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ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON TOXIC SUBSTANCES

REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE ACTS FLOUR DUST WORKING GROUP

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Cleared by Steve Coldrick on 14 June 2005

Issue

1. Report to ACTS members on the activities of its sub-group on flour dust.

Timing

2. Routine.

Recommendation

3. That ACTS notes the activities of the working group since its inception last year.

Background

4. In March 2004, ACTS agreed to the setting up of a small working group with industry, trade union and local authority representation to focus on developing a strategy for improving compliance with what was then the Maximum Exposure Limit (10 mg.m⁻³ 8 hour time weighted average; 30 mg.m⁻³ short-term exposure limit, 15 minute reference period). ACTS had requested a review three years after implementation of the MEL in May 2001 and was concerned at the lack of enforcement and compliance with the then MEL. The MEL became a Workplace Exposure Limit (WEL) in April 2005 when the new Occupational Exposure Limits framework came into force. The working group is expected to have a life of about two years and its terms of reference are attached at Annex1.

Argument

5. The working group met for the first time in November 2004 and a draft action plan was produced (attached at Annex 2). The action plan focuses on working with partners to improve control of flour dust and enzymes used in flour improvers, to achieve improvements in good practice and, specifically, compliance with the WEL. The working group will meet again in the summer of 2005 to review progress against the action plan and discuss future activities.

Link to HSC Strategy

6. The working group's activities are consistent with HSC's new strategy for the health and safety system in Great Britain. The overall aim of the work on occupational asthma is to meet the target of reducing occupational asthma by 30% by 2010. The new strategic programme plan, 'Fit for work, fit for life, fit for tomorrow', sets an intermediate target of a 10% reduction in 2008 of the 2004/5 baseline. Flour dust is one of the top causes of occupational asthma.

Communication Plan

7. Communications are a priority issue for the working group as part of identifying and cascading key messages to industry.

Evaluation Plan

8. The working group will evaluate the impact of its work and report back to ACTS at the end of its two-year life.

Consultation

9. The working group members will consult within their own organisations and more widely with other partners as the work progresses.

Costs and Benefits

10. There is a clear benefit of ACTS working with industry and other partners to improve good practice and compliance with the WEL.

Financial/Resource Implications for HSE

11. Running costs of the working group are being met from existing resources.

Environmental implications

12. None.

European implications

13. Not applicable

Other implications

14. None.

Action

15. ACTS members are asked to note the information provided in this paper.

Contact

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