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HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

Future Positioning and Communications Update

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Issue

1. An invitation to help shape a new corporate communications strategy including the role of the HSC and one of a series of regular updates on communications developments.

Timing

2. We shall present a renewed and refreshed communications strategy to HSC for sign off in January or February 2008, depending on timescales for DWP decisions on resource allocations and the development of the HSE Business Plan.

Recommendation

3. That the Health and Safety Commission:
 - advise on corporate communications aims (paragraph 9), positioning (paragraph 10) and messages (paragraphs 11);
 - note recent communications activity (Annex 1);
 - consider how they can best support work with corporate stakeholders; and give guidance/input on future direction for the communications strategy.

Background

4. Our current communications strategy, agreed by HSC in February 2004, has provided a framework from April 2004 – March 2008 within which we have pushed communications high up the organisational agenda.
5. Commissioners were last updated on communications in May [HSC/07/39]. Annex 1 covers the first two quarters of the financial year (April – September 2007).

Current Corporate Communications Strategy

7. Colin Douglas will illustrate key changes and assess progress in corporate communications in a presentation to Commissioners on 6 November. Current objectives are summarised below with a brief reminder of some key work done.

Promote the case for sensible health and safety

- 2 major national campaigns to promote the benefits of health and safety
- 3 large scale campaigns to tackle the widespread 'difficult' issues - Backs and Slips and Trips - raising awareness of risks among large numbers (130,000 for Backs 2006)
- hazard and sector specific campaigns – hairdressers, asbestos, falls, workplace transport, motor vehicle repair- achieving encouraging results
- sensible risk campaign building good media coverage

Present a clear picture of our role and priorities

- Research shows that key stakeholder perceptions about HSE are positive and clear however 'elf and safety' stories continue to devalue the broader 'health and safety' brand, by blaming 'health and safety' for actions which are taken by others for other reasons.
- corporate stakeholders identified and relationship management introduced – a good match between how they see us and how we want to be seen
- improved ratings of HSE by MPs – up from 29% who rate us well to 42%
- Web traffic up by 25% in last year continuing the trend of the previous 2 years
- Commissioners speaking at some 60 events over the past year

Help build and solidify partnerships

- stakeholder engagement techniques spreading within the organisation
- safety organisations publicly defending HSE and sensible health and safety
- Local Authorities participation adding significant value to campaigns
- COI research shows corporate stakeholders trust HSC/E and believe our communications have improved

Put in place effective internal communications

- Internal communications strategy in place
- internal communications channels – Express, e-express, Board visits – well accepted
- but continuing concerns to improve briefings and information

Establish a strong and dynamic strategic communications approach

- new branding consistently applied to all communications
- internal planning, coordination and clearance arrangements embedding well
- evaluation, management information, and pre campaign research delivering valuable data on understanding and attitudes to health and safety
- agreed strapline to unify safety communications

Develop a communications culture

- Understanding of how communications works and what it can do has taken hold in key parts of the organisation
- Investment in improving communications skills has been part of the story

A new Communications Strategy

8. Our wider business objectives and financial settlement will determine what our priorities will be over future years and how much we can afford to do. An internal stock take exercise to assess our strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats will help us take full account of lessons learned over recent years in shaping new objectives but it is too early to develop them in detail. Higher level strategic questions of aims, positioning and messages need not await our settlement.

Aims

9. What do we want our communications to do for us? HSE's strategy for 2010 and beyond defined its role as 'an intervention in its own right'. Effective communication remains essential to our delivery of improved health and safety. To achieve this we propose strategic aims which commit all of us to:

- Use communications to:
 - raise awareness of acceptable health and safety standards and
 - where necessary change attitudes and behaviour to improve health and safety;
- Secure a high level of commitment from strategic partners to deliver health and safety priorities;
- Build and defend the reputation of HSC/E;
- Engage with HSE staff at all levels to enable us to do our jobs to the best of our ability and ensure we are all working together and focused on priorities.

