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**HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON TOXIC SUBSTANCES**

**Proposals for European Week of Safety and Health 2003 on prevention of risks
caused by dangerous substances**

A paper by Julia Soave

Advisor: John Thompson and Carole Sullivan

Cleared by John Thompson

Issue

1 ACTS' views and support are sought for the European Week for Safety and Health 2003 (EW2003) on the prevention of risks caused by dangerous substances.

Timing

2 Routine. This European Week will be held w/c 13 October 2003.

Recommendation

3 To support EW2003 and its theme and to offer cost-effective ideas on this event.

Background

4 Since 1992, there have been eight European Weeks on Safety and Health. Last year's one was on stress. On 2 December 2002, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work issued a press release about EW2003 on dangerous substances (**Annex 1**). Target groups for the Week's promotional activities include workers and SMEs. An extract from a European Agency paper setting out a strategy for EW2003 is at **Annex 2**.

5 The European Agency makes clear that dangerous substances "represent a vast area of potential risks at work in all sectors. The impact on workers includes occupational diseases such as asthma and dermatitis, cancer, damage to an unborn child or future generations and a variety of negative influences on the well-being of workers, such as effects on the lungs, skin, intestines, nervous and immune systems, heart, kidneys and liver."

6 For EW 2003, the European Agency has taken dangerous substances to mean *“any substance or mixture of substances (in liquid, gas or solid form, including biological agents) posing a risk to workers’ health excluding radioactive materials and substances that are primarily a hazard due to their fire and explosive properties.”*

Argument

7 The Week’s title provides scope for HSE to focus on priority areas. Within Health Directorate, we intend to use the Week to push the new Chemicals Strategy (ACTS/20/2002) and to promote other continuing areas of work. Other parts of HSE and the Health and Safety Laboratory will be formulating their own plans .

- 8 The strategy suggests there should be three major programmes looking at:
- Respiratory diseases (including the existing programme on occupational asthma)
 - Skin diseases
 - Cancer (including the effects of asbestos).

It also seeks to align HSE work more closely to Revitalising Health and Safety and Securing Health Together. It proposes a communication strategy to raise awareness, particularly in SMEs, of the risks from chemicals and dangerous substances.

- 9 Translating this into practical programmes, we are planning initiatives on:
- Occupational asthma, including a new latex toolkit
 - Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Essentials and Electronic COSHH Essentials (e-COSHH)
 - Asbestos
 - CHIP and Safety Data Sheets

These will involve a variety of events and activities, including at least one conference, web sites/pages, guidance, promoting regulatory compliance. Each of these four programmes seeks to target small and medium-sized businesses and to work in partnership with existing or new partners. Details of each of the programmes are at **Annex 3**.

10. ACTS members are invited to consider how they might help with European Week, for example, by engaging with the other Industry Advisory Committees to get them to support these themes and help spread the message. We are also exploring how we can get Local Authorities to play a more prominent role in the Week and have contacted HSE’s Local Authority Unit, who have nominated an EHO to work with us. We would also welcome any advice from ACTS’ LA member on the best way to engage this sector during European Week. **[Refer to paper ACTS/03/2003]**

Communication Plan

11 The European Week will be publicised via a Newsletter and action pack and on the HSE website as well as through stakeholders’ networks. The European Agency in Bilbao will also be publicising EW2003 through its web site and a number of publications and reports.

Evaluation Plan

12 Each of the projects outlines in this paper will be subject to evaluation. HSE will also commission an external evaluation of the impact of EW2003.

Relevant Control Systems

13 N/A

Consultation

14 HSE's Directorate of Information and Advisory Service has set up a standing external Project Board to steer the activities for European Week. A similar paper has been put to the Project Board. HSE is also setting up internal mechanisms to manage the overall project in 2003.

Presentation

15 HSE will seek to maximise effort on EW2003 so that we can make some impact on Revitalising Health and Safety and Securing Health Together targets. We do not intend to hold events that 'preach to the converted'. We know from previous European Weeks that we need to concentrate on making the event attractive to employers, particularly SMEs.

16 We shall adopt a similar approach to that in previous years. A newsletter will be launched at EXPO2003 at the NEC, Birmingham in May 2003. (This will contain feedback from EW2002 as well as information for EW2003). Organisations that decide to run an event during European Week will be invited to report back on what they have done by way of a questionnaire (available in the action pack). Everyone returning a questionnaire will receive a personalised 'participation certificate'. At a later stage, the most imaginative and innovative entries will be invited to an 'awards dinner' and to host or participate in an event.

