

Measuring up...

Performance Report 2006



This is a web-friendly version of the HSC's Performance Report 2006

Achieving our targets

As a society, we've come a long way since 1974 when the Health and Safety at Work Act was introduced and there are at least 5000 people who can vouch for this. For that's the number of lives estimated to have been saved in British workplaces by improvements through the prevention of accidents. This takes account of changing patterns of employment towards lower-risk jobs such as in the service sector.

To put this into context, in 1975 there were 614 work-related deaths. In 2005/06, there were 212. Six years ago, the government set some ambitious targets to reduce work-related ill health, injuries and days lost. In November 2006, we set out how we are doing: on track for meeting the ill health and days lost targets, and at last making progress on injuries. Indeed, in the last four years, the number of days lost has fallen 25% from 40 million to 30 million.

But 212 deaths and 30 million days lost is still too many so there is much more work to do. And, despite recent progress, there remains a huge challenge in reducing the number of cases of ill health. This report aims to give a brief overview of the effort to reduce work-related fatalities, injuries and illness.

The achievements and challenges that we set out here are not those of HSC, HSE and local authorities alone. This is truly a combined effort, involving employers and employees, as well as government and non-government organisations across Great Britain.

We have achieved a lot. We have a great deal more still to do.

Revitalising Health and Safety targets: progress to 2005/06

- **Ill health:** the target is to reduce the incidence rate of work-related ill health by 20% between 1999/2000 and 2009/10. **This is on track** to meet the ten-year target, and falling in 2005/06.
- **Days lost per worker:** the target is to reduce the number of working days lost per worker due to work-related injury and ill health by 30% between 2000-02 and 2009/10. **This is probably on track** to meet the ten-year target.
- **Fatal and major injuries:** the target is to reduce the incidence rate of fatal and major injury by 10% between 1999/2000 and 2009/10. This had plateaued but has fallen over the past two years. **We are not yet on track** for this ten-year target. But the rate and number of fatalities are now at the lowest level ever recorded and the rate of major injuries has fallen over the last two years.

Counting the cost

Britain's health and safety record continues to improve, but there is no room for complacency. Last year, 2 million people suffered from illnesses caused or made worse by work, 146 000 people were seriously injured, 212 people were killed, and 30 million working days were lost due to accidents and ill health.

Key facts for 2005/06 are:

- Fatal injuries – 212 workers were killed.
- Non-fatal injuries – 146 076 employees suffered serious injuries at work.
- 2 million people were suffering from an illness they believed was caused or made worse by their current or past work.
- 523 000 of these were new cases in the last 12 months.
- 30 million days were lost overall (1.3 days per worker), 24 million due to work-related ill health and 6 million due to workplace injury.

Improving working lives

We've set ourselves ambitious targets for reducing workplace injuries and ill health, as well as cutting the days lost that they cause. Against these targets, set in the Revitalising Health and Safety Strategy and in our Public Service Agreement with the government, very good progress has been made in recent years. But there is much more to do.

Working together for improvements

There have been improvements. Last year saw 4000 fewer serious injuries and 53 000 fewer new cases of ill health. But there is still much to do.

A close working relationship between HSE and its enforcement partners in local authorities is important if we are to continue to drive down these figures. A key to the success of this partnership is the ability to achieve a higher profile for health and safety in councils around the country. Persuasive communications aimed particularly at councillors are crucial. Last year, HSE and Local Authorities Co-ordinators of Regulatory Services (LACoRS) published an 'Elected Members' Handbook' which raised awareness of the beneficial links between health and safety regulation and the wider priorities of local authorities.

HSE has also worked closely with its partners to develop the strategic programme: 'Fit for work, fit for life, fit for tomorrow' aimed at reducing work-related accidents, ill health and lost working days caused by them.

HSE is making a substantial effort to work with a wide range of stakeholders, as well as becoming actively involved with central initiatives such as the proposals for improved co-ordination of regulation and enforcement flowing from the Hampton Review, and the establishment of the proposed Local Better Regulation Office.

It's important to recognise regional differences. That's why high-level partnership forums between local government and HSE now exist in England, Wales and Scotland.

Construction: ownership, leadership and partnership

There are at least 80 people alive today who would have died without the improvements made in the construction industry since 1999. However, in that same period 535 workers have died from injuries, most of which were avoidable.

The latest survey of self-reported work-related illness, carried out in 2005/06, estimated that 86 000 people suffered from an illness which was caused or made worse due to a current or most recent job in the last year in the construction industry.

There is now a commitment to change within the industry. For example, slips and trips are regularly the biggest single cause of reported injuries in the industry; the campaign Watch Your Step was used to improve site conditions and so reduce the risk of slips and trips. With employers, unions, and construction safety groups on board, HSE inspectors targeted housekeeping issues in nearly a thousand site inspections, taking enforcement action as appropriate.

