



# RUBIAC

The Newsletter of the Rubber Industry Advisory Committee

## Second RUBIAC Action Plan 2002-05

**R**UBIAC's first Action Plan aimed to reduce the rubber industry's annual accident rate by 30% over the three years June 1999 to May 2002. The reduction actually achieved was 25% (see Figure 1). RUBIAC's second Action Plan has as its main aim to reduce the accident rate still further to match that achieved by all manufacturing industry. This means a 37% reduction based on current figures and RUBIAC wants to see the industry achieve at least a 30% reduction by May 2005.

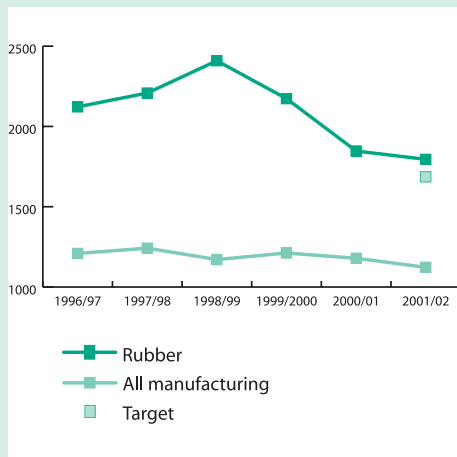


Figure 1 All injuries incidence rates per 100 000 employees

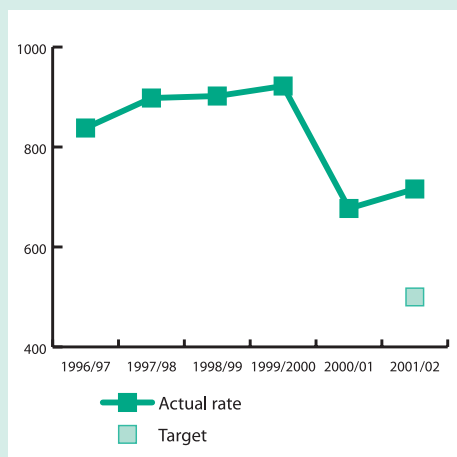


Figure 2 Rubber manual handling incidence rates per 100 000 employees

The first Action Plan also targeted manual handling accidents - the major cause of reported accidents in the rubber industry - and these reduced from 902 per 100 000 employees to 716, a significant reduction, although still not below 500, the original target (see Figure 2). The second Action Plan therefore again targets manual handling and RUBIAC's aim is to reduce these to below 500 by May 2005.

### Review of rubber industry's reported accidents 2002/03

Last year there were three fatal, 92 major and 677 over-3-day accidents reported\* in the rubber industry. This continues the promising downward trend we have seen over the last three years. However, the number of employees in the industry is also falling, so the fact that accident numbers are on the decline is hardly surprising. What we need to compare are the 'incidence rates', that is the number of accidents per 100 000 employees, and this is also falling. In other words, the rubber industry is now a safer place to work than it was three years ago.

At the start of the RUBIAC Action Plan in 1999 the likelihood of a worker having an accident in one year was about 1 in 40. Or, to put it more bluntly, the average employee spending their working life in the industry would have suffered an injury serious enough to keep them off work for at least four or more days. Bearing in mind the likely under-reporting of accidents, the reality was that they were likely to have more than one injury. Over the last three years this has improved to the extent that the chance of being hurt is now 1 in 56 years.

\* 'Reported accidents' refers to those incidents reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995.

This is good news. However, before we get too complacent we should ask, 'Is it good enough?'. It is worrying that the steady downward trend the industry has achieved is losing momentum and that last year, in the case of injuries caused by lifting or carrying, the rate actually increased. Given that this is the largest single cause of accidents in the rubber industry, this upward movement, following a sharp decline in the previous year, is worrying. As an industry we need to redouble our efforts to get things back on track and reduce accidents even further.

### How you can show your commitment to the Action Plan

The second Action Plan applies to the whole industry and involves all stakeholders working in partnership. Companies are being asked to commit themselves to achieving the aims. For those pledging to do so, this will be recognised by a certificate signed by all the key organisations in the industry. If you would like a copy of the Action Plan and Supporting activities or to pledge your company to help achieve the RUBIAC Action Plan aims and receive a certificate, please use the contact details at the end of this article.

