

Health priority plan: **Occupational lung disease**

Occupational lung disease continues to contribute substantially to work-related ill health. It includes a wide range of conditions.

Some of these conditions develop shortly after exposure, such as work-related asthma and legionella infections. Others develop many years later, such as pneumoconiosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), lung

cancer and pleural mesothelioma – these are life-limiting and/or life-altering.

It can occur in most industry sectors and is caused by a wide range of agents, from biological organisms through to dusts, fumes and vapours. Asbestos and respirable crystalline silica (RCS) are particularly substantial contributors to the burden of lung disease.

Current position

Occupational respiratory disease is currently estimated to result in approximately 12 000 deaths each year.

Estimates from the 2013/14 to 2015/16 Labour Force Survey indicate that around 36 000 people who worked in the previous year (and 141 000 who had ever had a job) reported lung or breathing problems that were caused or made worse by work.

There are an estimated 14 000 new cases of breathing or lung problems caused or made worse by work each year, resulting in at least an estimated 400 000 working days lost.

HSE statistics site: www.hse.gov.uk/statistics

Outcomes and priorities

We want to see:

- significant improvements in preventing and controlling exposure, especially in construction, manufacturing, quarries, mines, waste and recycling, and agriculture;
- consultants and product suppliers giving employers advice that is fit for purpose;
- a rise in HSE's/local authorities' regulatory profile and cross-industry learning about 'what works';
- national, cross-sector leadership on eliminating occupational lung diseases;
- the next generation of workers being educated and empowered to expect better.

What HSE will do to #HelpGBworkwell

We will lead and engage with others to improve workplace health and safety by:

- hosting an 18-monthly National Summit to raise the profile of occupational lung disease;
- establishing and facilitating a new Healthy Lung Partnership with a broad-based membership drawn from across the health and safety system and the professions, academia etc to provide direction and coordinate stakeholder activity on occupational lung disease. It will be established and begin implementing an agreed action plan by the end of 2017;
- managing existing lung-disease-related sector and topic-specific partnerships, and continuing to work closely with existing partners with their own lung disease initiatives;
- using insight research to better understand how to reach and engage with prioritised sector audiences;
- using communications and social media channels that resonate with industry to promote benefits to both the business and the workforce;
- establishing simple, insight-informed descriptors of what effective control of exposure looks like, by the end of 2017;
- engaging with the health and safety consultancy market and suppliers of LEV/RPE to ensure proportionate, appropriate and risk-based advice is provided on control of exposure to lung-damaging agents, by summer 2018;
- working with the vocational education sector to develop communication and learning activities that will really resonate with apprentices, by summer 2018;
- using insight research to understand how to influence societal attitudes to expect clean workplace air as being normal.

We will secure effective management and control of risk by:

- prioritising interventions, inspection activity and enforcement in sectors/activities where occupational lung disease poses the highest risks, and evaluating these findings to inform future approaches;
- maximising the effectiveness of investigations and publicity arising from enforcement outcomes;
- developing a suite of leading indicators and evaluation criteria by the end of 2018.

We will provide an effective regulatory framework by:

- developing a strategic programme of research on occupational lung disease to help us better understand the underlying issues and how best to address them, by summer 2018.