



IMPORTANT CHANGES TO FIRST AID LEGISLATION

24/09/2009

Amended guidance to the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 has come into force and sees a major change in the training regime for first aid at work (FAW).

From 1 October, the mandatory four-day FAW training courses will be reduced to three days, while small businesses will have the option of a one-day course. All qualified workplace first-aiders will still have to undergo a two-day re-qualification course every three years.

The aim of the change is to save businesses time and money without compromising health and safety. The new guidelines were produced on the back of extensive consultation with and feedback from employers across the UK, who recognised the need for first-aid training but often found it difficult to release employees for the necessary four days.

Savings in the first year of the new regime are estimated by the HSE to be £52 million.

The new guidance also suggests that refresher training taken annually would be beneficial to first-aiders and their employers, with staff feeling better placed to deal with an incident in their workplace.

Dr Dil Sen, HSE Principal Medical Inspector, said: “First aid can help save lives and prevent minor injuries becoming major ones. The revised guidance will help employers get first-aid training that suits their business needs and saves them both time and money.”

Training provider St John Ambulance welcomed the changes, particularly in light of research it recently carried out, which revealed that compliance with the first-aid regulations is low. Of the 2800 businesses it questioned, 79 per cent said they had times when no first-aider was present, and 18 per cent felt they did not have appropriate first-aid equipment on their premises. Interestingly, the research also found that first-aiders in work environments like offices are more likely to have had to administer treatment for a serious injury than those in workplaces traditionally thought of as higher risk, such as construction sites.

Commented the organisation’s commercial marketing director, Richard Evens: “The message to businesses is simple: carry out a risk assessment based on your actual needs, which covers things like the common injuries that happen in your workplace, then arrange the training. It has never been easier to comply and protect both your workforce and your back pocket.”

To see the list, and for more information on the guideline changes, visit www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid

ROUTINE INSPECTION AT FOOTBALL CLUB REVEALS SAFETY FAILINGS

25/09/2009

Blackpool Football Club has been fined £8000 for failing to comply with an Improvement Notice.

In February 2009, environmental health officers (EHOs) from Blackpool Council carried out a routine safety inspection at the football club's Bloomfield Road stadium. The council discovered the club had failed to carry out a risk assessment, or create a written health and safety policy, to cover non-match days.

The club was issued an Improvement Notice on 3 March and given 21 days to undertake a sufficient risk assessment, and create a written safety policy. During this period, the council supplied the club with advice and HSE guidance to help it meet the requirements. On 1 April, EHOs revisited the ground and discovered that no steps had been taken to adhere to the Notice.

Blackpool FC appeared before the town's magistrates on 18 September and pleaded guilty to two breaches of s33(1)(g) of the HSWA 1974. It was fined £4000 for each offence and ordered to pay £500 in costs.

Comment

It should be noted that along with the basic documentation identified above both Enforcing Authorities and insurers are demanding far more detailed documentation as evidence that you are managing the health and safety of your activities in an effective way.

Typical records that are being asked for include risk assessments, fire risk assessments, manual handling assessments, training records, records of statutory inspections and noise surveys.

WAREHOUSE ASBESTOS EXPOSURE THE WORST SEEN BY INSPECTOR IN 15 YEARS

09/10/2009

Two companies have been criticised for falling "woefully short" of the required safety standards by ordering renovation works to continue following the discovery of deadly brown asbestos fibres.

Southwark Crown Court heard that Noble Gift Packaging Ltd had contracted A&T Roofing Ltd to remove a roof at a warehouse in Brimsdown, Enfield. The work began on 29 November 2005 with the dismantling of the roof, which required the work team to smash a number of insulation boards.

Two weeks into the operation the workers became worried that the dust created from destroying the boards might contain asbestos. They informed A&T Roofing, but the company's management team refused to enter the site because of the safety concerns. Instead, it requested that staff retrieve a sample of the material so it could be sent off for testing.

The tests revealed that the insulation boards contained amosite, or brown asbestos fibres – one of the most deadly forms of the material. Nevertheless, management informed the workers that the substance did not pose any danger to their health, and they should finish the job. The workers were subsequently provided with facemasks and overalls, which were unsuitable for working with asbestos. Work continued on the site for a further 10 weeks until the renovations were complete.

A few weeks after the job ended one of the workmen contacted the local authority to report the incident. Jurisdiction of the case was later handed over to the HSE, because the work had involved construction activities.

The HSE's investigation discovered that Noble Gift Packaging had carried out an evaluation survey when it purchased the warehouse in 2005. This survey revealed that there was a possibility that asbestos was present in the roof insulation. Despite this warning, the company failed to commission an asbestos survey on the premises, and didn't inform A&T Roofing that workers could be exposed to asbestos during the renovations.

HSE inspector Sarah Snelling said: "Noble Gift Packaging, as the client for the work, should have taken the basic step of having a full asbestos survey done after they were informed in a valuation survey that the roof contained asbestos. This could have prevented this whole tragic case."

Noble Gift Packaging appeared in court on 6 October and pleaded guilty to breaching s3(1) of the HSWA 1974. It was fined £40,000 and ordered to pay costs of £19,223.65. A&T Roofing appeared at the same hearing and pleaded guilty to breaching the following: reg. 3(1) of the Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations 1983, for the unlicensed removal of asbestos – fine £5000; and s2(1) and s3(1) of the HSWA 1974 – fine £10,000 for each offence. The firm was also ordered to pay £33,844 in costs.

In mitigation, Noble Gift Packaging said it had fully complied with the investigation by commissioning an asbestos survey, and contracting a specialist to clean any remaining debris from the premises.

A&T Roofing mitigated that it had no previous convictions, and deeply regretted the incident. It said it had found the information about the harmlessness of amosite by performing an Internet search. It showed the website to the HSE, which subsequently had it shut down. A&T Roofing is currently in the process of arranging training for its staff to help them identify asbestos, and understand the risks of working with the hazardous substance.

Inspector Snelling added: "A&T Roofing Ltd's cavalier attitude towards the removal of the asbestos has put the future health of their employees, their employees' families and members of the public in general at serious risk. The exposure suffered by the men working on this project is the worst our specialist inspector has seen in over 15 years of dealing with asbestos cases."