Positioning

10. Our objectives will flow directly from these aims but will be defined also by decisions about what kind of organisation we want to be. We are seen as a safety regulator. Without losing sight of this important role, we believe that we must continue to broaden our positioning by doing the following:

- emphasising our health contribution as well as safety.
- continue to reposition HSE as 'adviser' as well as 'enforcer'.
- be clear on the balance between defending HSE and 'health and safety'.
- when resources are known, be clear on the balance between improving services to existing customers and reaching out to capture new audiences.

Messages

11. The corporate messages we propose set out our role and summarise the health and safety 'proposition' for Britain by addressing the 'what's in it for all of us?' questions

- i. HSC/E champions sensible health and safety – taking steps that are proportionate to the risk and potential harm.
- ii. Sensible health and safety is about saving lives, not stopping people living. Each week it prevents five deaths and 300 serious injuries, and every day it avoids 500 cases of work related ill health.

- iii. Good health and safety is good for business, with the failure to manage these risks costing employers around £4 billion every year.

Below them we shall use the strapline 'Don't chance it, change it' to unify appropriate health and safety campaigns.

Commissioners' role

12. Commissioners as ambassadors will continue to make a significant contribution to all our aims. They can add particular value to efforts to forging strategic partnerships, making our case with corporate stakeholders and defending our reputation, particularly against wrongly attributed claims.

13. Each corporate stakeholder is assigned a champion from among HSE officials but there are no formal arrangements for bringing Commissioners' skills and contacts to bear on this work. We would welcome a view from Commissioners on how they might best contribute.

14. As we adopt a more proactive media approach and move towards the merger of HSC/E it is proposed that the Chair becomes the lead public voice for the organisation. The new Chair has expressed the need to continue improve the reputation of HSC/E and is very willing to lead any new initiative in this area. To improve reputation we need to;

- actively detach HSE from "elf and safety" messages through rebuttal and increase coverage for sensible risk messages, The sensible risk plan, currently being developed, will play an important part in this activity,
- work to associate "health and safety" messages with public good rather than bureaucratic trivia. This will take increased effort to ensure others in prominent positions speak up for health and safety and mobilise a wider range of partners to rebut 'elf and safety' stories, and,
- publicising high profile enforcement activity which will need field staff to get the necessary human interest angle, statistics and clear statement of what dutyholders are to do to avoid prosecution.

This activity will need close scrutiny to manage the risks associated with being drawn into defending "health and safety" in areas where it is seen to be damaged beyond repair or where our rebuttals might be perceived to be shifting the blame elsewhere.

Consultation

15. Judith Donovan, CDS and PFPD have been consulted. We have also drawn on views from programme and director managers across the organisation on progress and future directions for communications.

Presentation

16. A new corporate communications strategy in the New Year will be disseminated to key stakeholders – including Ministers, and Heads of Communication of organisations with an interest in health and safety for example. It will be an important vehicle for communicating internally on future communications priorities.

Costs and Benefits

17. The estimated salary and associated costs for communication staff in HSE is some £3.8m (£1.54m for Communications Directorate and £2.25m for CDS) for the current year with an information and promotion budget of £8.7m, of which there is a projected spend of £7.5m in 2007/8.

Financial/Resource Implications for HSE

18. The financial allocations for 2008/9 and beyond to support the new communications strategy may not be known before [Spring 2008]. Latest spend figures for the first 6 months (April – September) on communications:

- total spend on publications, publicity and promotional activity was £1,279k against a budget of £8,767k.
- staff costs (payroll, travel, administrative costs) for Communications Directorate were £657k and for Communications Delivery Service £965K.
- income generated between April and September was £2,002k (£1,746k of priced publications, £256k royalties, copyright fees and priced conferences).

Environmental Implications

19. None

Other Implications

20. None

Action

21. HSC to advise on corporate communications aims, positioning and messages; and consider their role in work with corporate stakeholders.

Communications Update April – October 2007

Background

1. This annex reports our main communications activities in the first two quarters of 2006/7 against communications objectives in the current corporate communications strategy - one of a series of regular updates to HSC since February 2004.

