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HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE Quarter 4 2006/7 (Jan – March 2007)

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Issue

1. This update on communications activity in the final quarter of 2006/7 is one of a quarterly series.

Timing

2. Routine

Recommendation

3. Members of the Commission are invited to:
 - note recent communications activities
 - agree a standard wording about the human benefits of health and safety improvements that will form part of HSC and HSE's key messages (see paragraphs 6 – 8).

Background

4. The Communication strategy agreed by HSC is built on objectives and milestones to:
 - Improve health and safety by promoting the case for health and safety
 - Present a clear picture of HSC/E's role and focus
 - Build partnerships
 - Put in place effective internal communications
 - Establish a strategic communications approach
 - Develop a communications culture

Promoting the case for health and safety and raising our profile

5. Our ability to distance ourselves from criticisms of focusing on trivia and stopping normal activities would be enhanced if we can describe how much harm has been avoided by effective health and safety management. A standard wording on these human benefits of health and safety would make for consistency.

6. We have developed a description which takes account of changes in the pattern of employment, and does not attribute these improvements specifically to HSC/E or any other specific part of the health and safety system – but rather to ‘improvements in health and safety’. The proposed wording of the statement is as follows:

Over the past thirty years, health and safety in British workplaces has significantly improved. As a result, every week the lives of at least four employees are being saved and more than 300 serious injuries avoided. Also, every day 500 fewer workers identify ill-health problems related to work compared to 15 years ago.

7. The basis for this statement is as follows:

- i. There were 651 fatalities to employees in 1974, excluding health, education and public administration. The corresponding figure for 2005/06 is 155 (and is provisional). There are 496 fewer employee fatalities in 2005/06 compared with 1974. This reduction is equivalent to 9.5 fatalities per 7 day week (i.e. at least 9). Work by the Institute of Employment Research suggests that half of the reduction in serious injury is accounted for by a shift to lower risk sectors. Taking this result to apply to fatalities, we can assume that half of the reduction reflects the shift to lower risk sectors, leaving 4.8 to reflect improvements within sectors. Thus we can reasonably say that ‘...the lives of at least four employees are being saved...every week’.
- ii. The furthest we can go back with reliable statistics on ‘serious’ or reportable injuries is to 1986/7, when there were 179,706 such injuries reported. In 2005/6, there were 146,076 reported. By attributing half of this 33,630 reduction to health & safety improvements, we end up with a figure of 46 injuries avoided every day (16,815 / 365) or 322 every week. Thus we can reasonably say ‘...more than 300 serious injuries avoided every week’.
- iii. Finally, estimates of the incidence of work related ill health are available from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). Incidence in a year means cases where sufferers first recognised their illness in that year. The estimate of incidence for 2005/06 is 523,000 people. LFS data is available from 1990. Incidence was not available then but prevalence (includes cases where the ill health was recognised in previous years) is available. We can estimate incidence in 1990 from the steady relationship between incidence and prevalence since 2000. The estimate is 760,000 in 1990. Thus, there are an estimated 237,000 fewer cases in 2005/06 compared with 1990. These estimates are subject to sampling variation associated with a survey. As a result, we estimate that the reduction could vary from 187,500 to 286,500

(the 95% confidence interval). The lower figure is equivalent to 514 fewer cases per calendar day in 2005/06 compared with 1990. Thus, there are at least 500 fewer cases of ill health recognised per day in 2005/06 compared with fifteen years earlier.

8. Injury and fatality figures relate to 'employees' not 'workers' as we do not have historical data on worker accidents. A cautious approach has been adopted in estimating these figures. This allows us to defend them comfortably.

Media relations

7. With no major campaigns launched in this period the ratio of positive to negative articles in the regional press looked more like the norm at 11:1 (compared to the unusually positive 46:1 ratio in the previous quarter). Campaigns are a major driver of positive coverage – for example, the coverage for the dermatitis campaign was 97% positive and 3% neutral. Proactive work included preparing the ground for the Ministerial announcement on the outcome of the gas safety review, the revised construction legislative package and consultation on land use planning and societal risk. We also pushed corporate messages with key officials quoted in news releases reporting enforcement activity, investigations and presentational events.

8. HSC/E's usual critics – certain commentators and feature writers – were quiet, and rebuttals focused on sensible risk messaging and defending HSE's reputation as national newspapers picked up on our own health and safety incident rate. The specialist press, especially in construction, continued to cover HSE resources.

