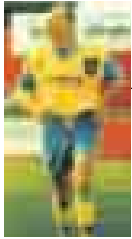
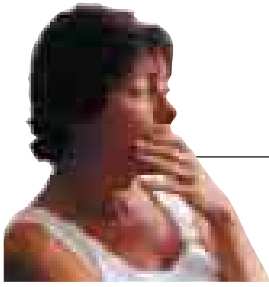


# JOBS TO DIE FOR



**HSE**  
Health & Safety  
Executive

# CONTRACTS



1

## Introduction

A message from Timothy Walker

2

## Your worst nightmare come true

Crane tragedy for maintenance contractor

4

## It's hard to cope on your own

Fall from roof ends worker's life

6

## The memories that won't go away

Construction tragedy - the site manager's story

8

## Why did Martin have to die?

The young life lost under the tracks of an excavator

10

## Until we're together again

Farmer killed by his own tractor

12

## Nobody should go to work to die

Lack of training claims ex-footballer's life

14

## If only I could hold him one more time

Young boy killed by all-terrain vehicle

16

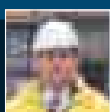
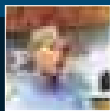
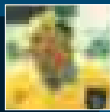
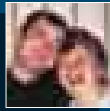
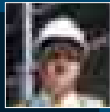
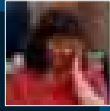
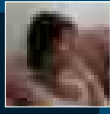
## Learn from them before it happens to you!

An inspector's story

18

## Further information

Advice to keep you safe and healthy at work



© Crown copyright 2002

*Applications for reproduction should be made in writing to:  
Copyright Unit, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, St  
Clements House, 2-16 Colegate, Norwich NR3 1BQ*

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

A message from...

# Timothy Walker

---

Director General of the Health and Safety Executive



It's tempting to believe 'It'll never happen to me'. However, sometimes it does. If we are lucky, we may get a second chance to learn from our mistakes. But some people are not that fortunate and the results can be devastating, not least for the families of those killed and injured.

I hope you read about the people featured here and think about any risks you might be taking at work. These stories show that training, procedures and the right equipment are essential to working safely, but just as important is the right attitude to safety. We must do what we can to work safely, and encourage others to do the same.

The consequences of taking chances and cutting corners are here for you to see in the stories that those left behind have shared with us. We owe it to our families and partners to make sure that we come home from work, and that we come home healthy and safe.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Timothy Walker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

# Your worst

**You're in Egypt. It's the holiday of a lifetime. You're just 21. Life couldn't be better. And then a fax arrives at your hotel. 'It's your father. It's serious...'**

Hannah Wardle had no reason to worry when she left England. But while she was away, the most tragic of accidents happened.

Her father, Allen, was a crane maintenance contractor, working at an Essex galvanising works. The crane he was working on was fitted with a large steel fume extraction canopy. It was parked above a tank of 350 tonnes of molten zinc at 450°C.

The crane and its canopy had been modified. Two holes had been cut into the top of the canopy, allowing the crane's wire ropes to pass through. Each had been covered by two pieces of thin plywood, one either side of the rope. But that was over a year ago. The dust and grime that had gathered on the canopy hid the dangers that lay beneath.

No one had told Allen about the modifications. He had nearly finished work when he stepped or stumbled through one of the pieces of plywood, plunging into the molten zinc 25 feet below...

It's difficult to imagine a more traumatic accident – not just for Allen's family, but for the people he was working with at the time and for the emergency services. But what must it be like to hear the news when you're in a different continent, when you've just turned 21 – and when you've got everything to live for?

'I just broke down. I couldn't believe it – I didn't want to believe it. I wished it was all some big mistake. But when I got back to England to find my mum and sister waiting there for me, their faces gave it away. It really was true. My whole life fell apart.'

Hannah's sister, Kellie (two years her senior), was in London when she heard the news. 'There was a terrible feeling of immediacy, of having no control. It was like being sucked into the ground. It was my worst nightmare come true...'

For Allen's wife, Katie, the feelings were the same. 'I saw the police coming up the path. I asked God to help me as I came downstairs to answer the door. But I knew in my heart that Allen wasn't coming home again. I just felt so helpless. My world came crashing down, like a huge sheet of glass that was smashed on the floor. I had such an awful fear in the pit of my stomach as I opened the door.'

Katie had always worried about Allen's work. 'He'd been working with cranes for over 25 years. He always took safety seriously. He'd never had an accident, though he'd known people who had. He loved his job and was well thought of. I used to say that he gave too much to his work – now he's given his life.'

The accident may have happened back in 1998, but the trauma still lives on for Allen's daughters. At that age, Kellie didn't expect to lose her dad. 'He went to work every day and came home every day. Nothing could have prepared us for what happened. It never crossed our minds. But there we were, faced with the awful truth that we'd never see our father again. He was only 52 when he died – such a waste.'

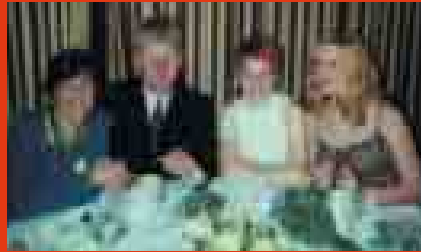
Hannah was in shock for eight months after the accident. She didn't want to accept what had happened. 'Life just stopped – everything stopped. A large part of our family was missing. It took everything away. We lost ourselves and our self-esteem.'

*For Katie, having to provide the support her daughters needed has been a difficult, draining experience*

# nightmare

## come true...

'A very scary place' is how Kellie describes her world now. 'Dad was always there to protect us, but the accident has taken all that away.' And it's not just the grief of losing someone so special to them that the family has had to deal with – it's the trauma of guessing what Allen must have suffered. 'I've relived what dad went through a million times. It's all so vivid.



Family photos mean so much. Pictured are (l to r) Katie, Allen, Hannah and Kellie

The accident happened in an instant, yet it's only now that we can begin to work through it and start to see a future beyond all this.'

So how *do* you cope with a tragedy like this? Fortunately, theirs is a close family, and they were able to talk to each other from the start, to listen and to support each other. For Katie, having to provide the support her daughters needed has been a difficult, draining experience. 'When one of us was feeling particularly low, the others would provide the strength we needed to go on. We spent days and nights talking about what had happened, how we felt and how we could hope to carry on. The only way forward was to face the pain, to discuss it and to support each other.'

Today, Katie, Kellie and Hannah are still adapting to their situation. 'Every day you need to think what you'll do to get yourself through the next 24 hours. We need a reason to go on – that's why we're all trying to do something we believe in, something we think will be useful to society.'

'At first, we really don't know how we managed. Gradually, very gradually, it gets a bit easier, though you never get over it ... you carry it round with you in your pocket. Even after all this time, we still can't fully believe what's happened. But you get used to living around it – you have to somehow work through it. And what we've achieved, we've achieved together.'

