

LegislationWATCH

THE No.1 RESOURCE FOR WORKPLACE LAW AND HEALTH AND SAFETY

The history of Safety Signs

Safety signs help us communicate important and meaningful information, find out how and why they work on page 6.



Inside this issue...

**Hand-arm
Vibration Syndrome**



**Outdoor Worker
Safety**



Noise at Work



**SAFETY
MADE
EASY**

Contents

Regulars

04 // Legal Update
May - July 2017

10 // Training Tools
Know your Safety Signs



4

11 // Ask the Expert
Free advice on health and safety

24 // Q&As
Your questions answered

26 // News Round Up
The latest snippets of news



26

Features

06 // The History of Safety Signs
Making sense of semiotics and safety signs

12 // Outdoor Worker Safety
Top 10 tips to keep employees safe outside

14 // Is Lead the New Asbestos?
The real risks of lead exposure

16 // Hand-arm Vibration Syndrome
Preventing risks to health from vibration

18 // Standing While Working
Is standing really more beneficial to health?

22 // Noise at Work
Eliminating the risk of noise-induced hearing loss



14



Editor
Cheryl Peacock

Designer
Nada Curley

UK Sales Director
Chris Humphrey

Head Office
14 Wildmere Road
Banbury
OXON
OX16 3JU

Legislation Watch is published quarterly. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage or retrieval system without the express prior written consent of the publisher. The contents of Legislation Watch are subject to reproduction in information storage and retrieval systems. Legislation Watch is not a substitute for Health and Safety consultancy. The information in this publication and online is for general guidance and is not legal advice. If you have any specific questions about any legal matter, you should seek independent advice, consult your lawyer or other professional legal services provider. You should never delay seeking legal advice, disregard legal advice, or commence or discontinue any legal action because of information found in this publication or on the website.

Letter FROM THE EDITOR



Dear reader,

There are a number of new laws this year which could potentially have a big impact on both workers and businesses; from the introduction of the new Immigration Skills Charge, through to the launch of the new Apprenticeship Levy which will open up opportunities for 3 million more apprentices by 2020.

In this edition, we've delved into the history of safety signs and the semiotics behind them. Semiotics is at the core of how and why safety signs work to help us communicate safety information – it's a fascinating subject and will enhance your understanding of successful signage.

Did you know there are currently up to 2 million people in the UK who may be exposed to disabling health conditions as a result of vibrations in their job? Hand-arm vibration syndrome is entirely preventable so we've put together a useful guide on page 16 to help ensure your workforce is a happy and productive one!

Thanks for reading!

Cheryl

Cheryl Peacock
Editor

Follow Seton on:
 Facebook Twitter

Contact us:
Freephone 0800 585501
Online www.seton.co.uk
Email sales@seton.co.uk

Legal UPDATE



Immigration Skills Charge Introduced

The Government has introduced a new Immigration Skills Charge to reduce Britain's reliance on migrant workers. The new charge which came into force on 6th April 2017 will incentivise employers and businesses to invest in training British staff.

In line with the Migration Advisory Committee's recommendation, the charge applies to employers who bring workers to the UK on a Tier 2 visa at a rate of £1,000 per Certificate of Sponsorship per year. A reduced rate of £364 per year will apply to small and charitable sponsors, including universities.

Exemptions to the charge will apply for PhD-level occupations, migrants switching from a Tier 4 student visa to a Tier 2 working visa, and the Intra Company Transfer Graduate Trainee category. These will help the UK continue to attract talented students and the most qualified migrants, as well as protecting the UK's world-class reputation for education and research.



New Apprenticeship Levy Launched

The Apprenticeship Levy is a new, non-negotiable tax applicable to employers with an annual wage bill of £3 million or more. Businesses will be charged a levy of 0.5% of their full UK payroll, although each employer will receive an allowance of £15,000 to offset against their payment levy.

The new Apprenticeship Levy applies to less than 2% of UK employers yet will mean the creation of 3 million more apprenticeships by 2020.

The objective of the levy is to encourage employers to invest in apprenticeship programmes and to raise additional funds to improve the quality and quantity of apprenticeships in the UK. It will give businesses more control over where, and how, money is spent on apprenticeships.

Businesses that pay the levy will have an online digital apprenticeship service account where they can access their contribution and use it to pay for apprenticeship training and assessment in the UK.



Gender Pay Gap Reporting

The Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017 for private and voluntary-sector employers came into force on 6th April 2017. Employers in Great Britain with more than 250 staff are required by law to publish information about gender pay gap results on both their own website and on a government website.

The following four types of figures will need to be reported:

- Gender pay gap (mean and median averages)
- Gender bonus gap (mean and median averages)
- Proportion of men and women receiving bonuses
- Proportion of men and women in each quartile of the organisation's pay structure.