17 The European Agency usually provides some funding for "Good Practice" awards, but at the time of writing we have no further information on this. This funding has in the past been awarded to either national or transnational projects (the latter involving more than one EU member state).

Costs and Benefits

18 These fall mainly to HSE staff in setting up and managing the Week, including an internal project team and project board. DIAS also runs an external project board and is the interface between HSE and the European Agency. The benefits are harder to quantify, but this is the first time we have been offered an opportunity to raise the profile of "dangerous substances" during a European week. If we start planning this event now, we have a good chance of raising awareness of chemicals and dangerous substances more widely.

Environmental implications

19 These will be addressed as part of the individual projects.

European implications

20 This initiative has been prompted by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work in Bilbao. Under the Italian Presidency, we know there are plans to hold a seminar or conference entitled: "European Week for Health and Safety in the Workplace: the risks deriving from exposure of workers to chemical agents on 2-3 October 2003.

Devolution

21 EW2003 applies to England, Scotland and Wales.

Other implications

22 Plans are still very much at the early stages; a further paper will be put to ACTS' members as EW2003 develops.

Action

- 23 ACTS members are invited to:
- a. Note developments so far;
 - b. Consider what they (as individuals or the organisations they represent) might do to help support this initiative;
 - c. Consider the scope for further cost-effective ways to increase awareness of the potential risks of dangerous substances.

Contact

ACTS Secretariat

Tel: 020 7717 6184

Fax: 020 7717 6190

New chairperson announces Agency plans to target 'Dangerous Substances'

Meeting in Bilbao on 26 and 27 November 2002, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work's Administrative Board has elected Dr Bertil Remaeus as its new chairperson and approved the Agency's work programme for 2003

Dr Bertil Remaeus is the Swedish government representative and leader of the government group on the Agency's Board. He takes over from Mr Luis Lopes, the Portuguese workers' representative. Commenting on his appointment, Dr Remaeus said: "I am very proud to have been entrusted with this responsibility by my colleagues on the Board. The recent publication of the first European Community Strategy on Health and Safety at Work in over a decade makes this a particularly exciting time to take over the reins. The Agency's work programme for 2003, which the Board has just agreed, marks a significant step towards converting that strategy into real advances in safety and health in Europe's workplaces. We plan to build on the success of this year's campaign against occupational stress by widening our aim to cover other important workplace risks such as **dangerous substances** and risk sectors such as fisheries. And we're particularly looking forward to the even greater participation of EEA and EU candidate countries in many of the Agency's activities."

Dangerous substances, fishing, and emerging risks – amongst the priorities for 2003

The Agency's work programme for 2003 will focus on developing the Agency's information services in line with the priorities set out in the Community Strategy for Health and Safety at Work. Besides **dangerous substances** and the fishing sector a special web feature will be set up on safety and health and disability as part of the European Year of the Disabled. The Administrative Board has also approved the setting up of an observatory for new and emerging risks at the workplace and to start preparatory work for the 2004 European Week campaign, which will focus on the construction sector.

Commenting on the outcome of the Board meeting, the **Director of the European Agency, Mr Hans-Horst Konkolewsky**, said: "I am very happy to welcome Bertil Remaeus as Chairperson of the Agency and look forward to working closely with him in promoting the Agency's health and safety activities in 2003. A key activity will be the **European Week on dangerous substances**, which represent a vast area of potential health risks in all sectors. The negative impact on workers health includes asthma and dermatitis, cancer, damage to an unborn child and a variety of negative influences on the well-being of the workers, such as effects on lungs, skin, intestines, nervous and immune systems etc. The European Week 2003 aims at tackling this persistent problem by increasing awareness of the risks and of ensuring that dangerous substances are, whenever possible, substituted for safer alternatives or if that's not possible always handled with care." END

European Week 2003: Prevention of risks caused by dangerous substances**1. Introduction**

The 'European Week for Safety and Health at Work' is a decentralised campaign run in all Member States to address a specific issue relating to occupational safety and health. In 2003, the theme for European Week will be 'Prevention of risks from dangerous substances'. The Agency's approach will be to build on the campaign model developed over the last three years. As in 2002, Focal Points will receive 'seed money' for the funding of European Week activities in their Member States. Member States were asked to comment on some initial proposals for European Week, and these views have been taken into account in the preparation of this paper. In particular, the Agency is looking less at specific substances or sectors, rather to focus the week at European Level on the communication of OSH information on Dangerous Substances.

