**IOSH IIRSM IIAI HSM January 2015**

In the New Year’s Honours list Kevin Myers the Deputy Chief Executive of the HSE was awarded a CBE for services to occupational safety and health. He has a long and proven track record of high level work in worker place safety and we wish him well in for his award. Kevin has been instrumental in trying to get the business focus onto the real workplace health and safety issues rather than the pathetic ‘elf ‘n safety myths. However it would also be nice to see the front line workers, the Union Safety Representatives from all UK unions’ receive recognition for the continuous work and commitment to their colleagues welfare. Maybe we’ll get a surprise call around the Quinn’s birthday.

Along with managing nanomaterials in the workplace the EU Directive 2013/35/EU - electromagnetic fields sets out minimum health and safety requirements regarding the exposure of workers to the risks arising from physical agents such as electromagnetic fields. However whilst this Directive covers all known direct biophysical effects and other indirect effects caused by electromagnetic fields it does not consider possible long term effects. With the Smart City Projects already underway in Italy and the UK [including Manchester] we need to revisit the Directive to consider the proliferation of Wi-Fi and 4G networks. The Smart City and the ever increasing communication networks with the various merging protocols now up to 4000MHZ, may bring increased communication but with a tradeoff for long term effects on health.

It is expected that fines for health and safety offences will continue to increase drastically as the tougher November guidelines are implemented. The larger the firm the more they pay – as an example for a corporate manslaughter conviction the fine is up to £20m. For years the CWU have said that many sentences imposed for these offences have been too low, last year in the UK, 133 people were killed at work and 70 members of the public killed in by work related incidents but there have been only eight convictions for corporate manslaughter in England and Wales since the legislation was introduced seven years ago. The largest fine so far is the £500,000 following the death of an employee so the guidelines are significant and will make company directors take the safety of workers seriously.

We have raised the revision of the international ISO 14001 standards with parts of BT; the standard is about having an effective environmental management system and is used by over one quarter of a millions companies worldwide. Changes to 14001 are expected to be implemented in Q3 this year focusing on environmental performance and communication which will bring better environmental management which reduce waste and resource use.

A Directive or a Regulation? When we refer to European legislation we mention both terms regularly in health and safety but just to separate the two definitions; a “Regulation” is a binding legislative act and must be applied fully across the EU; whereas a “Directive” is a legislative act that sets the target and then each member state is entitled to get to that target by whatever means they deem to suit their state the best. This is relevant because the PPE Directive may be introduced as a Regulation in 2016 (there have been many cases of counterfeit PPE products). For example, all types of hearing against harmful noise will be reclassified to Cat 3 including even where the hazard is not immediately obvious. This will require examination and surveillance; whether this is the equipment, the user or both is still unclear. However all such products will have a five year life cycle so as to remove inferior equipment from the workplace.

The ludicrous Social Action, Responsibility and Heroism Bill completed its crawl through Parliament with an even more ludicrous claim by a Tory Lord that he had returned from the USA where there was “unbridled enthusiasm” for the Bill as there has been too much concern given to health and safety. The Bill just needs the formal Royal Assent to be enacted.

New research by BUPA has said that less than one in three UK workers take a proper lunch break each day – a legal requirement – and two in five think they have too much work to stop for more than a few minutes. Even worse, over a quarter never take a break of any kind during the working day. Not having breaks obviously has long term health effects but in the immediate time prevents the worker from performing to their best capacity which includes poor decision making which will have an impact on their safety and the safety of those around them. For the business community it also lower’s productivity and business performance. Almost half of the workforce never leaves the workplace and a third eats at their desk – this probably includes most CWU branch officers so we should look close to home before approaching the employers.

There is to be a full review of the European design standard for MEWSPs – EN280/2013. The mandate CEN TC98/WG1 is agreed and will cover exit at height, retention of ground key control, fire prevention, power isolation etc. There are free presentations on using MEWPs at [www.ipaf.org/en/publications/film-presentations/](http://www.ipaf.org/en/publications/film-presentations/); these include ground conditions and that is a hugely important point as MEWPs are moving in to new areas and frequency of usage. HSE have a new information sheet GEIS6. An area for concern is in tree surgery where incidents have been caused by debris entering the bucket and altering the load suddenly. When working in a boom MEWP is necessary to wear a full body harness, however that is not the case for a vertical lift. It is against the law to use powered access equipment that does not have physical evidence of a current through examination by a competent person [IPAF].

Over a fifth of respondents to a UCATT survey did not believe that their employer takes their health and safety seriously and worse, eleven percent though their workplace had become more dangerous over the last twelve months.

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