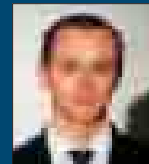
Now they want something positive to come out of Allen's death. 'People aren't always treated as humans in the workplace. We'd like to see a more humane, less corporate approach to the world of work. We need to value people's lives more. Everyone needs to take responsibility for both their own safety and that of others – and that means both employers and employees. Companies should be more proactive when it comes to the health and safety of their workers – not just act when things go wrong, but take steps to prevent them in the first place.'

'Nobody should have to go through what we've been through. Allen suffered so much – and all in a day's work. And accidents are still happening, and people are still dying, and families are still suffering – and it all could be avoided. At times, you feel your life no longer has a purpose, but we have to carry on for Allen – for the life that he's lost.'

For Hannah, that day in Egypt will remain with her forever. Nothing can take away the pain of losing her father. 'But if our story makes just one person stop and think, and maybe avoid another tragedy like ours, then dad will not have died for nothing. At least we can take some comfort from that.'

*But there we were, faced with the awful truth that we'd never see our father again. He was only 52 when he died - such a waste...*

**Rupert Lown** was the inspector who investigated Allen's accident...



'It's impossible to overstate how traumatic this was for everyone involved.'

'So what can we learn from the accident? Certainly, the company should have:

- assessed the risks associated with how the canopy had been modified, and identified a more suitable way of adapting it;
- made sure it took suitable measures to prevent anyone falling through the canopy, using harnesses or other protective equipment if necessary;
- made sure its permit-to-work system was being followed;
- arranged for any work on the crane to be done in a designated area away from additional hazards such as the zinc tank; and
- insisted upon seeing and reviewing the crane maintenance contractor's risk assessment and associated procedures to ensure that the system of work was safe.

'Assessing the risks and taking preventative action could have avoided this accident. It's too late for Allen, but his story shows that we *all* need to take health and safety seriously.'

# It's hard to cope... on your own

**The north coast of Aberdeenshire is a spectacular place full of contrasts. On a fine day, its rugged beauty and small-town charm are breathtaking; on a bad one, it's a bleak and challenging place to be.**

But none of the hardships prepared Amanda McIntosh for the day when a policeman came to her door with the news that 'I'm sorry, Mrs McIntosh – I'm afraid your husband is dead'.

Kenny McIntosh was a builder with over 30 years' experience in the trade. He could turn his hand to most things. He might not have been a trained scaffolder, but when he was asked to take down some scaffolding from a garage on a nearby farm, it seemed like just another day's work.

How the accident happened is still unclear. At the time, he was working with a younger man, Ricky. They had no special equipment to do the job, but it seemed like a simple enough task. The scaffolding had been in place for months, and the winter gales had taken their toll. It had become unsafe, and the farmer wanted it taken down.

Everything seemed to be going fine as the pair worked on the garage roof, until Ricky turned around ... and Kenny wasn't there. The roof was only eight feet high, but that was all it took to end Kenny's life. He lay on the ground below, his neck and skull broken.

Amanda was a family support worker with the Social Work Department and a Marie Curie nurse in the local community at the time. She was used to dealing with the seriously and terminally ill. But now it was her turn to cope with the trauma of personal loss. 'I felt numb when I heard the news. It was all so unreal. I'd never thought about losing my husband before. And here was this young policeman, struggling to find the words to tell me that Kenny was dead.

'Obviously, I knew that accidents can happen in construction, but you never think it'll happen to you, or to someone you love. Yet here I was, faced with the frightening prospect of spending the rest of my life without Kenny. It was a terrible thought.'

The accident happened in March 1997 and affected every aspect of Amanda's life. 'Kenny was a very popular character. The funeral was a really big affair. It wasn't just my children and family and I who felt his loss – the whole community was shocked. And it wasn't just the fact he'd died that people found hard to cope with – it was the way it happened.'

The accident hit Ricky hard, too. 'One minute Kenny had been talking to him – the next he was dead. The day after the accident, Ricky brought Kenny's lunch box and bag round to the house. I couldn't bear to see them. I threw them in the bin.'

Amanda didn't go out much at first. 'The people in the community were very supportive, but I didn't want to be talking about Kenny all the time, so I cut myself off for a while. And I couldn't go back to work. Dealing with the terminally ill was just too much after my own loss.'

'It's the children who I feel most sorry for. Paula was 18 at the time. She'd learnt to drive with Kenny; they'd spent a lot of time together. But Michael was three years younger. He was beginning to spend more time with his dad, playing darts at the

local British Legion. Kenny had just bought him a half set of golf clubs and had started to teach him to play when the accident happened. I used to sit and cry when I saw those clubs, lying unused in the corner of the room.'





# 5 steps

'Five years on, I'm still floundering. It's like I'm in a black tunnel, with no obvious way out. At last, I'm starting to see windows of light appearing, but they still seem a long way off.'

'Over the last three years, I've been trying to turn work into life. Money is a worry. Our financial position was getting better when Kenny died – we had plenty to look forward to. But now things are a lot more difficult. It's hard to cope on your own.'

Amanda doesn't really blame anyone for Kenny's death. 'Anybody can make a mistake, and that's how I see the accident. But what does annoy me is the fact that nothing has changed since to prevent another tragedy. The accidents haven't stopped since Kenny died. I want to see employers improve their work practices. The building trade in particular needs to take a long, hard look at itself. People seem to hold on to their old ideas of what work should be – that's what's at fault. We need to bring people's attitudes towards work up to date, to make them think about safety.'

'I never knew in all the years we were married how dangerous Kenny's trade can be. The accident statistics are horrifying. And they're not just statistics – they're people's lives, like mine and Kenny's and Michael's and Paula's.'

'This part of the country is very much in decline. People don't want to be unemployed, so they put up with poor working conditions and employers who put their lives in danger. I want to see the Health and Safety Executive given greater powers. I want to see inspectors turning up at premises unannounced so they can see the conditions that people are really working under. And I want to see employers being held personally accountable when things go wrong. It's they who should have to pay for the tragedies that keep on happening, not their companies. I'm held accountable for what I do in my line of work – why should the building trade be any different?'

'My life might have taken a huge turn for the worse, but I'm not going to let it ruin me. Kenny lived life to the full, and that's what I want for myself and my children. I like to think I can look forward to the future. Life's too short to spend it all dwelling on the past.'

'I don't really know where the future will lead me, but I'm sure it will be with my family and friends. My children give me a real purpose in life – something to get out of bed for in the morning. I should be grateful for that.'

'While one door might have shut, a whole new set of options are open for us. We intend to make the most of them, in spite of all that's happened.'