Organisations have a deadline of 4th April 2018 to publish their results.

The history of Safety Signs



CONTINUED...▶▶

If you're in the process of buying safety signs for your workplace, semiotics may not be the first thing that springs to mind. However, semiotics is at the core of how and why signs work, particularly safety signs. Semiotics refers to the study of all the various aspects of symbols and signs, and how they help us to communicate important and meaningful information.

When it comes to safety signs, visual interpretations need to be more immediate and easier to understand and digest than verbal instructions. Safety signs are vital in the workplace, as they help employees and visitors safely negotiate both an area and the apparatus within it.

Safety signs are coded to send messages according to their colour, shape and the images they portray. Semiotics is a fascinating area, and even a quick look at the hows and whys of successful signage will enhance your understanding enormously.

Bygone days

Civilizations have always found ways to communicate pictorially, especially when language was in its infancy, such as drawings and paintings on the walls of caves, hieroglyphic inscriptions on tombs in ancient Egypt and runic symbols. In fact, it could be said we are returning to our pictorial roots when we use emojis and other icons in electronic messages.

The Romans used milestones to mark out distances along roads, while brewers in Britain in the Middle Ages had to display

a sign, often carved in stone, outside their premises, or risk losing their license to sell their goods.

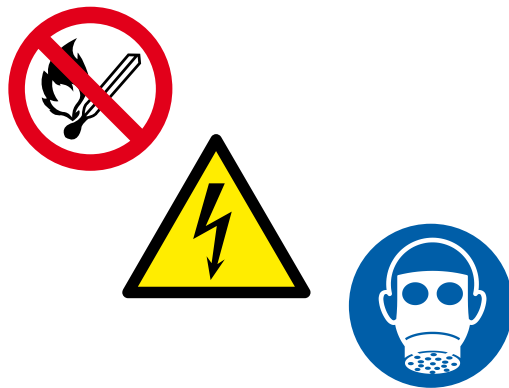
Safety signs came into their own during industrialisation and when cars first emerged. In 1968, a convention in Vienna made a move to standardise certain shapes and colours of road and safety signs so they would be recognisable in different places, which finally came into effect in 1978. In today's hectic world, we need safety signs more than ever to protect us.

DANGER:
Red

POTENTIAL HAZARD,
SO TAKE CARE:
Yellow

VITAL INFORMATION,
SO PAY ATTENTION:
Blue

SAFE TO PROCEED,
ALL SYSTEMS GO:
Green



In terms of how signage has developed, the emergency exit green running person is a good example, as it's a relatively recent development, first appearing in the 1980s. A skull and crossbones, on the other hand, has been a symbol for poison for more than 1,000 years, while signage relating to danger was first introduced in the early 19th century.

In 1946, the University of California created a sign to indicate radioactivity that is now black on yellow, but was then magenta on blue, which sounds as if it might have been a little too discreet to be a genuine hazard warning sign.

The duties of safety signage

When it comes to designing, selecting and implementing safety signage, there are four obligations to be met. It must:

- Mandate
- Prohibit
- Safeguard
- Warn

Mandatory information is designed to tell people what they must do to remain safe, such as wear a hard hat in a designated area. Prohibitive information tells people what they can't do, to prevent harm to themselves and others. Safeguarding information highlights how people can get to safety, while warning information requires immediate attention as it signals a dangerous situation and the need for direct action.

Colour coding

Often considered to be the most important element when designing a safety sign, colour emits the most immediate signal to your brain. Thus, primary colours as well as colour blends are used to indicate:

- Danger: Red, sometimes orange
- Potential hazard, so take care: Yellow
- Vital information, so pay attention: Blue
- Safe to proceed, all systems go: Green



These are the very basic levels at which such signage operates. Colour combinations are also used to carry powerful messages, depending on the circumstances. It's also important to note that, for colours to be effective, they must take up a certain minimum percentage of the sign area. For example:

- Red: A dominant colour, even a small amount tends not to weaken and automatically alerts us to danger psychologically, not least because it's the colour of blood
- Yellow: A stimulating colour and very visible to humans; at least 50 per cent of the sign must be yellow to trigger our attention
- Blue: Associated with intelligence, wisdom and power; at least 50 percent of the sign must be blue to reinforce mandatory commands
- Green: Affiliated with nature, liberty and peace; at least 50 per cent of the sign must be green to reassure us all is well.

