

Moving and handling materials in construction: early findings from HSE's latest health campaign

A snapshot of good and bad manual-handling practices on construction sites across Great Britain has been revealed in six weeks of inspections.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) carried out more than 1,000 inspections in October and November, checking how workers were moving heavy, bulky and awkward-to-handle materials.

The inspections by Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety revealed many examples of good practice.

These included the use of mechanical equipment to handle large glazing panes, using small inexpensive air bags to help to position heavy doors when being installed, and the use of all-terrain pallet trucks to move blocks and brick-lifters to carry bricks around site.

But HSE inspectors also found many examples of poor practice, including a worker lifting an 80kg kerb on his own without any assistance from machinery, lifting aids or colleagues, and a 110kg floor saw that had to be moved into and out of a work van by two operatives at a street works site, both of which resulted in enforcement action.

Working in construction is a physically demanding job and many construction workers suffer injuries to muscles, bones, joints and nerves that affect their health and ability to work.

HSE's Acting Head of Construction Division Mike Thomas said: "Lifting and moving heavy, bulky and awkward-to-handle objects on construction sites is harming the health of thousands of construction workers to such a degree every aspect of their lives is affected.

"The 1,000 plus inspections just completed took place across a range of construction sites to check the action businesses are taking to ensure their workers' health is being protected.

"We know from early analysis that HSE's MAC Tool (Manual Handling Assessment Charts) was used by inspectors at a large number of inspections to improve duty holders' understanding of the risks and inform enforcement decisions.

"A full evaluation of the inspection data is underway, and we will release more information in due course."

HSE's MAC Tool helps to assess the most common risk factors in lifting, carrying and handling activities. It was developed to identify high-risk manual handling and points users towards the factors they need to modify to control these risks.

The law requires employers to prevent the ill health of their workers, which includes injuries to muscles, bones, joints and nerves that can develop over time, known as musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs).

Moving and handling risks should be considered and prevented where possible at the design stage. Once on site and before work starts, employers should talk to workers about controlling existing risks to make sure that the right handling aids, equipment and training are in place to prevent MSD injuries.

HSE Inspector Ian Whittles said: "How materials are moved around site and used in the construction process needs to be considered from the design stage right through to the construction stage.

"For example, planning for how materials are moved and handled from the point of delivery to the point of installation on all kinds of sites from small domestic projects with limited access, to large inner-city commercial sites."

Supporting the inspections, HSE ran a communications campaign 'Your health. Your future', which raised awareness of the inspections through media, social media, podcast and webinars to provide helpful advice, information, and links to guidance, for employers and workers.

Over a million connections were made to the campaign via the social media channels alongside extensive stakeholder and press coverage.

Notes to editors:

1. For further advice and guidance visit [WorkRight Construction: Your health. Your future – Work Right to keep Britain safe](#)
2. The [Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise.

Firm fined after blind man falls into open manhole

A family-run plumbing business has been fined £4,000 after a blind man fell into an open manhole.

The 62-year-old registered-blind resident of Hanover Court, a sheltered housing development in Banchory, Aberdeenshire, suffered injuries to his left leg in the fall on February 19, 2020.

The manhole at the sheltered housing development had been left open by A & R Services while a blockage was being cleared.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) into the incident found that A & R Services failed to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risk posed by the open manhole.

The company had failed to put in place barriers, signage or other protective measures to prevent anyone from accessing the pathway leading to the open manhole.

In addition, other than leaning the manhole cover against a door, no signage, barriers, guarding or other protective measures were put in place to prevent pedestrians from falling into the manhole while using the door.

A & R Services, of Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire pleaded guilty to breaching Sections 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and was fined £4,000 at Aberdeen Sheriff Court on December 14, 2022.

HSE principal inspector Niall Miller said: "This incident could so easily have been avoided by simply carrying out correct control measures and safe working practices.

"Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standards."

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2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available

Confectionery firm fined after worker

is injured in fall

A Scottish confectionery and meringue manufacturer has been fined £5,000 after a worker was badly injured in a fall from a forklift truck.

The employee of Lees of Scotland Limited was hurt while helping unload a delivery of equipment from a lorry using a forklift truck in the yard of the company's Coatbridge site on June 4, 2019.

The man had been asked to get on the forklift truck to try to help it stay upright because it couldn't lift the load.

The employee fell from the forklift truck, resulting in a broken arm, cuts to his head and muscle damage to his back. He was off work for more than four weeks, before returning on light duties.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Lees of Scotland Limited had failed to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks arising from a lifting operation undertaken by employees.

This involved the unloading of a lorry using a forklift truck which was not capable of lifting the weight of the loads.

Lees of Scotland Limited, North Caldeen Road, Coatbridge pleaded guilty to breaching Regulations Section 2(1) and Section 33(1)(a) of the Health and Safety at Work Act etc 1974. It was fined £5,000 at Airdrie Sheriff Court on December 13, 2022.

HSE inspector Ashley Fallis said: "This incident could so easily have been avoided by simply carrying out correct control measures and safe working practices.

"Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standards."

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Cold weather working: Helping staff stay safe and warm

Employers are being reminded of their responsibilities to keep workers safe as cold weather continues to affect large parts of the country.