The European Week Campaign is primarily concerned with the provision of factual information, particularly to those operating at workplace level (e.g. Enterprises, Intermediaries). However, in the magazine product below and the closing event, European level political and technical debate will be covered.

The Agency will liaise where possible with other Directorates General and Agencies (for example, The Environment Agency, DG Environment, DG Sanco) and will take on board relevant outcomes of the Advisory Committee discussions if they are communicated in time to the Agency.

1.1 The Subject Area

Dangerous substances represent a vast area of potential risks at work in all sectors. The impact on workers includes occupational diseases such as asthma and dermatitis, cancer, damage to an unborn child or future generations and a variety of negative influences on the well-being of workers, such as effects on the lungs, skin, intestines, nervous and immune systems, heart, kidneys and liver.

For European Week 2003 (EW 2003), dangerous substances will be taken to mean *any substance or mixture of substances (in liquid, gas or solid form, including biological agents) posing a risk to workers' health excluding radioactive materials and substances that are primarily a hazard due to their fire and explosive properties.*

1.2 Aims

- The aims of the European Week 2003 are:
- To contribute to a reduction in the number of workers suffering ill health effects arising out of their exposure to dangerous substances at work;
- To promote awareness of the hazards and risks of dangerous substances and to inform end users of the safe handling of substances;

- To communicate relevant information to those involved in production, supply, handling and use of dangerous substances; and
- To minimise the risks to workers arising out of the use of dangerous substances, particularly by providing information relating to the elimination and substitution of substances.
- To support the EU activities, policies and initiatives in this area.

These aims will be achieved by:

- Raising awareness of known and new hazardous substance risks in the workplace;
- Promoting action by enterprises (including those supplying substances) in reducing the risks to workers' health arising from the use of dangerous substances in the workplace; and
- Stimulating discussions on how to contribute to further development of research in this field especially on how to fill gaps within the research area on dangerous substances.

1.3 Target Groups

The Agency plans a wide range of products and activities relating to EW 2003. The majority of the products will be targeted at what the Community Strategy calls the 'end users'. This is understood to mean that EW 2003 should be targeted in particular at persons exposed to dangerous substances, or those involved in the implementation of occupational safety and health (OSH) measures at workplace level (including the environmental area). Primary target groups include:

- Employers
- Worker safety representatives, and workers in a wide range of sectors, and
- Intermediaries such as social partners (e.g. Union officials, persons from industry organisations, labour inspectors, public authorities, safety practitioners, and persons in prevention services).

Material may also be of use to those in the chemical sector involved in the manufacture, supply, and distribution of dangerous substances.

However, these are not the only important groups involved in the use of dangerous substances and prevention of risks to workers' health. Other target groups for some of the EW 2003 campaign material will be:

- Persons involved in policy making in the field of dangerous substances, whether at local, regional, national, or supranational level; and
- Persons involved in relevant research in the field of dangerous substances.

The Agency will also look to promote the Week at EU level through relevant European bodies (e.g. the European Environment Agency, Chemical Sector Industry Groups, and relevant parts of the Commission) with the aim of maximising the dissemination of information to the target groups.

Occupational asthma: general

1. We are planning a two day, high level conference on occupational asthma for either 14/15 October or 15/16 October. Following the successful conference on stress during EW2002, we will again be organising this one in partnership with the Professional Organisations in Occupational Safety and Health (POOSH) group. This will secure the involvement of twelve of the major organisations involved in occupational health and safety in Great Britain. The event will be held in the London area and we are currently seeking a suitable venue. Speakers have yet to be identified but we will be seeking prominent people in their respective fields.

Occupational asthma and allergic diseases: Latex toolkit

2. Following an idea put forward by the Latex Allergy Support Group, HSE and other partners (e.g. Royal College of Nursing, Department of Health, National Patients Support Agency and manufacturing industries) are putting together an educational toolkit. This can be used by suitably trained people to disseminate widely the potential hazards of using latex gloves and other products and what can be done to promote safe working methods.
3. The toolkit will comprise literature about allergic diseases, latex specific issues (most particularly latex gloves), posters, model policies, teaching tools and guidance on purchasing strategies. The kits will be made available on CD, through the internet and in hard copy.
4. We intend to launch the toolkit during EW2003. In addition HSE is developing a new policy on use of latex gloves which will be incorporated into HSE's guidance on latex and which will be launched at the same time. A press release will be issued covering both topics.