## 5 steps to safe working at heights

- Eliminate the need to work from heights if you can (eg install windows that can be cleaned from the inside).
- If work needs to be done at height, select the right access equipment to prevent a fall (eg scaffolds and mobile elevating work platforms).
- Engage competent, trained and properly supervised people to do the work.
- If there is a residual risk of falling, take additional safety measures such as safety nets, safety harnesses and lanyards.
- Make sure any equipment used is properly maintained.

*Obviously, I knew that accidents can happen in construction, but you never think it'll happen to you, or to someone you love.*

# The memories...

**Imagine – it's a quiet day on site. You're responsible for a major building renovation project. There are only a few workers around. You're catching up on your paperwork when the door flies open and one of your gangers bursts in, out of breath, looking worried – 'There's been an accident ... it's Rob ... it looks bad!' Imagine how you'd feel.**

This was the situation faced by James Player, Project Manager of a building site in Bristol city centre. Now building sites are notoriously hazardous places to work. Minor accidents are not uncommon. But this was different.

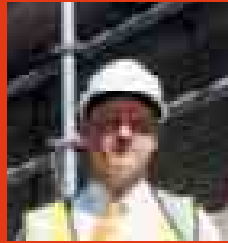
'I felt sick', James explains. 'Yes, we'd had some cuts and bruises since the project began, but this was the first serious accident I'd had to deal with.'

James and his ganger rushed to the scene of the accident. Rob was a casual labourer who'd had several short spells of work for the demolition subcontractor. He was a nice bloke, not a skilled labourer, but a conscientious worker. Now he was lying on a pile of rubble, the life rapidly draining from him. 'He was obviously seriously injured – a weak pulse, but getting weaker. All I could do is cover him with my jacket and monitor his condition while we waited for the ambulance. I felt so helpless...'

Construction has the worst accident record of any British industry. James knew the risks. He'd had all the relevant training, was familiar with what the law required, knew his first aid – but it had always seemed so remote. Now he was confronted with the shocking reality of a serious accident.

'There was so much to think about – keep in touch with the ambulance, monitor his pulse and breathing, remember to ring HSE. The adrenalin was really pumping. It was only after the ambulance had taken Rob off that the reality of what had happened fully sank in – and that's when the shakes started. A man had lost his life on our site. It was an accident that should never have happened ... such a waste. All he wanted was to get his shovel back...'

From what they could work out, Rob had left his shovel up on the scaffolding the previous day. Being the conscientious type, he decided to go up and get it back – only workers had started to strip the scaffolding the previous afternoon, and the ladders had been removed. So he decided to climb up the scaffolding poles and building facade. That was to prove a fatal mistake – he must have lost his footing, crashing down onto the rubble below.



*Rob was a nice bloke, not a skilled labourer, but a conscientious worker. Now he was lying on a pile of rubble, the life rapidly draining from him.*

# that won't go away

'I can still see it now, more than two years after it happened', James continues. 'There were only a few of us on site at the time, but everyone was hit hard by the accident. Construction workers are usually a boisterous lot, but over the next couple of weeks, the whole site was a lot more subdued than normal. These were people who had worked closely with Rob. One minute he was there, the next he wasn't. It really did come as a terrible shock to us all.'

Of course, different people deal with this type of thing in different ways. Some prefer to discuss what's happened, others keep it to themselves. 'I personally didn't want to talk about it. There was plenty of support and advice on hand, but I preferred to deal with this in my own way. I didn't sleep well for the first week or so. My wife knew that something was wrong and wanted me to open up and talk about it, but that's not the way I am.'

'My initial shock soon turned into anger. This might sound perverse, but I felt angry at what had happened. I was really sorry for Rob, but I was angry that his actions had caused so much pain and heartache. His intentions may have been good, but he was courting disaster. This is an accident that could so easily have been avoided – but it was too late now.'

'I'm ultimately responsible for safety on our site. You can't watch people all the time, and our company has a good safety record, but I still couldn't help feeling guilty about what had happened. And it was even worse at Rob's funeral. Seeing all the grief his death had caused made me feel dreadful. Could I have done anything to avoid the accident happening? You can't foresee the unforeseeable, but the question was always there. It was most distressing for all concerned.'

On building sites, the workforce changes day by day. It's hard to make sure that everyone knows the rules when they might only be working there for a week or less. So far, over 800 people have worked on the site. Each one has to be properly inducted into the safety procedures. Since the accident, James does most of the inductions himself. 'I try to make each one relevant and specific to the individuals concerned. I make sure they know we've already had one fatality, and that I don't want there to be another.'

'Our company now circulates an accident report to all its sites every month, showing what has happened and

## **Demolition work continues to kill and injure construction workers. Contractors should:**

- ensure that they plan work carefully and that their safety plan and method statements are site-specific;
- employ only experienced and competent supervisors;
- make certain that the workforce is competent and provided with proper site induction; and
- use the right plant and equipment for the job and make sure that it is properly maintained.

what we can learn from it. This is a really good idea, although the lessons I've learnt are a lot more powerful than anything a piece of paper could say. An experience like this stays with you forever.

'I've always been cautious, but since this happened, I'm even more so. It's really made me aware of my own mortality. I jump every time I hear a crash and shouts on site, so my nerves are always on edge. Now when I see people putting themselves and others in danger, I feel really angry. They know they shouldn't be doing it, they've seen what can happen, yet they still take risks. It's frightening to think that the same thing could happen again.'

'I now look at safety with a keener eye. I do everything I can to make sure people take their health and safety seriously – I don't want myself and my colleagues and another man's family to go through that type of trauma again. There's pressure in every job to get it completed as quickly as possible, but now I'm even more determined to make sure that this isn't done at the expense of workers' health and safety.'

'I threw away the jacket I put over Rob as he lay there on that pile of rubble – I could never wear it again. Unfortunately, the memories aren't that easy to get rid of. This is a part of my life I'll never forget, and never want to have to go through again. You can't remove all risk from construction work, but that's no reason to stop trying.'

# Why did Martin ...have to die?

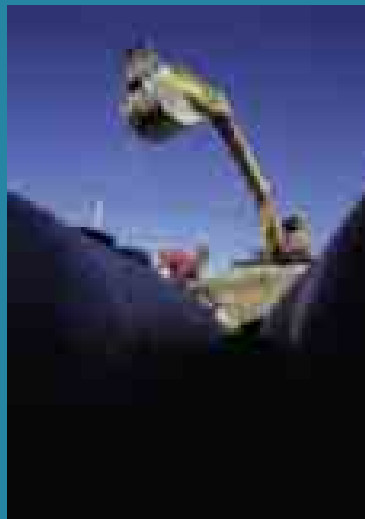
**Martin Gill wasn't worried when he set off for work that day.**

He was a groundworker on a nearby building site – a job he loved. He wanted to learn all he could about the trade. He'd just got top marks on a safety training course and was trying to get a place in college to do welding and plumbing.