Health, Work and Well-being strategy

Launched jointly in October 2005 by HSE, the Department of Health and the Department of Work and Pensions, the Health, Work and Well-being strategy has three main aims:

- to prevent people becoming injured or ill;
- to keep them healthy in work; and
- to provide support to help them remain in, or return to, work if they become ill.

HSE, working with local authorities, makes significant contributions to this strategy through a number of initiatives including the Stress Management Standards, the Better Backs campaign and Workplace Health Connect (WHC), an occupational health, safety and return-to-work support service for small businesses. Over 3500 enquiries have been received by WHC's Adviceline and more than 1500 initial workplace visits conducted. Over 95% of callers say they are satisfied or very satisfied with the service.

Reaching out to businesses

HSE continues to work closely with the Small Business Service to make simple, practical, good practice guidance available to small businesses through the Business Link website, as well as HSE's own site. By October this year, over 6000 businesses had completed a free online assessment tool, which is jointly run by HSE and Small Business Service/Business Link and helps users prioritise health and safety requirements.

Our Small Business Trade Association Forum ensures that key HSE publications are meeting the needs of these businesses as well as leading to the creation of specific, small-business-friendly guidance.

HSE and local authorities are working with larger companies to help achieve better health and safety outcomes. To date, this partnership initiative has invited 17 companies to join a pilot that focused on developing closer partnerships to improve health and safety. Between them, the selected companies employ around 1 million people.

Health and safety improvements can be much greater if firms take action because they are convinced of the business benefits of effectively managing health and safety. At the beginning of 2006, HSE ran a Better Business campaign to highlight

to small firms the possible cost savings to be made through good health and safety practice. This was supported by a press campaign and a series of case studies (see www.hse.gov.uk/betterbusiness).

Sickness absence – on the road to recovery

An encouraging improvement in central and local government sickness absence levels is starting to show following the setting up of a Ministerial Task Force two years ago.

With support from the Department of Health and the Department for Communities and Local Government, HSE is delivering a nationwide programme of 'Healthy Workplace Solutions' workshops. The aim is to persuade the public sector of the business case for managing sickness absence and equipping them to use the Stress Management Standards.

The workshops will be followed by a major programme of visits in 2007/08 to key employers in education, local and national government, and the NHS. Poor performers in the NHS and local government sectors will continue to be inspected and enforcement action considered.

Regulating major hazards

HSE's Major Hazards teams are responsible for regulating and assuring the safety of those industries where failure to manage risks to health and safety can lead to a catastrophic incident. The industries they regulate include nuclear, offshore oil and gas and onshore major hazard industries (eg chemical manufacture and storage, high-pressure gas storage and distribution, mining, explosives). This work is brought together in a Major Hazards Programme which is currently on course to deliver the Public Service Agreement targets for a reduction in dangerous occurrences and other incidents which are potential precursors of major accidents.

Buncefield

The investigation into the 2005 explosion at Buncefield oil storage depot and the implications for other fuel storage sites have placed significant demands on HSE's Hazardous Installations Directorate.

The incident involved the overfilling of a large storage tank supplied with petrol through a pipeline. This resulted in a large vapour cloud that subsequently ignited. The investigation is being overseen by an independent Investigation Board chaired by Lord Newton. As well as providing resources and expertise to carry out the investigation, HSE has been taking forward its emerging findings.

A report on this work was issued on 13 July giving an initial picture of the levels of safety at fuel storage sites with plans to publish a fuller analysis in the new year. The findings of the site visits have informed the work of an industry-led Task Group including HSE, the Environment Agency and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency to agree additional measures to further improve safety at fuel storage sites. The first report of the Task Group, focusing on 'quick wins' which can be carried out promptly to strengthen safeguards further, was issued on 12 October. A final report is planned for summer 2007 which will set a new standard for such sites.

Following the incident, HSE has worked closely with the local authorities and lessons learned will also have implications for land use planning policy and the advice HSE provides to planning authorities.

Energy Review

In January 2006, the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) launched an Energy Review to look at what progress had been made towards achieving the aims of the 2003 White Paper *Our energy future: creating a low-carbon economy*. The review was prompted by the need to replace declining energy sources and to help the government decide which energy technologies to support. In making policy decisions in this area, the government needed to consider the health and safety risks of the options, several of which would use new technology.

The Energy Minister asked HSE to produce a report on the risks arising from various energy developments such as gas storage, carbon capture and storage, nuclear, renewable energy and cleaner coal. The Minister also asked what steps HSE has taken to ensure risks were managed sensibly by the industry.

In the event of a new generation of nuclear power stations being ordered, HSE's views on the potential role of pre-licensing assessments of candidate reactor designs were also sought.

