

Open Government status: Fully open

Paper Number: M1/2005/4

Meeting Date: 31st March 2005

Exempt material: None

Type of Paper: Above the line

Paper File Reference:

HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CONIAC)

The new Occupational Health Model

Summary

This paper informs members of the new Occupational Health Management Model being developed by Construction Division and asks members to help in piloting the model for a six-month trial period.

Issue

- 1 Research by HSE's Construction Division has shown that the construction industry is committed to improving occupational health, but is unclear about how to do this. Organisations have often focused on individual health topics rather than management of ill health as a whole. The Construction Division has therefore produced a new Occupational Health Model which is designed to provide generic advice to the industry on the general management of ill health including active case management. A presentation of the new Occupational Health Model will be given at this meeting.

Background

- 2 The industry faces many challenges: Around 98% of the employing organisations are SME's and micros employing fewer than 5 employees. Workers are peripatetic and can work long distances from home, often resulting in staying away from home during the working week. Employment is often short term and can be part of the informal economy with a significant number of migrant workers, some of whose first language is other than

English. It is also an industry that works people hard – it is physically challenging and time pressured.

- 3 There are significant levels of occupational ill health in the industry. Although there is a considerable under-reporting of ill health, it is estimated ¹ that 96,000 people whose current or most recent job in the last year was in the construction industry suffered from ill-health which was caused or made worse by their job. The most prevalent health issues in the construction industry include manual handling (or musculo-skeletal disorders (MSD)), hand arm vibration (HAVS), noise induced hearing loss (NIHL) and dermatitis. MSD affects 5% of the construction workforce (or around 90,000 people).

Aims of the Occupational Health Management Model (OHMM)

- 4 The goal of the OHMM is to provide simple and structured guidance on the management of occupational health. The OHMM has four main aims:
 - *The model should give a clear steer on minimum standards of occupational health management to stakeholders*
 - *The advice should be simple enough to be useful to small organisations and sufficiently detailed for large organisations*
 - *The model should cover management of occupational health in general rather than be health issues led*
 - *The model should cover each of the main management processes involved in occupational health management.*

The model proposes four main processes involved in the management of occupational health in construction. These are entry health checks; risk control; ongoing health checks and back to work. These processes are explained in more detail in the model, with practical suggestions for what companies need to do.

The OHMM Pilot

- 5 Construction Division will begin a six-month pilot of the OHMM from 1 April 2005. The pilot will introduce the OHMM to the industry and evaluate its content and effectiveness, including as well as, structure and ease of use.

- 6 The pilot provides a good opportunity for organisations to implement the model with direct support from HSE and other pilotees. It is expected that they will respond to HSE on the effectiveness of the model with suggested changes. They will need to complete a baseline questionnaire pre-implementation of the model and an evaluation questionnaire post implementation.
- 7 A number of organisations have volunteered to take part in the pilot including BCSA, Bovis Lend Lease, Carillion, Construction Confederation, Clugston Construction, Costain, Caxtons FM, Taylor Woodrow and Wates Construction. We are in discussions with other organisations with a view to securing further volunteers. It is essential that SME organisations are involved in the pilot and we are therefore actively seeking their participation.
- 8 Organisations who take part in the six-month pilot will receive a copy of the model on CD Rom, contact details for direct support from HSE, and copies of detailed baseline and completion questionnaires, to be completed at the beginning and end of the six-month period. HSE will provide advice and support throughout the six month period, as well as encouraging contact between different pilot organisations to facilitate sharing of useful information and lessons learned.
- 9 At the close of the Pilot the evaluation questionnaires will be analysed, with help from an independent consultant. Individual comments, suggestions and lessons learned will be incorporated into the model. A final draft of the model will be produced, formally launched and published on the HSE Website.

Actions

- 10 Members are asked to note the development of the OHMM by Construction Division and consider whether it will be appropriate to encourage their constituency of member organisations in the industry to participate in the Pilot. Any organization wishing to participate in the OHMM Pilot should contact Shelley Atkinson Frost in the Construction Sector.

¹ Self-reported Work-related Illness (SWI) Survey 01/02

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