Promoting the case for health and safety and raising our profile

Campaigns

Our first campaign of the year was a Workplace Transport initiative focused on falls from vehicles – analysis of audience influence led to the conclusion that we would get more by targeting manufacturers and purchasing decision makers rather than drivers. The first phase in May was a direct mail shot to manufacturers and suppliers. This was followed up with advertising and wider direct mail aimed at 14,000 fleet managers / vehicle buyers and at 24,000 site managers (16,000 of them in construction). We will report results when the evaluation is complete in the New Year.

We also ran a "clear the air" campaign in motor vehicle repair to promote awareness of clearance times in spray booths and used direct mail and advertising. We organised and helped publicise the first of five master classes to kick off the next phase of the stress implementation programme and supported some modest activity on back pain for European week of health and safety.

Publications

We updated Approved Codes of Practice or guidance on Asbestos, Welfare at work, Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations, Warehousing and Fairgrounds. Focus group research helps us tailor guidance for specific audiences – for example our advice on tackling work related stress.

Joint guidance – our advice on REACH chemical registration framework with DEFRA and HSE-IOD guidance on leadership for directors and board members – can deliver new distribution channels, wider buy in and text well tailored to particular audiences.

We published a series of Buncefield Investigation Board reports and Buncefield Standards Task Group's standards for fuel storage and to very tight timescales and a high standard a report into biosecurity breaches at Pirbright

Information for vulnerable workers included joint HSE/DRC guidance for employers of disabled people in easy read format, with large print and audio versions to follow. Guidance aimed at migrant workers in agriculture and food processing in a range of eastern European languages will shortly be supplemented with information for their employers. A picture based pocket card for waste and recycling workers on hygiene adopts a cartoon based easy read approach.

Our annual report was laid before Parliament in June and work on the rest of our reporting package continues with the HSC Performance Report 2007 and 2006/7 statistics highlights due shortly. We have increased subscriptions to the HSE Newsletter to 5000 – alongside regular news, prosecutions, ‘what’s new’ online and from HSE books, we featured sensible risk, directors’ responsibilities and campaigns – and it is raising £60k a year.

Vulnerable workers needs have been addressed – with good use made of our Diversity toolkit to help decisions on when translations are useful – with information in a range of east European languages and recent advice to waste and recycling workers delivered in picture format for those with limited literacy/English language. Joint HSE/DRC guidance for employers of disabled people was delivered in easy read format, with large print and audio versions to follow.

Events and conferencing

We continue to meet our stakeholders face to face: we attended conferences of the Chartered Institutes of Waste Management (CIWM), Environmental Health (CIEH), and Professional Development (CIPD), and ran a conference stand and plenary session at Public Sector People Management. We highlighted working at height and manual handling at The Royal and Highland agriculture show and delivered the shows in England and Wales too. At ROSPA’s Health and Safety Expo we supported HSE speakers from an exhibition space providing an opportunity to speak to HSE staff.

Web

We usually do well in a survey which benchmarks the accessibility and build quality of Government sites and in October we again made top place, this time with a perfect 10 out of 10 score in all 5 test categories. Two seminars to brief staff on online accessibility and improved access from handheld devices and browsers contributed to this success as did a lot of other backroom work to update access for changing technologies and standards.

A model microsite in development and online style guide now completed will illustrate good practice when a new content management system – finally approved in September - transfers ownership of web pages to authors. This major change will require a detailed implementation plan to prepare staff.

Our corporate strategy has been to drive traffic to the web. HSE’s Website has become the destination site for workplace health and safety in Great Britain. It regularly receives more than 1.5 million visits per month making it the busiest occupational health website in Europe and second only to OSHA (US) worldwide.

New techniques and services are helping to increase traffic. For example, e-bulletins are proving highly popular – subscriptions now up from 72k to 112k with less than 1% dropout. We are testing new media approaches ready for any corporate decisions to go down new paths – podcasts, SMS services – and have capability in viral ‘email a friend’ and blog techniques. Our rankings on Google are good and improving fast on other engines.

Work to develop the web gets high priority - 33 new web microsities and 18 Intranet sites have been built or revamped.

Media relations

A media breakfast in July attracted some 30 journalists who followed up with requests for interviews and articles – we were particularly pleased with a case study on health and safety saving lives by the Guardian's Matt Keating.