HSE's response, in its report *The health and safety risks and regulatory strategy related to energy developments*, was published in June and concludes that Britain's health and safety system is well established and able to deal with new energy-related risks and hazards. The report reviews the energy technologies, describes the health and safety risks and explains the regulatory strategy for controlling those risks.

Partnership working

Partnership working is vital to improve workplace health and safety in Great Britain. HSE and local authorities have built a solid partnership to make the best use of their respective strengths in tackling national and regional priorities. We are involving more workers in health and safety risk management by raising awareness and influencing attitudes as well as reminding businesses of the benefits of well-managed health and safety. We are also continually striving to strengthen our relationship with trade unions, industry and other government departments.

New partnership arrangements

Two years ago, HSC, HSE and local government representative bodies signed a 'Statement of Intent', setting out a commitment to partnership to ensure best use of joint resources. Close working continues to sustain the partnership and the main elements are now in place. They include:

- a stronger voice for local government through regular meetings with HSC and involvement in policy and programme development;
- joint teams in HSE's regions helping to develop partnership working with local authorities;
- joint planning and working focused on HSC's priorities;
- an interactive extranet for local authorities and HSE to communicate better together;
- better access for local authorities to common guidance, technical support, training and research.

Health and safety partnership for Scotland

This implements HSC's strategy in the context of Scotland's health and safety performance, the Scottish economy, and its industrial and occupational make-up and culture.

Set up by HSC in 2004 and supported by Ministers, it brings together key players within the Scottish health and safety system including representatives from business, trade unions and local authorities. It meets the need identified by Scottish health and safety stakeholders to co-ordinate effort across devolved and reserved government interests.

Supporting Welsh Backs

'Don't take back pain lying down' was the message during a Welsh Backs campaign highlighting the economic and social effects of back pain on the Welsh population. Run by the Health Promotion Division of the Welsh Assembly, the initiative ran in tandem with HSE's Better Backs campaign in England and Scotland. HSE and local authorities in Wales worked closely with Welsh Backs to ensure a well co-ordinated campaign.

Worker involvement

Getting workers on board with health and safety is a key to achieving improvements. It is also vital that managers are encouraged to include workers and their representatives in decisions about health and safety.

Excellent progress has been made in this area. For example, as well as ensuring that our priority campaigns reach out to both workers and managers, HSE's worker involvement programme has produced specific tools to encourage involvement. For the first time, advice is available for all employers on how to involve their staff, including a suggested process, practical tips and examples (see www.hse.gov.uk/involvement).

Also, in our determination to ensure that everyone is protected at work, we are making sure that migrant workers have access to information on health and safety and their rights. We are also making sure that employers are aware of their responsibilities towards migrant workers.

Speaking clearly

We are constantly looking at what we do and ways of doing it better. As a modern regulator, we are taking a lead role in making our approach to regulation more efficient, both for those regulated and the regulators. We know that sensible, smarter legislation is easier to understand and apply and, therefore, is more effective in protecting people. Last year's Hampton Review, which called for reducing administrative burdens on business through more efficient regulation and enforcement, endorses our approach.

Sensible risk principles

In August 2006, HSC and HSE urged people to focus on risks that cause real harm and not bureaucratic back-covering. A set of sensible risk management principles were launched, all widely supported by stakeholders.

The principles spell out what we believe sensible risk management should – and should not – be about. It should be about saving lives, not stopping people living. HSE wants others to help in turning the principles into practice. HSE has launched a series of measures including the publication of new straight-talking guidance on risk management and a risk management website (www.hse.gov.uk/risk).

Better regulation: risk-based approach to regulation

Over the past 30 years, we have cut the number of health and safety regulations on the statute books by half, supporting our view that simpler and more effective legislation improves health and safety.

In 2005 the government accepted the recommendations of the Hampton Review and Better Regulation Task Force report on how to reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens. Many of the recommendations confirm the approach HSE was already taking, eg targeted, risk-based enforcement.

As part of a commitment to better regulation, we published with HSE a simplification plan. The plan includes key initiatives to simplify risk assessments, reduce the numbers of health and safety forms, and simplify the regulations for the construction industry. The proposals were welcomed by the Cabinet Office, TUC and CBI.

Promoting health and safety

In the past two years, HSE has increased its investment in publicity, as well as encouraging stakeholders to tackle the most common causes of injury and ill health.

Major campaigns such as Better Backs, Watch Your Step and Height Aware have been boosted by advertisements in national, regional and trade press, as well as on the radio and online.

Wherever possible, publicity campaigns and promotional events are supported with inspection activity. For example, during HSE's Watch Your Step campaign, inspectors focused on construction, manufacturing and cleaning industries.

- Around 750 000 people visit HSE's website every month.
- In the 12 months from October 2005, 249 234 enquiries were handled by HSE's Infoline.
- Recent research has shown that 90% of CEOs and senior managers believe that health and safety requirements benefit their company as a whole.