COSHH Essentials and e-COSHH*Guidance sheets*

5. COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) Essentials provides advice on controlling the use of chemicals for a range of common tasks, eg mixing, or drying. It was developed by the HSE, in collaboration with the TUC and CBI, originally in paper version. In April 2002, HSE successfully launched Phase 1 of an interactive website with electronic COSHH Essentials (e-COSHH) The website takes users through a number of steps and asks for information about their tasks and chemicals. We have had very encouraging statistics on use of the system, and are introducing additional guidance sheets for launch during EWHS 2003.
6. The guidance will include:

- process generated substances found in rubber processing, foundry working and working with wood;
- guidance on the top three causes of occupational asthma - isocyanates in the motor vehicle repair industry, wood dust (included already in process generated substances guidance) and flour;
- guidance on hazards in premises inspected by Local Authorities e.g. hairdressers, dry cleaners, retail outlets etc.

Plans for launch are still under consideration. We are probably not aiming for a high profile, ministerial launch as for Phase 1 but would certainly aim to promote phase 2 at other events during the week. This will be accompanied by a press release.

General promotion of e-COSHH

7. Linked to the work on COSHH guidance notes, we also plan to use the week to increase awareness of e-COSHH essentials amongst our target audience, i.e. small and medium sized businesses and micro businesses. We plan to do this by targeting employers through using intermediaries, Small Business Service (DTI) and others. Our aim is to increase the number of online risk assessments during EW2003 and in the following weeks.

Asbestos

Introduction

8. Asbestos-related diseases represent the UK's biggest occupational health killer. Some 3,000 people currently die each year from such diseases. Research suggests that 25% of these deaths are people who once worked in the building/maintenance trades and often would have worked unknowingly on or near to materials containing asbestos.
9. The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002, (October 2002) introduced an explicit duty to manage the risk from asbestos in premises; and aimed to significantly reduce the number of people exposed to asbestos fibres in non-domestic premises. The duty requires those with a contractual obligation for the maintenance and/or repair of premises e.g. employer, landlord, managing agent, to assess whether their premises contain asbestos, assess its condition and then record the information. They then have to prepare a plan for managing the risk.
10. The duty to manage regulation has an 18-month lead-in period ending in May 2004. It is a major task getting the message out to duty holders with responsibility for about 500,000 workplace premises that may contain asbestos. In October 2001, HSE embarked on a 5 year campaign to promote awareness of and compliance with the new duty. The first two years focus primarily on awareness-raising initiatives.
11. The campaign's target audience is vast and diverse. It became evident that to make any significant inroads into its ambitious programme the HSE would need to engage the support of others to cascade campaign messages. In

response to our plea for assistance, 1,500 organisations committed themselves to joining the HSE as Partners in the Campaign, with this number growing daily. However, our Partner network does not provide a true reflection of the potential vast level of interest in the asbestos issue, a potential that we will seek to realise through various Campaign initiatives during EW2003.

12. HSE is looking to its Partners to continue to organise and deliver a programme of Asbestos Workshops and seminars. These events are aimed at providing details of the new legislative requirements, together with the option of providing practical help on the means of compliance, to those with responsibilities under the new duty. The events use packages of material (Presenter's Pack and Conference Pack) prepared by HSE.
13. The Presenter's Pack is a boxed priced pack of resource material including slides, supporting script and delegate material, distributed by HSE Books. The free Conference Pack provides an alternative reduced set of slides and script supporting the delivery of awareness style events to duty holders. All the material has been prepared with flexibility in mind, for different audiences and presenters..
14. An integral part of the Campaign's communication strategy is its Asbestos Campaign web page. This provides a further means of raising awareness of the new duty to manage requirements and supports HSE's Partners by way of updated information on the Campaign.
15. FOD is actively participating in the awareness elements of the strategy, together with the planned phase two initiatives that focus on targeted support to duty holders on compliance. The phase two initiative is scheduled to be introduced from April 2003. We are seeking a similar level of support from Local Authority EHO's.