Corporate issues – particularly HSC/E's role as enforcer/regulator - were prominent in both quarters which saw the launch of the fatal statistics and publication of key investigation reports. The latter kept accident and incident investigation as the leading reported issue throughout the period. The impact of external reports (CCA, UCATT) critical of HSE's prosecution activity was reflected in HSE's leading negative message switching from its usual 'overzealous' regulator to a 'hesitant' enforcer for a short period prior to the July launch of the 06/07 fatal statistics, with the sharp rise in construction fatalities attracting most attention. This, and scrutiny of HSE resources, culminated in Geoffrey Podger appearing on R4 File on Four broadcast in July that centred on HSE. On the proactive front, promotion of the end of tenure of Sir Bill Callaghan as HSC Chair secured interview coverage in the Times and Daily Telegraph alongside key specialist publications. Sir Bill took the opportunities to push sensible risk messages, and covered topics such as partnership working and the HSC/E merger.

Alongside the rise in fatalities, a series of well-reported incidents (London building and crane collapses) and the launch of new construction regulations saw that sector retain its high showing in specialist/trade press. HSE's ladder exchange initiative, launched in summer with a proactive push, was prominent in the same media. The lack of any other prominent campaign kept the ratio of positive: negative articles in the regional press steady at 11.9:1.

Reports published following three investigations - the Barrow Legionella outbreak; BBC presenter Richard Hammond's crash and the Pirbright Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak - secured positive and extensive coverage for HSE across all media. HSE's involvement at Pirbright increased August volumes by almost 60%, and Geoffrey Podger secured interviews with national media including Channel 4 News. In August the first critical reporting of HSE's investigation into the Glasgow ICL explosion appeared.

Judith Hackitt's letter in October to Local Authority Chief Executives and the Association of British Insurers, asked for their help in ensuring that unnecessary risk aversion did not interfere with Remembrance Day parades. A press release to follow up with quotes from Judith and Paul Coen, the Local Government Association's Chief Executive, was picked up in Telegraph piece.

Judith Hackitt was interviewed for Tonight with Trevor McDonald (broadcast on Monday 22 October) as part of an item on the application of health and safety requirements to workers in the emergency services. Judith set out the balance to be struck in ensuring that the safety of emergency service workers is adequately protected whilst also recognising the unusual operational demands that they face when responding to emergencies where they are called upon to save lives.

Engaging stakeholders

A successful summer reception, addressed by Minister Anne McGuire MP, and hosted by Judith Donovan on behalf of Bill Callaghan, was held on the Terrace at the House of Commons in July. The reception was well attended, and evidently appreciated, by Parliamentarians and stakeholders. The Westminster Newsletter continues to be well received by Parliamentarians. The July issue covered the reformed gas safety regime,

HSE campaigns and the merger of HSC/HSE. Another issue is due in November. Fringe meetings were held at the Party Conferences on the topic of workplace stress and chaired by Commissioners (Liberal Democrats - Judith Donovan, Labour - Danny Carrigan and Conservatives - Sandy Blair). Judith Hackitt attended the fringe meeting at the Liberal Democrat Conference. One to one meetings with MPs also took place at these events. The recent MPs' survey showed a disappointing drop in their view of our effectiveness. We will be watching this closely and redoubling our efforts to ensure that MPs/Peers are kept well-informed about our work.

Building Partnerships

Internal Lead Contacts and Senior Champions have been appointed for each of HSE's eighteen key corporate stakeholders to act as a focus for our relationships with them. In order to assist better stakeholder engagement planning, we have worked with COI and other government departments to develop some stakeholder mapping and management software which will be made available throughout the organisation.

Internal Communications

The Board agreed an internal communications strategy and work on a new 'Big Picture' for staff started. The internal communications team have supported work on major organisational change projects – e- HR, 'How and Where We Work' relocation project, work recording, Making Better Use of Science, Diversity – and advised programme teams developing communications plans for Disease reduction, Musculo-skeletal disorders, enforcement programme, and Better regulation. A major new Whitehall initiative to transform government internal communications into 'employee engagement' has also absorbed some resource. HSE will help design, test and embed new approaches.

SM. 23.10.07