Yet as he was helping unload drainage pipes from a dumper truck, he couldn't have known that this would be his last day at work. For the excavator working by him had limited rear visibility; lack of space restricted its ability to manoeuvre; there was no banksman to guide it; no consideration had been given to using barriers to keep the vehicle and the men working on the ground separate – and there was no way for Martin to know that the excavator was reversing towards him, its driver unaware that someone was about to be crushed under its tracks.

Martin's fiancée, Tracy, was working at the local market when the police arrived. 'I couldn't believe it when they told me Martin was dead. It was the worst feeling in the world. You just can't describe what it's like – complete numbness.'

The numbness was still there when she visited the site to lay flowers where Martin had died. But for Martin's mother, Irene, it would have been too painful to see where her son had been killed. 'In my eyes, there was no point. He wasn't there, and I wanted to remember him as he really was – full of enthusiasm, full of energy, and with a love of life that had been taken away forever. He loved his family and he loved his fiancée, and he was so looking forward to starting a family of his own. This accident didn't just take away one life – it took away many generations to come. He'll never be a father or a grandfather now – something he wanted so much.'



So how do you come to terms with a tragedy like this? How do you cope with the loss of someone so close to you, especially when that loss could so easily have been avoided? For Irene, the answer is simple. 'You don't. You can't come to terms with something like this. You just have to struggle to cope as best you can. We still hope that maybe one day we'll wake up and find that it's all been a bad dream.'

The whole family has received medical help, hoping this would make it easier for them to cope with each passing day. They've all had counselling, with varying degrees of success. And there's certainly been no shortage of help and support from Martin's many friends, who were themselves devastated by what happened. 'But you never expect it to happen to one of yours', Irene explains: 'Nothing can prepare you for that.'

'It's like something inside you has died. It leaves an enormous void in your life that nothing can ever fill. I try not to be over-protective with my other children, but you can't help but worry about them. The fear is always there in the back of your mind that something else could go wrong...'

And it's the same for Irene's children. Jacqui rings her mum every night to make sure she's alright. If Irene doesn't answer, she worries. And if Jacqui doesn't ring, then Irene worries and has to call her to make sure nothing's happened. 'It's silly. You tell yourself you shouldn't be like that, but it's impossible not to worry. You see how quickly things can go wrong, how easily a life can be taken away from you.'

They say that time heals, but for Martin's family, the pain is ever present. While they all have their own treasured memories of a loving son, brother and fiancé, those memories can also be cruel at times. Like the birthdays and anniversaries which bring back their loss, the bank holidays which Martin used to spend with his brother, Tony, and which Tony now dreads having to face without him, and the England matches they'd always watch together, but which Tony can't bear to watch any more.

Martin's elder sister, Dawn, has also struggled to come to terms with his loss. 'And it's not just me – my children David, Caroline and Steven miss him

Vehicles are the third biggest cause of fatal accidents in the workplace.

About 70 people are killed by workplace transport every year. A further 1600 are seriously injured.

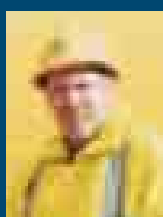
The three main causes of these accidents are vehicles hitting/running over people, vehicles turning over, and people falling off vehicles.

Companies must:

- assess and properly control risks from vehicles in their workplace, including visiting vehicles (eg delivery vans);
- separate pedestrians from vehicles as far as possible;
- remove or reduce the need for vehicles to reverse in and around workplaces (many workplace transport accidents involve reversing);
- do all they can to separate loading and unloading activities involving vehicles from other activities; and
- make sure drivers are properly trained and competent, that vehicles are only used on suitable surfaces and are well maintained.



**Brian Fotheringham** was the inspector who investigated the accident...



'As with so many accidents we investigate, Martin Gill's death could have been prevented.

'The risks associated with excavators are well known. Had an adequate risk assessment been carried out, a series of simple precautions could have been taken. These include:

- organising the work to eliminate or reduce the need to reverse;
- putting up barriers to keep people away from the area where the excavator was manoeuvring;
- fitting reversing aids such as alarms; and
- appointing a banksman to control the movement of the machine.

*Any of these measures could have prevented Mr Gill's tragic death.'*

terribly too. He was more like a father than an uncle to them. He and Tony had planned to take David for his first drink when he reached 18, but that's been and gone. It could never be the same...'

*It's like something inside you has died. It leaves an enormous void in your life that nothing can ever fill.*

So do they feel bitter that an accident like this could have been allowed to happen? 'Too often, accidents occur when corners are cut, when costs count more than lives. Firms have a responsibility to look after the health and safety of those who work for them. If someone had done a proper risk assessment, if there'd been a banksman to make sure that lives weren't put at risk, if the job had been done right, then Martin would still be here, and none of us would be feeling the pain that we've been put through or the loss we're having to endure.

'Saving money doesn't make up for losing a life. Cutting corners just isn't worth it. And until we have tougher sentences in place to deal with those who flout the rules, it's unlikely that we'll see a real improvement in safety at work.'

As well as the support which such a close family can give each other, there's also the strength that Martin still provides which helps keep them all going. 'He believed that life is for living, and he lived life to the full. If he saw us giving up hope, if he saw that we were weak, he'd be so disappointed. He had no choice that day whether he lived or died. He certainly didn't deserve what he got. Things will never be the same without him. That's why we keep going – for Martin.'

*One of Irene's most treasured memories of a loving son at her 60th birthday party, just three months before the tragic accident which took him away from her*



# ...Until we're together again

Picture a farm, and what do you see? A field of cows comes to mind. A barn packed full of hay. A tractor (every farm has at least one). And let's not forget the trusty old sheepdog.

All harmless stuff, you may think. But every year, around 55 people die on farms, and about a dozen of these deaths involve tractors.

One of these statistics is Colin Hawking, who lost his life on his farm just a few miles outside Cardigan, south-west Wales, in 2000. Only he isn't just a statistic. Like so many other accidents, Colin left behind his wife, Janet, their six children and their grandchildren. The loss of a loved one is probably the most traumatic thing any of us will ever have to deal with. Most of us would have struggled to cope, but fortunately, Janet has her faith to sustain her.

Janet and Colin had been married for 27 years. Farming was in their blood. 'We worked hard and enjoyed what we did', Janet explains. 'Farming has its ups and downs, but we were happy with our life together. We shared a love for each other and a love for God. What more could we ask?'



*'I am blessed to have had Colin, and I'm grateful that one day we'll be reunited again'*

Once a week, a local man would come along to help out on the farm – sweeping up, general labouring, that sort of thing. 'He and Colin took the tractor up to the field to bring down one of the cows. I was busy in the kitchen when our helper suddenly appeared at the door with a jumbled message: something had happened ... Colin was lying in the lane and couldn't move...