9. The Chief Executive responded, through interviews on Radio 4 Today programme, BBC Radio 5Live, BBC Breakfast TV and BBC News 24, to a UCAFF report criticising HSE's prosecution decisions around fatalities in the construction sector.

Campaigns

10. Evaluation from three campaigns came available in time to inform plans for 2007/8 initiatives. Backs 2006 increased awareness among employees by 9% (from 23% to 32%) and similar for employers. This result is broadly in line with other HSE and government advertising campaigns. Behaviour change is difficult to pin down. 16% of those who recognised some part of the campaign claimed to have changed their behaviour as a result – i.e. 6% of all employers. Over half who recognised any of the campaign said they had not taken or did not intend to take action.

11. The 'Bad Hand Day' campaign (see HSC/07/25) run in Autumn 2006 to reduce hairdressers' dermatitis was spontaneously recalled by 55% of salon owner/managers and with prompting by 70%. Campaign visuals and simple messages (wear gloves, dry hands) were well received and the evaluation indicates that Local Authority inspection visits pushed up recall for the campaign. We shall rerun a hairdressing campaign in 2007/8 and extend the dermatitis initiative with a pilot in the catering sector. Learnings from evaluation include a need to challenge the low priority given to dermatitis and reservations about wearing gloves, and 'disorganisation' in small firms where no-one has responsibility for taking action

12. Our 'Don't Take a Gamble' campaign to reduce asbestos risk was aimed at maintenance and repair workers and those responsible for them (a population of some 1.8 million workers and 80K duty holders). Post campaign, about 38% of duty holders recalled the campaign when prompted.

13. In future asbestos campaigns we shall want to do more to engage with peripatetic workers, target smaller companies with different communications, avoid mixed messages of 'stop and report' and 'work safely with asbestos' and tackle complacency that asbestos is yesterday's risk.

14. We are exploring the feasibility of a common strapline for all our campaigns. A number of approaches have been tested – 'Don't chance it, change it'; 'Assess it, Address it'; and a celebrity/personality 'guide to the workplace'. We shall report in the next update.

Corporate Stakeholders

15. Our work with key corporate stakeholders is critical in raising our profile and reputation. In order to develop this area of work, we have recently remapped and reprioritized our stakeholders. Results of the latest COI research to determine stakeholder perceptions of HSE are positive. Stakeholders are confident in the ability of HSE to champion safe and healthy working practices, we are trusted to perform our function and our stakeholders feel that our relationships with them are good. They feel that our Communications continue to improve.

16. One of Lord McKenzie's first engagements as Health and Safety Minister was to chair our annual Parliamentary Friends of Health and Safety session in the House of Commons at the end of January. This was well attended, with a lively discussion following Bill Callaghan's briefing to Parliamentarians. The January 2007 issue of the Westminster Newsletter, giving the latest health and safety statistics, was sent to all MPs and to selected Peers. Our 'effectiveness' rating with MPs is steadily rising.

17. The Chair hosted 2 open Commission meetings and the Parliamentary reception for Friends of Health and Safety. He addressed health and safety forums in the Electricity Industry and the Wates Group and visited a Bow site. Sandy Blair launched North West Workplace and spoke at a workshop in Bedfordshire. Margaret Burns visited Devonport and the Wood Group and Liz Snape attended ROSPA's annual awards. Judith Donovan chaired the Small Business Trade Association Forum and Hugh Robertson addressed IOSH. Danny Carrigan attended a health and safety event in Aberdeen.

Internal Communications

18. Results of the 2006 staff survey provided feedback on the functioning of internal communications channels: Express enjoys a regular readership of 83% of staff while responses on 'exchange', the corporate briefing system, suggested a need for more work to assess its effectiveness.

19. The Board considered our strategic approach to internal communications at a March awayday and will discuss an Internal Communications Strategy at the May Board meeting.

20. Internal Communications priorities were work with project teams to develop communications plans and keep staff informed on initiatives on Making Best Use of Science, How and Where We Work, a new staff suggestion scheme launched in April and rollout of the new staff directory.

Strategic Communications

21. We secured good communications plans for 2007/8 work from programme and project teams with clear objectives, target audiences and messages. We encouraged teams to focus on fewer larger initiatives and to reduce numbers of messages aimed at single audiences.

