



**Practice**

**Change signalled in the provision of first aid at work**

**After 25 years without change, the first-aid training requirements in the UK are due to undergo their biggest shake-up since their inception. Employers and employees alike are set to benefit through more appropriate training guidelines designed with the needs of modern businesses in mind.**

The Health and Safety (At Work) Regulations 1981 have been operational for more than 25 years, and were brought in at a time when the UK economy was dominated by manufacturing industry. Hence, the Regulations, the Approved Code of Practice (ACoP) and guidance documents were all written to reflect the needs at that time. Since then, the UK economy has become more service based, with a greater proportion of SME-sized enterprises than existed in the 1980's.

Concurrent with this shift in industry has been a considerable development of workplace safety regulation resulting in safer workplaces, and the response times of emergency services have also improved.

Casella Winton was commissioned in 2001 to produce a report on how employers viewed the Regulations, and what factors influenced their compliance. The report was published in 2003, and it provided a framework for a more focussed consultation with employees, training providers and other stakeholders. The report identified a number of key aspects for consideration, such as:

- ❑ The difficulty for smaller organisations to release people for four-day first aid at work courses – not so much due to cost, but from the loss of employee working days,
- ❑ Confusion about the roles and training requirements, such as that of the Appointed Person,
- ❑ Training providers and first-aiders highlighted 'skills decay' a short time following initial training.

Following publication of this report, the HSE published a discussion document. Following a review of the findings from the discussion document, the HSE found that while the Regulations and ACoP were still relevant and did not require changing, the guidelines needed some significant alterations in order to bring them in to line with current workplace requirements, and to be clearer.

Currently the training course for a first-aider is four days in duration, and for an appointed person one day. The new guidelines will introduce the following:

- ❑ A new course, Emergency First Aid at Work (EFAW), lasting one day, and will enable emergency first aid to be given to someone who is injured or becomes ill at work,
- ❑ A three day First Aid at Work (FAW) course, covering the EFAW subjects plus how to deal with a range of specific illnesses and injuries,
- ❑ Strong recommendation that first-aiders undertake annual refresher training of half a day during the FAW/ EFAW three-year certification period.

A reduced burden on employers through more training options and shorter courses, alongside annual refresher training, should see the provision of first aid in the workplace become more appropriate to today's business needs.

Once the new guidelines are available, we will circulate them to company managers and staff. In the meantime, we should ensure that adequate first-aid provision exists (under the existing guidelines) within offices and on construction sites.



## Court Case

### First corporate manslaughter charges laid<sup>♦1</sup>

**A Cotswolds firm and one of its directors will be the first to be prosecuted under the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007.**

The charges against Cotswold Geotechnical Holdings Ltd, of Birdlip in Gloucestershire, relates to the death of Alexander Wright on 5 September 2008.

Mr Wright, who was employed by the firm as a junior geologist, was taking soil samples from inside a pit near Stroud, when the sides collapsed and crushed him. Peter Eaton, a director of the company, has been charged with gross negligence, and manslaughter under s37 of the HASAWA 1974. The firm has also been charged with a breach of s33 of the Act.

Kate Leonard, reviewing lawyer of the CPS Special Crime Division, said the CPS had concluded there was "sufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction for this offence".

Peter Eaton will appear before Stroud magistrates on 17 June to face charges both as an individual and on behalf of the company.

*This article may be viewed on-line, at [www.shponline.co.uk](http://www.shponline.co.uk), and search for 'Eaton'.*

## Construction

### Fatal injury analysis uncovers small company failings<sup>♦2</sup>

**More than half of the building workers killed in 2007/08 worked for small companies, despite such firms employing little over a third of the construction workforce.**

This is the main finding of a report written by the Centre for Corporate Accountability for construction union UCATT, which wants more HSE inspectors to support a tougher regime of enforcement and prosecutions, and apply pressure on small construction companies "all year round".

*Small isn't beautiful* reveals that in 2007/08, 51 per cent of construction workers killed worked for companies with fewer than 50 employees, while almost half of these deaths occurred in companies that employed five or fewer workers. Figure from the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) show that just 34 per cent of the construction workforce are employed by small and micro-sized firms.

The report also provides information on who died, where they worked, how they died, and their age.

## Legal

### Summertime drink-drive campaign<sup>♦3</sup>

**Transport officials and police teams will be cracking down on vehicle users believed to be drunk this summer. Between June and September 2006 some 670 people were killed or seriously injured in crashes involving drunk drivers.**

All 43 police forces in England and Wales will use new, more accurate breath testing devices to check drivers' alcohol consumption this summer. Causing death by careless driving when under the influence of drink or drugs carries a maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment, a minimum of a two-year driving ban, and an extended driving test before the offender may drive legally again.

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<sup>1</sup> SHP online, June 2009

<sup>2</sup> Safety & Health Practitioner, June 2009

<sup>3</sup> The RoSPA Occupational Safety & Health Bulletin June 2009