'I called the ambulance and ran off down the lane. Colin was obviously badly injured. The tractor was stuck in the fence, its engine still turning ... it must have run him over.'

Janet didn't panic. 'I could tell it was serious. I prayed with Colin and told him how much I loved him. I asked for God's help. And I asked for it again as we waited for news at the hospital. I asked the Lord, how on earth was I going to cope. Thankfully, He answered – my faith gave me peace of mind. I held hands with my children, and when the news finally came, I told them "Daddy has moved house", but that we'd see him again one day.'

So what exactly happened on that wet and windy day? How did a bit of routine farm work end this way? Janet has no doubts. 'I don't know why, but Colin must have asked our helper to drive the tractor, as he led the cow down from the field. There's a sort of tradition in farming that we all instinctively know how to drive one of these vehicles. But it's not that simple.

'What some people don't understand is that tractors don't handle like a car, especially when they've got a load up behind. They're often quite heavy to drive, requiring a firm hand and a heavy foot. They should never be left in the hands of inexperienced people. Yet for some reason, Colin asked him to drive. I don't blame our helper for what happened. Colin ought never to have asked him. But he did. The poor weather and Colin's hearing problems wouldn't have helped, either.'

'I grieve for Colin, of course I do, but not without hope. We are a close family, and throughout, we have supported each other. Obviously, at times you feel sad, but the Scriptures tell us not to worry, but to pray for help. Colin wouldn't want us to be miserable. He's now gone to a better place, where there's no more pain or tears, and I'm thankful for that.'

After the accident, Janet made a conscious decision to keep the farm. 'We'd farmed it for 25 years and had a lot of happy memories. I didn't want to give all that up. There'd always been lots of fun and joy on the farm, and I wanted that to continue.'

She's pragmatic about her husband's death. 'You can't get 100% protection from accidents anywhere – farms are no different. Animals especially can be very unpredictable. Colin had his collarbone broken once when he was kicked by a cow. But I think farm people generally are aware of the dangers. They just need a gentle reminder every so often not to take chances. And if our experience doesn't make them sit up and take note, then I'm not sure what will.'

One of the problems Janet has found since her husband's death is the extra workload she has to cope with, which could have left her with little time for family life. 'We were in the process of changing from a dairy farm to a suckler herd, as we wanted to have more time for ourselves. That's helped, but I still have to be organised with the work to make time to spend with my family.'

'As for the children, they have their own lives to live, but are there if I need them. In return, I am there for them. They have all coped in different ways, but I hope that the stability of the loving family environment that we have has sustained us all and allowed us to come to terms with what's happened.'

'One of the things that Colin's death has shown me is that we should value and appreciate people, especially our spouses and families. People and relationships are the most important thing. And we should never hold grudges – life's too short. Do so, and you might never get the chance to put things right again. I'm glad that Colin and I had learnt to do this, to forgive and be forgiven.'

Now one of Janet's main goals is to be a good mum and gran. 'It's not always easy to cope, but it's important that I'm there for my children when they're suffering, to laugh and to cry with them. It's precious to be real, to let the tears roll when they need to – but it's never long before the joy comes back again.'

Janet is grateful that her last memory of her husband is one to hold dear. They had started the day by praying together, and Colin had thanked God for the gift of their marriage – a typically caring act from a loving husband.

'I am blessed to have had Colin, and I'm grateful that one day we'll be reunited again. It's important to appreciate what you've got, rather than regret what you haven't. And I've got so much to be thankful for.'



Before you go near a tractor, ask yourself:

- Have you been trained to drive the vehicle?
- Are you wearing suitable clothing and footwear?
- Have you read and understood the instruction manual?
- Do you know how to carry out the work you intend to do?
- Have you carried out pre-start checks of the machinery?
- Do you know enough to work safely?

It's essential that you use the SAFE STOP procedure when leaving the tractor seat:

- Make sure the handbrake is on.
- Make sure all controls are left safe.
- Stop the engine.
- Remove the key.

Check that no one is in danger before you move off. Take special care when there are children around.

Equipment, loads or weather make it harder to see – get help when visibility is reduced, especially when reversing with a trailer or other tall-sided equipment.

Only carry someone else if a proper seat is fitted. **IT IS ILLEGAL TO CARRY CHILDREN UNDER 13 ON ANY TRACTOR!**

You are most likely to have an accident when hitching or unhitching a machine from your tractor.

*Always:*

- Use SAFE STOP.
- Operate controls from the correct position.

*Never:*

- Stand between the tractor and other machines, or behind them.

Unguarded power take-off (PTO) shafts, machine blockages and maintenance work cause many serious injuries. Correct guarding is essential, and you must remember SAFE STOP.

- Make sure guards are in place.
- Report any faults immediately.
- Never use a machine with a damaged PTO shaft guard.

A tractor can overturn anywhere – even on the flat. Most accidents, however, happen on slopes. **NEVER DRIVE ON SLOPES UNLESS YOU'RE PROPERLY TRAINED.** Remember:

- Match the equipment to the tractor.
- Always couple, maintain and use implement brakes.
- Use seat belts if they are fitted – if not, get one fitted and wear it.
- Make sure a safety cab is fitted.



# Nobody should go to work ... to die

*I have no husband and  
the kids have no dad.  
It's such a waste.*



Mike Burd was the inspector investigating Arthur Mann's death. His comments apply to all

kinds of workplaces - could they help you stay alive?

'As with most accidents, there were simple, inexpensive steps the company could and should have taken to reduce the risk.

'For a few hundred pounds, Arthur Mann could have been properly trained. This would most likely have prevented the accident.

'Following changes to the law, in most cases, lift trucks should have seat belts fitted. Drivers should be trained to wear them from the beginning and supervised to make sure they are worn afterwards.

'If there's one lesson to be learnt from this tragedy, it's that we should never underestimate the value of training. The benefits far outweigh the costs. A little time for proper training isn't too much to ask, is it? A life could depend on it!'

**You might have heard of Arthur Mann. He was a well known and respected footballer in the 1970s and 1980s, enjoying success with clubs like Hearts, Manchester City and Notts County, Mansfield and Shrewsbury. He also managed Boston and was assistant manager of West Brom.**

But in February 1999, he died. At the time, he was driving a fork-lift truck in a factory in Birmingham. His wife, Sandra, had no idea what his work involved. She'd wave him off every morning with a 'See you tonight – take care': only that night, he didn't come home.

'I was on a training course that day', she explains. 'I'm a physio assistant and we were learning about exercise regimes when someone came in and told me to ring work. At first I thought I'd done something wrong, but it was obviously much more serious than that. "Ring home straight away", they told me, and my heart sank. I knew it was Arthur.

