

HSC ANNOUNCES NEW REGULATIONS FOR WORKER CONSULTATION

The Health and Safety Commission (HSC) has announced a new package of measures to improve employers' consultation with workers on health and safety matters.

The package consists of two stages. Work will start immediately on the first stage, which includes:

v new regulations to harmonise general consultation arrangements, based on the principles of the existing Safety Representative and Safety Committees Regulations 1977. The regulations will:

- empower employees in workplaces where unions are not recognised to decide whether they wish to be consulted by their employer on health and safety issues directly or through an elected representative;
- specify the functions of elected representatives; and
- be supported by a new Approved Code of Practice (ACoP) and guidance.

v testing workers' safety adviser pilots in workplaces where there is little or no employee representation and health and safety performance is poor; and

v further research to explore the links between good employee consultation and improved health and safety performance.

The second, more medium-term stage will consist of:

- w a publicity campaign to raise awareness of the new regulatory package;
- w research to explore more practical and less resource-intensive alternatives to provisional improvement notices (PINs), which are, issued by safety representatives in some other countries, to notify employers of an alleged breach of the law; and
- w exploring new enforcement initiatives and training for inspectors relating to worker consultation in the light of the new regulations.

Commenting on the package, Health and Safety Chair Bill Callaghan said:

“Genuine consultation is central to forming effective partnerships between employers, unions, workers and their safety representatives - and to meeting and beating the tough targets set out in the Revitalising Health and Safety strategy. Recent research by the London School of Economics confirms that unions have a positive impact on reducing injury rates.

“The HSC’s initiative provides a timely boost to ensuring that all working people are actively involved in measures to protect their own health and safety. I expect employers to give the initiative their full backing and appreciate the value that employee consultation brings to running an efficient business.

“The new regulations will replace - but retain the principles of - the existing provisions relating to employee consultation and the appointment of safety representatives, while the new code of practice will provide clear guidance to employers, workers and their representatives on effective consultation”

The HSC will launch a consultation, inviting comments on its proposed new regulations and supporting ACoP and guidance in the spring 2001.

Notes for editors

1 The package of new initiatives takes account of the outcome of a four month public debate generated by an HSC discussion document: *Employee Consultation and Involvement in Health and Safety*, published on 8 November 1999. Nearly 850 responses to the document were received by the HSC, including from the TUC, trade unions, employers, the CBI and other employers' organisations, Government Departments and local authorities.

2 The Revitalising Health and Safety initiative was launched by Bill Callaghan and the Deputy Prime Minister on 7 June 2000. It includes a 44-point action plan which aims to achieve, by the year 2000, the following targets: reduce the incidence of working days lost through work-related injury and ill-health by 30 per cent; reduce the incidence of people suffering from work-related ill-health by 20 per cent; and reduce the rate of fatal and major injury accidents by 10 per cent. There is an additional target of achieving half of each improvement by the year 2004.

3 Research into the effectiveness of safety representatives is included in *Discussion Paper 468: Trade Unions and Industrial Injury in Great Britain* by Adam Seth Litwin, Trade Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics and Political Science, available by contacting the London School of Economics, tel: 020 7955 7673 or accessing their website: <http://cep.lse.ac.uk>

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