support events by providing speakers or materials, most notably British Institute of Facilities Managers and British Ladder Manufacturers Association.

17. A campaign pack is being developed to support these events which will contain information about the campaign, key messages and relevant guides produced by HSE. The campaign pack will be available on CD Rom and on the HSE website.

18. HSE is working with a number of stakeholders to distribute this campaign material, place articles in publications and support their Height Aware events in the campaign period, including Access Industry Forum, Building Research Establishment, National Federation Window Cleaners and British Pest Control Association.

19. It is also planned to promote key messages of the campaign through a number of "point of sale" initiatives in various outlets used by the target audience for products and equipment. This builds on a recent pilot conducted by HSE with Dulux Paints and is particularly aimed at SMEs and the self-employed.

Inspection activity

20. HSE have appointed a Falls Coordinator for each region. They are HSE inspectors who will take the lead on falls from height issues within their region. They will help organise events and inspection activity related to the campaign. HSE and LA inspectors have been briefed on the campaign and the regulatory approach to be adopted as part of the recent FIT3 road-shows.

21. Targeted inspections will be carried out by HSE and LA inspectors. There will be joint visits to share knowledge and address cross-jurisdiction issues as these arise. Information will be distributed to duty holders summarising the key messages of the campaign.

22. In addition, HSE will be writing to all duty holders who report a falls fatality or injury during the campaign period, to provide information and seek a response on action taken. Follow up visits will be made to premises as required.

23. Contact records will be used for follow-up as part of the ongoing the Falls from Height Programme later in the year.

24. Formal enforcement action coming out of inspection activity will be in line with HSC Enforcement Policy and the Enforcement Management Model. While WAHR have not banned ladders, inappropriate use will attract a proportionate enforcement response.

Evaluation

25. A full evaluation will take place to test the effectiveness of all aspects of the campaign and feed in to future planning. It will test levels of awareness in the build up and after the main campaign activity and levels of behaviour change at the 2-month stage.

Argument

26. This paper is for information only.

Consultation

27. LACORS, stakeholders from the business sector and trade unions have been consulted in planning the campaign and HSE will be working with these partners to ensure that the key audiences for the campaign are reached.

Presentation

28. Lord Hunt is scheduled to preview the campaign at the Access Industry Forum Conference which is part of the Safety and Health Expo in Birmingham on 10 May 2006. We will be exploring appropriate opportunities to involve Commissioners where we can.

29. The campaign will attract media interest and a public relations strategy is being prepared to provide information about the campaign. Lines to take for staff who may have contact with the media are being prepared and will include a defensive briefing to address recent media activity around ladders being "banned" for some tasks. Other similar issues that detract from the messages of the campaign will be addressed as and when they arise.

Costs and Benefits

30. Four staff years of inspector contact time have been allocated to inspection activity and educational events for the campaign. Local Authority (LA) inspectors will raise falls issues as part of their planned inspection activities.

31. The campaign will contribute to PSA target delivery by increasing awareness of the issues among an estimated 500,000 people during the campaign period and providing better targeting for future programme work.

Financial/Resource Implications for HSE

32. There is a campaign media budget of £1.5m. Inspection and educational events will come from existing HSE and LA resource.

33. Evaluation costs have yet to be finalised, but will be less than 10% of the overall campaign budget.

Other Implications

34. Trade Unions such as TGWU, Amicus and the Communication Workers Union are involved in the campaign and have agreed to distribute campaign material to representatives and raise awareness amongst members of the risks associated with work at height.

35. In Northern Ireland there are plans for targeted inspection activity in June 2006.

Action/ Next Steps

36. This paper is for information only. The Height Aware campaign will take place in May and June 2006. The Commission will be informed of the outcomes of the campaign on completion of the evaluation process.

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