'My daughter, Georgina, answered the phone. She was just screaming and screaming – she couldn't say anything. "What's happened? Is it your dad?" Yes, it was. "Is he hurt?" No answer. I asked: "Has he died?" She said "Yes".

'I just couldn't believe it. "They're saying my husband's died!", I said to the woman on reception. My mouth went dry. I needed a glass of water. They brought me one, but I couldn't drink it – couldn't even pick up the glass. I went totally numb. I just couldn't function at all.'

So how did such a tragic accident happen? Arthur had been using a fork-lift truck to load a container outside the factory where he worked when a lorry came down the road towards him. He reversed across the road, away from the container, to let the lorry pass. The truck's forks were still raised and, as he reached the opposite kerb, the vehicle overturned. Arthur was crushed beneath it.



When the truck was later examined, investigators found no significant fault with it. But Arthur was not trained to drive a fork-lift truck, as the law requires.

Such a simple mistake to make. You wouldn't expect driving a fork-lift truck slowly around your workplace to be dangerous. Yet people are killed in accidents like these every year. And most of them have had no training.

Sandra is angry because her husband's death could have been avoided: 'Employers have both a legal and a moral duty not to let anyone drive these things unless they're properly trained. It's as simple as that. They might look harmless enough, but they can be lethal in the wrong hands. And one killed my husband. He didn't die, as far as I'm concerned – he was killed!

'As Arthur went off to work that chilly February morning, the last thing he said was "I'll do those shelves when I get back". Those shelves are still sitting there, waiting to be done, over three years later. They just don't seem all that important any more.'

Sandra knows exactly what she'd like to see done to stop this type of thing happening again: 'I want every fork-lift truck to be registered, every company that uses fork-lift trucks to be registered, and every driver to be fully trained and licensed to use them. These vehicles are changing all the time, so it's important to keep that training updated. I wouldn't be allowed to work in physiotherapy without going on all the relevant training courses, with refresher training every year. Why should people be expected to drive these trucks – trucks that can and do kill – without any training at all?

'The companies that make fork-lift trucks should be able to keep track of who's using them, and drivers be made more aware of the dangers. And yet, across the country, people are still driving them without the proper training. Statistics show that at least a few of them will be dead this time next year.

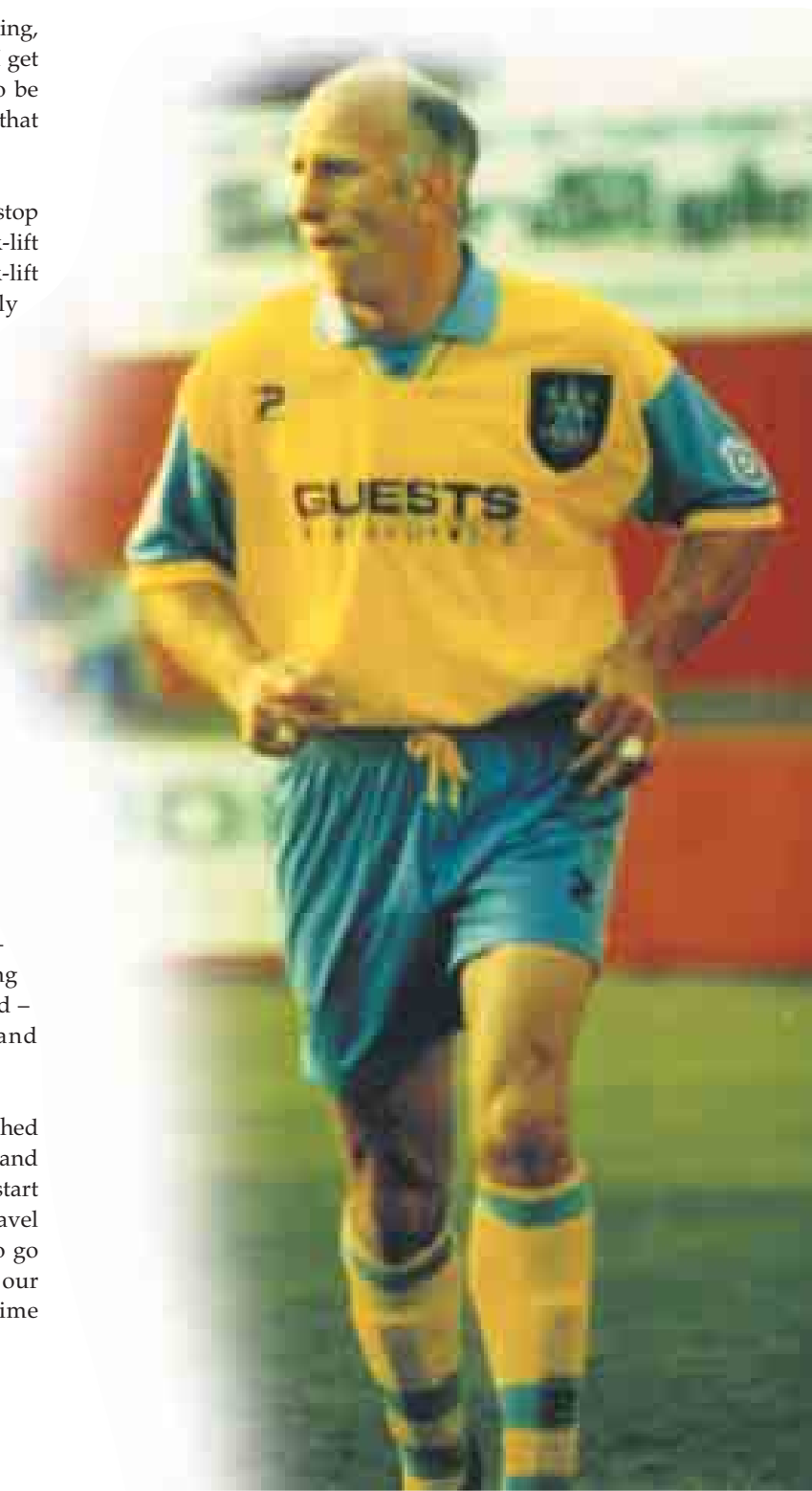
'My brother-in-law has a vending machine company up in Scotland. If he visits a site where they use these vehicles, he asks if the drivers are properly trained. If not, he tells them about Arthur – and they tend to listen. And if I see someone driving one, I find it difficult not to ask if they've been trained – I don't want to see what happened to my husband happen to them and their family.'

Arthur was just 51 years old when he died. 'We'd reached that point when our three children were all settled and making their own way in life. Now we had time to start doing the things we wanted to do. We intended to travel – see more of the world. In fact, we were planning to go up to Scotland towards the end of summer to visit our homeland. We were hoping to spend a lot more time together – we were so looking forward to it.

'Now all that's gone. I have no husband and the kids have no dad. It's such a waste.

