

Secretary of State's Inquiry into construction fatal accidents



Background

- Continuing high levels of construction accident fatalities in recent years have caused widespread concern.
- The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions asked Rita Donaghy CBE to Chair an Inquiry into underlying causes and make Recommendations.

Secretary of State's Inquiry into construction fatal accidents



Background

- Notwithstanding a focus on accident deaths, the Chair was free to take evidence from concerned stakeholders on all pertinent issues.
- While not an Inquiry into HSE, the Chair was free to examine HSE's work.
- The Chair was fully free to make any recommendations as she saw fit.

Secretary of State's Inquiry into construction fatal accidents



Background

- Inquiry required to carry out its work quickly and report promptly.
- HSE provided Secretariat support for Chair.
- Chair supported by 3 academic peer reviewers to provide independent oversight and continuity throughout the Inquiry.

Secretary of State's Inquiry into construction fatal accidents



3 independent academic peer reviewers:

- **Andrew Hale**, Professor of Safety Science at the Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands
- **Sonia McKay**, Reader in Socio-Legal Studies at the Working Lives Research Institute
- **David Walters**, Professor of Work Environment, Director of Cardiff Work Environment Research Centre, Cardiff University.

Secretary of State's Inquiry into construction fatal accidents



Plan of Inquiry

Phase 1 – HSE review and summary of its research over last 10 years (including study of 25 vulnerable worker fatalities) on causal factors in construction fatal accidents. Independent peer review of this with recommendations for Phase 2 work.

Phase 2 – Review of 26 recent accidents (28 deaths) selected by Chair and peer reviewers. Loughborough University review of non-HSE evidence (including from business, international, trades unions) on root causes and levers for improvement. All Phase 2 work overseen by independent peer reviewers.

Phase 3 – Chair's review of all Phase 1 and 2 work and extensive consultation with stakeholders. Preparation and delivery of Chair's Report to Secretary of State and HSE Board with Recommendations.

Secretary of State's Inquiry into construction fatal accidents



Chair's activities included:

- Liaising closely with the academic peer reviewers, especially in connection with the Phase 2 work
- Considering written evidence and background material
- Site visits with HSE inspectors
- Observing court proceedings in a fatal injury case
- Speaking to a very large number and range of stakeholders, including next of kin
- Writing and presenting Final Report to Secretary of State

Secretary of State's Inquiry into construction fatal accidents



Those consulted by the Chair included:

- Companies and industry bodies
- Professional and safety bodies
- Trades unions
- Campaign groups
- Lawyers, academics and other experts
- Government Departments and Agencies

Secretary of State's Inquiry into construction fatal accidents



- Rita Donaghy's Report ("One Death is too Many") published on 8 July 2009.
- Commenting on the Report, Yvette Cooper, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, said:
 - "I am very grateful to Rita Donaghy for her thorough work, involving wide consultations with stakeholders. Despite the welcome recent fall in construction fatalities, any death or major injury is a tragedy for individuals, their families and their colleagues, and more work is needed to bring the number of accidents down."

Secretary of State's Inquiry into construction fatal accidents



- The Report stresses that HSE cannot eliminate construction fatalities without the help of the whole population and the Government, and it suggests that the profile of these deaths is raised so that they become unacceptable to society.
- It includes 28 recommendations, some of which where the natural lead falls to HSE's and include:
 - Encouraging genuine worker involvement
 - Work to tackle the challenge of second-hand plant still in circulation
 - An awareness campaign to encourage reporting of accidents

Secretary of State's Inquiry into construction fatal accidents



- Recommendations (continued)
 - Targeted safety campaigns for vulnerable workers
 - More HSE construction resource for London
 - A pilot study on more non-accident prosecutions
 - Review of communications strategy on fatal accidents
 - Encourage inspectors to promote the principles of the joint Institute of Directors/HSE guidance for directors
 - Regular work in the future to further illuminate the underlying causes of fatalities

Secretary of State's Inquiry into construction fatal accidents



The Report is supported by several other documents:

- **Phase 1 Review Report**
- **Phase 2 External Research Report**
- **Phase 2 Study of Recent Fatal Accidents Report**
- Additionally, there are separate documents giving views of the peer reviewers on each of the Phase 2 reports.

Secretary of State's Inquiry into construction fatal accidents



- DWP will consult with the Health and Safety Executive, the industry, trade unions and other relevant Government Departments, to fully consider all the recommendations before making the Government response later in the year.