Shape shifting

In the context of the colours representing various stages of alert or information, certain shapes have emerged which, combined with these colours, offer a more sophisticated range of communication. The basic shapes are as follows:

- Triangle: Warning
- Square: Usually provides safety information
- Circle: Prohibits certain actions if red, gives mandatory information if blue

Combination signage

Sometimes more than one sign is displayed, particularly in workspaces, to provide extra information to employees and visitors. For example, internationally-recognised signs can be grouped together to clarify the status of a facility. So, a yellow triangle might warn of hazards in an area, a red circle could indicate that there is no unauthorised entry and a blue circle may instruct all visitors to report to reception.



Current icons

There have been many shifts in signage, and today there are specialist symbols pertaining to individual industries as well as the general health and safety signs we all know. The classification of chemical hazards has undergone enormous changes, with new warning signs resembling red-edged diamonds containing information about toxic substances, fire hazards and potentially-explosive materials.

This is vital information for those working in highly-customised premises, and as this strand of signage progresses it will no doubt be followed by other specific industry-related signage developments.



Safety Signs For all your sign needs visit [seton.co.uk/safetysigns](https://www.seton.co.uk/safetysigns)

Training TOOLS

Our Training Tools can be used to guide an informal group discussion that focuses on a particular safety issue. They should take no longer than 10-15 minutes and can be delivered by any responsible person.

Download
Your **FREE**
Training Tool
NOW!

This edition... Understanding Safety Signs

Safety signs are broken down into 5 categories: prohibition signs, hazard signs, mandatory signs, safe condition signs and fire equipment safety signs. Our useful guide to Understanding Safety Signs provides everything you need to know about each of the categories to help enhance your understanding of safety signs.

This Training tool covers...

- Legislation
- Warning signs
- Prohibition signs
- Mandatory signs
- Safe condition signs
- Fire equipment safety signs
- Viewing distances



Download your FREE Training Tool NOW!

at www.seton.co.uk/signs-training-tool



Ask **the** expert...

Do you have a question related to Health & Safety or Workplace Law?

Our experts are IOSH accredited and ready to answer your questions.



What statutory inspections are required by law for our plant and equipment?

One of our workers has had an accident, is it reportable under RIDDOR?

What do we need to cover when we deliver H&S training?

How to 'Ask the expert'

1. Go to www.seton.co.uk/legislationwatch
2. Click on the red 'Ask the expert' tab at top of page
3. Enter your question on the form
4. We will respond via email within 48 hours!

Top 10 tips for outdoor worker safety

Outdoor working is a year-round phenomenon, with construction and agriculture among those industries that see many employees working outside. Along with the changing of the seasons, there are a number of additional risk factors to be considered if part or the majority of your workforce operates outdoors, especially if working long shifts.

Several million people work outside every year. The Office of National Statistics (ONS) Workforce Jobs by Industry report estimates that in December 2016 over 2.6 million worked in construction, 408,000 people worked in agriculture, forestry and fishing, while 60,000 were employed in mining and quarrying. Many other employees in diverse occupations work outdoors, such as individuals providing utilities services or working in the hospitality industry.

There is legislation in place to secure the rights of employees and responsibilities of employers when working outdoors. The Health and Safety Act 1974 secures the provision of health, safety and welfare at work, whilst The Health and Safety Executive specifically provides advice for those working outside, and what employers should bear in mind for the safety of their employees.

We have also compiled a list of the top 10 tips for outdoor worker safety...

1



Risk assessment

Identify problems and hazards and decide who is at risk, especially in hot weather. Main factors include working climate - including air temperature, movement, and proximity to heat sources when working. Also medical, genetic and other factors - a worker's age and build may influence heat tolerance.

2



Training

Comprehensive training can help avoid problems with outdoor working. Employers should advise about the dangers of sun exposure, the risks of heat stress and offer guidance on sun protection and checking the skin for damage.

3



Sun cream

Under strong sunrays, skin can burn very quickly, potentially causing severe discomfort, sunstroke or even skin cancer. Sun cream should always be used by outdoor workers and reapplied according to the manufacturer's instructions.

4



Clothing

Outdoor workers should be advised to keep covered up comfortably. It's not uncommon for employers to consider relaxing the usual dress code when it's very hot outside, whilst hats should be used in relevant conditions to protect the head.

5



Hydration

Employers can encourage workers to keep well hydrated by providing cool water in the workplace, combatting heat stress and overheating. Drinking water regularly will help prevent dehydration and is preferable to coffee or tea where hydration is concerned.

6



Shade

Periods out of the sun can be encouraged by employee breaks in the shade where possible. Workers who can rest comfortably and rehydrate are likely to work more productively.

7



Allergies

Allergies can be triggered if workers are in an environment where they may suffer a reaction. Providing protective equipment such as masks or glasses in problem areas can help prevent issues and keep productivity up.

8



Keeping food cool

When employees bring their own food to work, it needs to be kept cool during warm conditions to prevent the possibility of illness and time off work resulting from contaminated food.