'I used to think I was so lucky. I had a wonderful husband, three beautiful children and the kind of friends and family and workmates most people can only dream about. Now a large part of that has been taken away. Nothing can bring Arthur back – I just don't want anyone else to suffer what we've been through.

'Over the past three years, there have been times when I've wanted to die myself. We have all been totally devastated by what happened to Arthur. This accident has ruined the life we were planning together in our later years. Nobody should go to work to die.'



**It was a lovely spring day when Karen Armstrong kissed her young sons, James and George, goodbye at the school gate. Their father would be picking them up after school, so she had the best part of the day to work through her chores.**

She was at home with her mother, Rose, in the early evening, when the phone rang. They were to come quickly. There'd been an accident – something to do with ATVs (all-terrain vehicles, or quad bikes). James was hurt. That's all they knew.



Karen didn't really know how bad things were as she and Rose rushed off to the hospital. 'I felt sick. I was panicking. I had to be with my son. I didn't want anything to happen before I got there.'

'We were allowed in while the doctors worked on James. There wasn't a mark on him – no cuts or bruises – nothing. We told him he'd be alright, that he'd soon be back with his friends. I just wanted him to know that I was there for him.'

But James had suffered a massive blow to the head. The only hope was to transfer him to a specialist unit in Leeds. But by the time they arrived, he was brain dead. 'I thought I'd be asked to give my permission for the life-support machine to be switched off, but there was no need. All we could do was wash the dirt off his hands and face, and kiss him goodbye. The nurse told us he was slipping away – and then he was gone...'

It was a tragic accident, pure and simple. James' father had picked him and George and one of their friends up from school and taken them back to his farm. George and his friend took their quad bikes up into a field, while James stayed behind to help his dad. But it wasn't long before he changed his mind and went off to join the other two.

He ran up the gentle slope, waving his arms, shouting that it was his turn. The machines headed towards him, but the grass was wet and slippery. His friend lost control, and skidded straight into him...

The whole family was devastated by the accident. At first, Karen couldn't believe what had happened. 'I just felt so empty. But I had to be strong, to get through the funeral. I wanted things to be right for my son.'

The cortège left from James' father's farm. That's where he'd been born and brought up. That's where he'd played and laughed and brought his family so much pleasure. But where once there'd been joy and laughter, now there was silence and tears.

It wasn't until after the funeral that Karen really felt the depth of her loss. 'It was an empty feeling, a pain you can't describe – almost physical. I cried until I couldn't cry any more. My life was in ruins. Things would never be the same again.' Like taking



*All we could do was wash  
the dirt off his hands and  
face, and kiss him  
goodbye...*

**If**

George back to school, and seeing all James' classmates, and knowing that someone was missing, someone she'd never be able to hold again and talk to again and do all those things these other boys' mothers could do.

Of course, it's not just Karen who feels the pain of James' loss. 'His sister, Laura, can remember the day he died. She finds it easier to talk about what's happened. But George wouldn't mention it at first, and he's still not come to terms with it. He's suffered from nightmares, couldn't sleep, and would panic if I was ever late coming home. He became very introverted, didn't bother with his friends any more – it was so upsetting to see how he changed.'

Karen's mother and father idolised James and were both heartbroken by his death. Rose thinks about James constantly: 'I feel unhappy all the time. It's a feeling inside that never goes away. No matter how well things are going, they can never be right now that James is no longer with us. I have to tell myself I'll see him again when my turn comes. Otherwise, I couldn't cope.'

Karen had no formal counselling. Instead, she found the support of her local GP invaluable. 'Depression and the feelings of helplessness used to come in waves. For a while, I'd feel like I was coping, but then things would get worse, and I couldn't carry on. "Don't worry – that's normal", he'd say, and he was right.'

On many occasions, she's wanted to die herself so that the pain would stop. 'I keep trying to look forward, but the future never looks any brighter. Whether it's a holiday or birthday or Christmas or school sports day or whatever, there's always someone missing...

'This year, James would have been eleven. I don't know what he would have looked like, how tall he'd be, how he'd be getting on at school – nothing. I can watch his friends growing up, but my own son will always be seven. He had his whole life in front of him. He was just a young lad who'd done nobody any harm, so why did this have to happen? Why couldn't it have been me? I feel that we've all been cheated.'

Karen considered moving away at one point, but that wouldn't have changed things. 'This is what I've got for the rest of my life. People say time heals, but it doesn't. You just learn to cope with those feelings better.'

If all this has taught Karen anything, it's that you don't realise how precious your children are until you lose one. 'Speaking as a parent, my advice would be to always think before you take a risk, or you might spend the rest of your life regretting it. It's not worth saving a minute by not putting on your child's seat belt or pointing out the dangers – you could end up spending a lifetime without them.'

'If there was anything I could do to bring James back, I'd do it – but there isn't. I brought him into the world, and it hurts me so much to remember how I could do nothing to help him as he slipped away from us on that hospital bed. Now all I can do is hope and pray that nobody else will go through what we've been through, because it's not something that happens and then goes away. It's something that's going to be there, that we're going to have to live with for the rest of our lives ... and it just gets harder.'

## ATVs are fun – right?

Certainly, many of us use ATVs as recreational vehicles, but you should never lose sight of the fact that **THESE VEHICLES CAN KILL!**

Every year, two or three people are killed at work in ATV accidents. Recreational use brings more death and injury. And most of these happen because the rider wasn't trained and didn't know the dangers.

So stay safe, and make sure you **ALWAYS** follow these seven tips:

- ATVs handle differently from any other type of machine – make sure that *everyone* who uses them has formal training from a qualified instructor.
- Never carry passengers – the long seat is to allow you to move your weight around for safe driving – carrying passengers prevents this and leads to overturning.
- Have the vehicle properly maintained, and check tyre pressures every day – these are critical to safe handling.
- Loads carried should be balanced between the front and rear, and never exceed the manufacturer's recommendations.
- Always wear a safety helmet – 52% of deaths are due to head injuries.
- For children, make sure you have the right size ATV to suit the age of the child.
- Children should not use ATVs for a work activity – it's the law!



**only** ... I could hold  
him one  
more time

# Learn from

**Seven very real stories of pain and suffering – who can read them without being moved?**

But spare a thought for those whose job it is to deal with the aftermath of these tragedies. The emergency services spring immediately to mind – doctors, nurses and paramedics called to deal with horrific injuries; fire officers who often have to pick up the pieces... But who would think of the inspectors whose job it is to investigate accidents, find out what went wrong, and bring those responsible to justice?



Ken Logan is a Principal Inspector in HSE Northern Ireland. He's investigated around three dozen fatal accidents over the last fifteen years or so. How has he coped with the horrific stories he's been involved in? How has the job affected him? And what is it that makes someone want to become an inspector in the first place?