What we intend to do during EW2003

16. We will be linking with HSE's FOD and Local Authorities to encourage a co-ordinated promotion of the Asbestos campaign messages.
17. Dutyholders are being encouraged to begin implementation now of the duty to manage asbestos (see paras 14 and 15). EW2003 coincides with our intended 'mid term' push to encourage a self analysis from dutyholders of where they are at with compliance and also to stimulate action where appropriate through:
 - Conference for key players, including Asbestos specific satellite events e.g. conferences/seminars/workshops delivered by our Partners
 - Articles in technical and in-house journals (the latter could be achieved through our partners)
 - Asbestos campaign web page
 - Promotion of best practice – case studies (free leaflet/presentation material/web page)

Targets

18. We aim to target:
 - Duty holders and those with responsibilities under the new duty to manage;

- Potential intermediaries with the aim of encouraging their participation as Partners;
- Representative groups in a position to cascade HSE's messages to associated members;
- Particular emphasis on SMEs;
 - Groups of potentially key influencers e.g. Insurance Industry.

How will we do this?

19. We intend to:

- Promote the Web site through the established Asbestos Campaign page and the proposed European Week site;
- Use the established Asbestos Campaign newsletter;
- Provide material for others to distribute at events;
- Produce new material/refine existing material linking the Asbestos Campaign with EW2003 e.g. Posters, leaflets, slide presentations;
- Provide case studies to promote the benefits of compliance with the regulation;
- Promote the concept of Employee Health and Safety Events possibly using a modified version of the guidance material produced for last year's 'Showing Off – organising safety events';
- Contribute to any planned Agency publication promoting the Euro Week activities. The Magazine could provide the opportunity of promoting our Campaign approach etc. (same for other topics);
- Key event at a prestigious venue inviting leading figures to deliver key speeches to delegates representing major industries;
- Seek ways of getting details of best practice from practitioners. The aim would be to distribute the details through a glossy publication . Current ideas are that we could either use EW 2003 to encourage participation in the initiative or alternatively to have completed initial work beforehand and deliver the 'glossy publication' during EW2003.

Likely outcomes

20. The likely outcomes for this initiative include:

- Raised general awareness of the duty to manage asbestos to a wide audience encouraging a heightened level of understanding amongst those with duties under the legislation;
- Ideally some evidence of sustained co-operation beyond the EW2003 experience;
- Positive response from duty holders on our campaign messages revolving around HSE's expectations on compliance with the new duty during the 18 month lead-in period;
- An increase in the size of the Partner network;
- Gained support from Partners to participate in a coordinated programme of events during the week.

The Chemicals (Hazard Information and Packaging for Supply) Regulations 2002 (CHIP3) and Safety Data Sheets

21. Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) are often known as 'COSHH sheets'. They are used as a major source of information in carrying out COSHH assessments.

The Chemicals (Hazard Information and Packaging for Supply) Regulations 2002 (CHIP 3) specify the contents and layout of an SDS. CHIP 3 has given effect to an amendment to the SDS Directive whose main purposes were to:

- require SDSs to be made available for some non-classified preparations; and
- specify contents and layout with a view to improving the clarity and accuracy of SDSs.

22. CHIP 3 was introduced in July 2002. It requires suppliers of chemicals (substances and preparations) to classify them for their hazardous effects in accordance with specified criteria, and to inform recipients by means of labels and safety data sheets. By October 2003 the Regulations will have been in force for 15 months, so this will be a suitable time to consolidate/share best practice
23. For EW2003, we will firstly be seeking views from the Standing Committee on Hazard Information and Packaging (SCHIP) , and trade associations and bodies with a known interest in safety data sheets. (SCHIP is a standing Committee of the HSC's Advisory Committee on Toxic Substances). The trade associations include the Chemical Industries Association, the British Association for Chemical Specialities, the British Coatings Federation and the UK Cleaning Products Industry Association. We would also be looking to other bodies (eg the Chemical Hazards Communication Society, the National Chemical Emergency Centre) to contribute to the Week.
24. We aim to target CHIP practitioners; i.e. employees of supplier companies who write safety data sheets, and to target them through intermediaries. We would encourage intermediaries to run 'best practice workshops' on Safety Data Sheets throughout the country; and we would encourage enforcing officers (HSE inspectors and Local Authority Trading Standards Officers) to participate. Likely outcomes of this initiative include:
 - Raised profile of CHIP;
 - Raised profile for those who can contribute to improved quality of Safety Data Sheets; and
 - Raised awareness and understanding of CHIP among enforcing officers (HSE's Inspectors from Hazardous Installations Division (HID) and Field Operations Division (FOD) and Local Authority Trading Standards Officers).