Plans for merger of HSC and HSE

We must have the right decision-making frameworks in place to provide the leadership, direction and accountability expected of public bodies.

We believe that merging the Health and Safety Commission and Health and Safety Executive into a single, independent body will give us more robust governance arrangements and provide a much stronger voice for health and safety in Great Britain. Like the Commission, the governing body of the merged organisation will have a balanced structure, with employer, employee and local authority interests represented.

Individual enforcement decisions will continue to be taken by officials. This will allow us to take the best from the existing arrangements, while updating them to reflect best practice and improve our accountability to the public.

A Consultative Document seeking views on our proposals is due to be published in early December 2006.

Effective risk control

Firm, properly targeted and proportionate enforcement underpins the action HSE and local authorities are taking to deliver our Strategy. Enforcement, or the fear of it, is a powerful motivator for improving risk control. Evidence shows that it can act as a wake-up call for employers to introduce more effective risk-control measures. And, through prosecution, dutyholders are brought to account for failures to safeguard health, safety and welfare.

Enforcement activity should not be viewed in isolation. It is only one means of securing compliance with the law. The multi-faceted approach includes emphasis on achieving improvements in sensible risk management, for example, through raising awareness, working with and through intermediaries and campaigning on particular issues.

However, the unique role and powers of health and safety inspectors to enforce the law continue to remain a vital part of how we can drive up health and safety standards.

Inspection, investigation and enforcement are key levers for change. In carrying out these tasks, inspectors are always available to give advice or guidance.

But where conditions are poor or there is blatant disregard for the law, they will not hesitate to use their powers to ensure that dutyholders take action to deal immediately with serious risk and so promote and achieve sustained compliance with the law. And, when required, they will not hesitate to prosecute.

Falling from height is the most common cause of workplace death. Inspectors will continue to use a range of intervention techniques to drive down the numbers of accidents. This has included prosecuting construction contractors before an accident had happened but where there was significant risk and clear non-compliance.

Notices and prosecutions

While HSE's headline figures for notices and prosecutions have declined during 2005/06, the commitment to enforcement as a key intervention remains constant. While it is not in the business of conducting enforcement for enforcement's sake, and does not wish to set enforcement targets, it has reason to believe that it may not have been entirely meeting its standards. Early indications are that enforcement action in 2006/07 is rising.

Notices and prosecutions by HSE 2005/06

- Improvement Notices: 3787
- Prohibition Notices: 2596
- Offences prosecuted: 1012
- Convictions: 741
- Average penalty per conviction: £29 997 (this figure includes 13 fines in excess of £100 000 which when removed gives an average of £6219)

Notices and prosecutions by local authorities 2004/05 (latest figures available)

- Improvement Notices: 5110
- Prohibition Notices: 1310
- Offences prosecuted: 332
- Convictions: 281

Challenges for the future

Our future challenges will continue to be shaped by a changing workplace and an increasingly diverse workforce but our ultimate vision remains constant and that's to gain recognition of health and safety as a cornerstone of a civilised society. We know we can't achieve this alone, so we will continue to develop partnerships with HSE, local authorities and other stakeholders.

Changing economy

As the economy continues to shift towards the service sector, and we see the emergence of a more diverse workforce in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and patterns of work, our regulatory approach must keep pace.

This means more focus on occupational health issues and continuing to reach workers and employers in various ways. It means providing information, advice, guidance and, where necessary, enforcement.

We particularly want to reach the increasing number of small firms and HSE is currently encouraging greater health and safety awareness, and ultimately, activity in these businesses which are often difficult to reach.

Another challenge is ensuring that migrant workers have access to information about health and safety and their rights as well as making employers aware of their responsibilities towards such workers.

As more household and commercial waste is recycled, the recycling industry is undergoing a major growth. The industry's poor accident record is a cause for concern, and we will want to see real improvements.

Major hazards

In the wake of Buncefield, and with the prospect of a new generation of nuclear power stations for the future, it is vital that we provide public assurance of the adequate control of risks in major hazard industries without stifling developments.

We must strike the right balance between proper assurance while enabling the safe conduct of hazardous industrial processes that are vital to the well-being of our economy and modern society.

Sensible risk management

With ever more tales of unnecessary risk aversion in the name of health and safety, we will need to trumpet louder the message that sensible health and safety is about saving lives, not stopping people living.

Further information

You can learn more about the themes described in this report by visiting the HSE website.

Online you will find our Annual Reports, information about offences and penalties and the latest health and safety statistics. We also regularly publish updates about our work with partners.

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For information about health and safety ring HSE's Infoline Tel: 0845 345 0055
Fax: 0845 408 9566 Textphone: 0845 408 9577 e-mail: hse.infoline@natbrit.com
or write to HSE Information Services, Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly CF83 3GG.

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