Great Britain's workplace regulator, the Health and Safety Executive, is stressing the importance of [protecting workers during the cold weather](#). It comes as the Met Office has issued a level three cold weather alert until Thursday December 15 for large areas of the UK.

John Rowe, Head of Operational Strategy, said: "We're calling on all employers to take a sensible approach during the cold weather we are experiencing. There are lots of jobs that will be more difficult in the current conditions. Most employers will recognise this and make appropriate accommodations for their staff. That is the right thing to do.

"It's also important employers ensure staff are working in a reasonable temperature. People working in uncomfortably cold environments are less likely to perform well and more likely to behave unsafely because their ability to make good decisions deteriorates."

Temperatures in indoor workplaces are covered by the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, which place a legal obligation on employers to provide a "reasonable" temperature in the workplace.

All employers are expected to ensure indoor workplaces are kept at a reasonable temperature. [The Approved Code of Practice](#) suggests the minimum temperature should normally be at least 16 degrees Celsius. If the work involves rigorous physical effort, the temperature should be at least 13 degrees Celsius.

John Rowe said: "Complying with the code of practice is the right thing for an employer to do. By maintaining a reasonable temperature, employers are likely to maintain the morale and productivity of their staff as well as improving health and safety."

Ends

One in two motor trade workers suffering with mental health and

wellbeing

Motor trade organisations have joined forces with the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Working Minds campaign to tackle work-related stress in the motor repair trade ahead of Christmas.

Ben, a charity that supports people who work or have worked in the automotive industry, has revealed one in two workers in the automotive sector have struggled with their mental health and wellbeing in the past 12 months, while 50% of those involved in the industry are likely to have been dealing with stress, worry or anxiety, low mood or depression. Ben has also seen a 190% rise in people using their benefits counselling service and accessing their financial guidance.

HSE, together with Working Minds campaign partners Ben, the National Body Repair Association (NBRA), the commercial Vehicle Body Repair Association (VBRA) and the Independent Garage Association (IGA) are promoting how to prevent work-related stress and support good mental health across the sector.

During the winter months, Ben sees an increase in enquiries and cases as many people tend to spend more time indoors and have less interaction with others, negatively impacting their emotional wellbeing. The charity says enquiries also come from people who are suffering with financial issues as they see an increase in their bills, which can also lead to poor mental health.

Ellen Plumer, Head of Outreach, Health and Wellbeing at Ben, said: "Each year thousands of people come to Ben with mental health issues as their primary concern. From results of latest survey of those in the automotive industry, one in two workers have struggled in the past 12 months. Stress is the most common issue, followed by anxiety and poor sleep.

"Work life balance and high workload are the biggest drivers of workplace stress. If it's not addressed and goes on for a long period of time, it can turn into an issue. We know there is a strong link between money worries and mental health.

"If you're struggling with money, then you're likely to be stressed and anxious. It's really important for employers to understand that all areas of a person's life impacts health and wellbeing. Work is a big part of life so it's important to make people feel like they matter, are heard and feel supported."

The latest figures from HSE show there were an estimated 914,000 cases due to work-related stress, depression, or anxiety for workers in Great Britain in 2021/22. That's an 11% rise from the 822,000 cases in 2020/21. An estimated 17 million working days were also lost to work-related stress, depression or anxiety in 2021/22, which covers more than half of all working days lost due to work-related ill health across the same period.

Research from the regulator has also found that those who work in motor

vehicle repairs, the wholesale and retail trade, had a significantly higher workplace injury rate in 2021/22 compared to most industries. HSE's Working Minds campaign was launched last year and is aimed specifically at supporting small businesses by providing employers and workers with easy to implement advice and tools to help them recognise and respond to the signs and causes of stress and support good mental health in the workplace. The law requires all employers to protect workers from stress at work by doing a risk assessment and acting on it.

There is an economic benefit to employers supporting staff's mental health. Figures from a [Deloitte report](#) show employers can see a return of £5.30 on average for every £1 invested in mental health, while the total annual cost of poor mental health to employers has increased now by 25% since 2019, costing UK bosses up to £56 billion a year.

Liz Goodwill, Head of the Work Related Stress and Mental Health Policy Team at HSE, said: "We're calling on employers in the automotive industry to ensure that recognising and responding to the signs of stress becomes as routine, as managing workplace safety. Bosses in the automotive industry should hold regular catch-ups with workers and their teams."

"Working Minds helps employers to follow 5 simple steps based on risk assessment. They are to **Reach out** and have conversations, **Recognise** the signs and causes of stress, **Respond** to any risks you've identified, **Reflect** on actions you've agreed and taken, and make it **Routine**. It needs to become the norm to talk about stress and how people are feeling and coping at work."

Guidance, risk assessment templates and talking toolkits to help employers spot the signs of work-related stress and prevent issues before they become a problem, can be found through HSE's Working Minds campaign:

<https://workright.campaign.gov.uk/campaigns/working-minds/>

To find out more information about Ben and to access their services visit: <https://ben.org.uk/> or call their helpline on 08081 311 333.

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2. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
3. To read more about HSE's Working Minds campaign click here: <https://workright.campaign.gov.uk/campaigns/working-minds/>