'I was a civil engineer with the water industry', Ken explains. 'We'd had a couple of accidents, and I was pressuring our safety officer to provide training for the workers. Then the job in HSENI came up, and I applied.'

'It wasn't that I wanted to wield the big stick – not at all. I just wanted to improve conditions for workers. This was the perfect way to do so.'

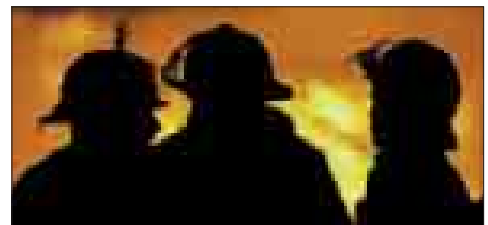
Of course, when you're new to a job, it's difficult to know exactly what will be expected of you. One event early in Ken's career brought home to him just what's involved. 'I had to attend a

coroner's inquest into the death of a four-year-old boy killed on a building site. I had children of my own, one around the same age as this youngster. Seeing how devastated his parents were really brought home to me the kind of tragedies I would have to face.'

Ken deals mainly with the construction and quarry industries. 'They're like small communities in themselves. Everybody knows everybody else, so when there's an accident, chances are you'll have met the person involved. Quite often, several generations from the same family work together. When one of them gets killed, turning up to investigate the accident is like walking into a wake. And they're all waiting for you to give them the answers, to explain what's gone wrong. It's a huge responsibility.'

So how can you remain detached in such a situation? 'You can't. It's impossible not to become involved on a personal level. When you see the pain and the sorrow that everyone's feeling, you can't help but be touched by it. Yet you have to remain professional, not let your emotions cloud your judgement. After all, you're there to do a job, and to do it to the best of your ability.'

Ken doesn't see accident investigation just as a matter of punishing those who are at fault. 'To me, it's more important to find out what went wrong and why, and to send a message to the rest of industry that they have to take health and safety seriously, to put their house in order. Every accident is a terrible loss, but it's happened and can't be undone. But if we can learn from it and use it to educate others so that they don't make the same mistake, then at least some good will have come of it. This won't bring the victims back, but the least we can do is try to make sure they haven't died in vain.'



# them...

## before it happens to you!

'The sad thing is that, of the 30 or so fatal accidents I've investigated over the years, every one of them could easily have been prevented. That means over 30 people have died needlessly, and 30 families have lost a loved one who should still be with them.

'And it makes me angry that accidents keep on happening. I can go into a workplace and see people taking the same kind of risks that recently killed a man only a few miles down the road. We use whatever means we can to publicise these accidents, and yet people still carry on risking their own lives and the lives of others. They think it can't happen to them, but I know it can. It's disappointing that some of them don't realise this until it's too late.'

Obviously, when accidents happen, it's a stressful time for everyone. 'Relatives sometimes approach me for information and support. I try to put myself in their position – ask myself what I would want to know if I were in their shoes. If speaking to them will help them come to terms with their grief, I'm more than prepared to do so.

'Obviously, if they've lost a loved one, they want to see justice done. It's my job to make sure the due process of the law is applied, to do the right thing by the deceased, their family and their work colleagues.'

The proof of whether Ken has achieved this must surely come from the bereaved families themselves. Generally, they have said that he's acted fairly, and have thanked him for helping them cope with their loss. 'As for failures, I feel I've failed when I haven't managed to make people take health and safety seriously through the normal powers of persuasion, and have to use my legal powers instead to get the message across.'



*Investigating accidents isn't satisfying – making a difference is.*

It's difficult to switch off at the end of a day which has seen another life taken and another family distraught. But Ken thinks it's worth it. 'My job gives me a real opportunity to make a contribution to health and safety in the workplace. No one wants to have to deal with the kind of tragedies that I've been faced with over the years, but when an employer listens to what you say, when a company starts to put safety before profit, and when someone rings you up and says "Thank you, Ken – your advice saved my life today", that's what makes it all worthwhile.

'I don't take pleasure from investigating accidents. But what does bring me job satisfaction is knowing that, without inspectors out there pushing the health and safety message, there'd be far more accidents and far more tragedies.

'Northern Ireland's workplace accident record is nothing to be proud of. People generally have a poor attitude towards health and safety here, so the job we do is an important one. If we could change attitudes, we could make the province a better place to work.

'Investigating accidents isn't satisfying – making a difference is.'

*To me, it's more important to find out what went wrong and why, and to send a message to the rest of industry that they have to take health and safety seriously.*

# Further

# information

In line with its published enforcement policy, HSE prosecutes companies that break health and safety laws and put people's lives at risk.

Some of the companies which feature in this book were prosecuted and fined. These fines total more than £160 000, with nearly £40 000 costs awarded. Although this can in no way make up for the lives lost, it should make everybody think twice before exposing themselves or their workers to unnecessary danger.

But HSE isn't just about enforcement. We also offer advice and guidance on good health and safety practice so that these tragedies don't happen in the first place.

A good place to start is HSE's free leaflet *An introduction to health and safety* (INDG259). No matter what line of business you're in, you'll find plenty of useful information here. And if it doesn't answer all your questions, it contains plenty of useful sources of further information and advice.



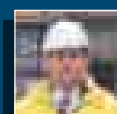
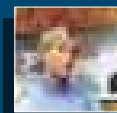
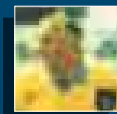
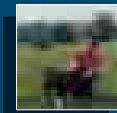
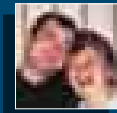
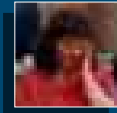
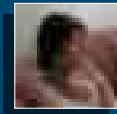
HSE's website, [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk), has loads of information on small firms, accident reporting, research and statistics, safety campaigns, the Workers' Webpage and much more, all designed to keep people healthy and safe at work, or from work activities.

Infoline is HSE's free information and advice service. One call is all it takes. Just ring 08701 545500, and you're through to a comprehensive pool of health and safety expertise. Whether you're a member of the public, a small business, a large manufacturer or provide public services, there's someone who can answer your questions and give you the information you need.

HSE Books has around 2500 priced and free publications on offer. You can browse through the extensive list of titles on our website ([www.hsebooks.co.uk](http://www.hsebooks.co.uk)) or call 01787 881165 for more information.

*We appreciate that businesses face many pressures. But statistics show that good health and safety really is good business, and it makes sound financial sense to take it seriously – not to mention the terrible human costs when things go wrong.*

*So take note of what our contributors say. As Ken Logan puts it, learn from them before it happens to you. Now that you know where to go for good health and safety advice, you've got everything you need to help make sure that yours doesn't become another job to die for!*





Printed and published by the Health and Safety Executive  
MISC471 C400 10/02