Developing our channels of communication – HSE online

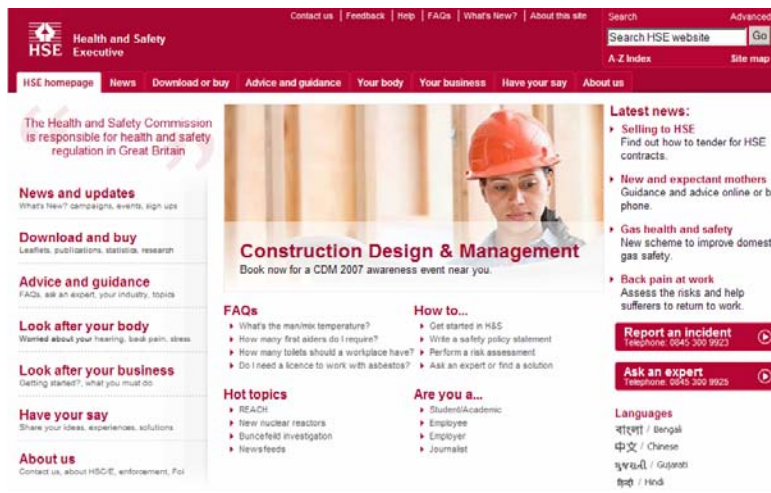
22. March 2007 was the busiest month for our HSE Website to date with 1,532,832 visits – nearly quarter of a million more than the same month last year. The table shows the most popular ‘topics’ in the last 30 days. Although people are visiting more frequently the visits tend to be shorter. Broadband is a contributing factor - making it easier and quicker to 'dip in and out' online.

Top 20 ... (Last 30 days)

Topic	Visitors	Visits	Page Requests
1 stress	26,975	32,413	87,354
2 coshh	26,937	29,956	38,175
3 workplacetransport	25,748	28,525	55,726
4 msd	24,072	27,926	71,072
5 comah	23,090	27,598	48,667
6 risk	20,159	23,436	70,254
7 asbestos	18,230	22,654	55,683
8 falls	17,662	21,963	54,289
9 firstaid	17,032	19,439	41,307
10 gas	15,763	17,756	29,359
11 slips	14,522	16,945	44,064
12 electricity	13,880	15,871	35,143
13 mothers newandexi	12,670	14,284	31,038
14 fireandexplosion	11,874	13,461	23,729
15 noise	10,242	12,129	31,447
16 sicknessabsence	7,755	8,501	21,036
17 cdg	7,542	9,097	16,591
18 vibration	7,088	8,678	24,701
19 chip	7,022	7,842	11,616
20 humanfactors	6,269	7,170	12,643

23. More than 50% of adults in the UK now have a Broadband connection from home and over 70% of firms employing 10+ have their own website. So, it's more important than ever to make our Website more useful and usable for new and infrequent users – especially SMEs. We are starting to tackle this in several ways. For example, the new RIDDOR incident reporting site (hse.gov.uk/riddor/) aims to make reporting easier and quicker with a choice of simple reporting methods - emphasising telephone and online.

24. A redesign of HSE's Website is underway with SMEs in mind. The draft design (see left) is based on research findings - and will be road tested around June this year to see if users prefer the new version. The design dedicates areas of the site to advice and guidance, news and updates, getting started etc.



The 'How to' area would, for example, make it easier for SMEs to draft a risk

assessment - and be directed to the appropriate follow-up guidance.

Consultation

21. PEFD, Communications Delivery Service, Secretariat, Neal Stone, HSE Chair.

Presentation

22. This paper sets out proposals for further improving HSC/E's approach to stakeholder engagement. By prioritising some stakeholders, we risk undermining our relationship with others, by implying that we do not value them. That is not our intention. Instead, we need to be clear that we are putting in place additional mechanisms for a limited number of prioritised corporate stakeholders, whilst continuing to work with a wider range through normal business.

Costs and benefits

23. 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

24. Total communications spend on publications, publicity, and promotional activity for the last financial year (excluding Communications Directorate and Delivery Service staff costs) was £8,726K against a budget of £8,438K (an overspend requested and approved by the PEFD).

25. Spend on Communications Directorate staff costs (payroll, travel, administrative costs) for the year was £1,403k and on Communications Delivery

Service £1,834k. Income generated in 2006/7 was £3,851k (£3,352k sale of priced publications and £499k royalties, copyright fees and priced conferences).