### Improving training in the rubber industry

Alongside continuing to improve in the areas of risk assessment, incident investigation and the management of manual handling, we are also seeking an improvement in overall competence. This will be achieved by working towards a measurable improvement in health and safety training at all levels, from senior managers, to shop floor. This will be measured against a RUBIAC training matrix that is currently being developed and workshops will be held to promote this new tool.

## RUBIAC Recommended Practice Approaches

Further RUBIAC Recommended Practice Approaches will also be published. The topics planned include falls from height, workplace transport, working in partnership, selection and management of contractors, health surveillance and rehabilitation.

## RUBIAC seminars and workshops

RUBIAC will also run seminars to develop and promote the new Recommended Practice Approaches. If you would like to register an interest, please do so using the contact details below.

## Open meeting

A RUBIAC open meeting will be held at The Pavilion at Goodyear in Wolverhampton on 26 June this year to report on progress with the second Action Plan and listen to industry's views. It will involve a shortened formal meeting followed by a combined seminar/workshop covering the RUBIAC training matrix and the new Recommended Practice Approaches. If you would like to attend please register your interest at [rubi.ac.area14@hse.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:rubi.ac.area14@hse.gsi.gov.uk) or contact Anne Rayner at Marshalls Mill, Marshall Street, Leeds LS11 9YJ, Tel: 0113 283 4354.

## BRMA seminar for health and safety officers

BRMA organised a joint seminar with HSE at the National Motorcycle Museum on 5 February 2003 to launch the RUBIAC second Action Plan. The seminar raised awareness among member firms of the health and safety work programme that BRMA will both contribute to and deliver to improve the management of health and safety in the rubber industry.

## Review of RUBIAC publications

A number of RUBIAC publications are currently being reviewed. These are:

- *Control of rubber fume at extruders, calenders and vulcanising operations* (1994).
- *Dust and fume control in rubber mixing and milling* (1996).
- *Dust control in powder handling and weighing. A revised COSHH guide* (1997).

RUBIAC invites comments on the content of these publications, highlighting inaccuracies, omissions or out-of-date information. Comments can be sent to [rubi.ac.area14@hse.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:rubi.ac.area14@hse.gsi.gov.uk)

In addition RUBIAC has recently agreed to delete the following from its series of publications:

- *Noise control in the rubber industry* (1990). (Industry-specific solutions from the noise publication will be available on the HSE website.)
- *Be on your guard. A risk assessment approach to machinery safety in the rubber industry* (1995).
- *Health and safety training in the rubber industry* (1998). (NB RUBIAC's *Health and safety training resource pack for the rubber industry* (1998) is still available.)

## BRMA flexible foam survey

In June 2002 BRMA collected industry data to contribute to the Health and Safety Commission/Executive work relating to future strategies for reducing the incidence of occupational asthma. The findings of the survey suggest that the estimated annual contribution to the incidence of occupational asthma arising from exposure to isocyanates in flexible foam manufacture is likely to be well below one case per year.

BRMA has pointed out that this is very low when compared with the estimated number of cases annually for all isocyanates users. It has suggested that any future HSE strategy for reducing the incidence of occupational asthma should focus on users of isocyanates where exposure is known to be poorly controlled and where the incidence of occupational asthma is known to be high.

## Manual handling risks in tyre collection and delivery

RUBIAC has set up a working group to look into the manual handling risks to which lorry drivers and others are exposed when collecting and delivering new and used vehicle tyres.

Although the industry has made progress in reducing manual handling risks at tyre manufacturing and retread plants and at the larger tyre distribution depots, delivery drivers are still often exposed to unacceptable levels of risk in some sectors of the industry. For example, drivers collecting used tyre casings from tyre fitting depots and other yards often find that the casings are stored horizontally or even in a massive pile in a haphazard fashion in the open air. They become filled with rainwater making them even heavier and more difficult to handle.

With truck tyre casings weighing up to 70 kg, drivers are exposed to a very serious risk of musculoskeletal injury or hernia. If the tyres were stored upright, it would make it easier to roll them to the collection lorry's tail-lift for loading.

The working group, made up of representatives from HSE, local authorities, trades unions, tyre manufacturers, distributors, retreaders and the haulage industry have commissioned an ergonomist to visit a number of companies who are involved with collecting and delivering tyres. The aim is to produce case study guidance showing good practice for eliminating and reducing the risks to an acceptable level.

The initial view of the working group is that there are reasonably practicable measures that can be taken to control the risks. Following the distribution of guidance to the industry and associated publicity it is likely to recommend that HSE and local authority inspectors should take a strong line in enforcing these control measures.

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