9



Work rate

Employers can schedule work so exposure to the sun is minimised. Always be aware of the amount of labour needed and the amount of time required for it to be done.

10



Heat stress

Where possible, you should control workplace temperature inside. Outside workers need regular breaks, with access to shade, and good hydration to reduce the possibility of heat stress.

IS Lead

THE NEW ASBESTOS?

Asbestos was once hailed as a marvellous material, with its impressive insulation and fire-resistant properties. However, as time passed the health issues caused by asbestos became apparent. It is now acknowledged as a major health and safety risk, so much so that, where found, it has to be professionally removed to safeguard the health of that building's occupants.

However, it may well be that lead is filling the void left by asbestos in terms of being a material that is injurious to health. Increasingly, employers are taking steps to ensure safety signs signalling the presence of such hazardous materials are in place.

Read on to find out why lead is present in some workplaces and institutions, how to find out if it's present in your premises and, if so, what precautions to take and how to safely remove it, thus protecting the health of all site users.

History of lead

Lead is far from a recent discovery - ancient records show white lead was being manufactured as long ago as the 4th century BC. The primitive methods of preparation in those days were dangerous to workers, but artists loved white lead paint. It remained in use up until the 19th century, when it was replaced by white zinc and white titanium.

By the 20th century, it was apparent that white lead was dangerously toxic. In 1866, it was banned in German factories employing women and children. These factories used white lead and another compound, known as lead sugar or lead acetate, to manufacture products as diverse as the following:

- Cosmetics
- Hair dye
- Printing
- Sweeteners
- Textile treatments
- Textile dyeing and other dyeing

In the past, red lead paint was commonly used on external pipes and metalwork as a primer to prevent corrosion. Although not banned by legislation, by 1992 it had mostly been replaced by alternatives such as red oxide.

Coloured lead paints - yellow, red, orange, green - were added to wall paints and gloss for external use and used for road markings.

Toxic effects of lead

Lead is poisonous, and lead paint is known to cause several conditions and illnesses. Children are particularly vulnerable to it - lead has a sweetish taste, so lead paint used in toys, for example, can easily find its way into children's mouths. Adults are also adversely affected if exposed.

Lead paint is now thought to be a carcinogen. Exposure to high levels can cause death. Besides cancer, other conditions and illnesses it can cause include:

- Abdominal pains
- Anaemia
- Behavioural disorders in children
- Brain damage
- Damage to reproductive systems in men and women
- Delayed development in children
- Headaches
- Kidney damage
- Memory problems
- Nervous system impairment
- Stunted growth

Lead in use today

Lead paint is still manufactured, but generally, in developed countries, lead-content levels are tightly regulated. Many countries have now banned the use of lead-based paint in toys and furniture, and there are also strict regulations about the removal of lead paint, particularly from the interiors of buildings such as nurseries and schools.

Lead is still found in some decorative and architectural paints for external use, and coloured lead paint is sometimes used in road markings, despite substitutes being readily available. Lead paint is also used for industrial coatings and on cars, and concerns have been raised about the effect this may be having on several things, including the environment.

Worryingly, people involved in manufacturing lead paint, applying it or removing it may bring home contaminated particles on their clothing or bodies, subsequently exposing their families to them. As such, public health experts worldwide continue to call for a total ban on lead in paint.

Lead detection

Experts say that lead may be present in some tinned foods, spices and toys imported from other countries, so it makes sense to be careful about what you buy and check its origins.

Older homes may contain lead in paintwork, pipes and plumbing systems, and lead may have been used to glaze ceramic tiles. If you are redecorating and spot old, flaky paint that you're not sure about, you should proceed with caution. Collect a small sample for analysis or call in an expert who can remove suspected lead paint safely. Laboratories that specialise in identifying toxic substances can offer guidance on how to safely collect and store a sample.

You can get practical advice from the government regarding safety measures to take when dealing with hazardous materials, such as lead paint. These include:

- Choosing a vacuum cleaner with high-efficiency filters that meet British Standard 5415
- Using a face mask with built-in respiratory protective device
- Wearing protective clothing and gloves

Current UK legislation

The Control of Lead at Work (CLAW) Regulations 2002 are designed to ensure employers prevent employees being exposed to lead, or adequately control exposure where prevention is not possible.

The government website contains valuable information about how lead can produce dust particles, vapour or fumes, and how these should be handled. There are important pointers about undertaking regular risk assessments and keeping controls in good working order. You must ensure employees have adequate training and supervision, as well as access to practical advice about contamination and the importance of appropriate skincare.

It's worth taking time to consider how your workplace complies with the current rules about working with or near lead. You should have welfare facilities located in isolated areas where potentially-contaminated clothing can be processed, and employees should be able to shower to remove stray particles before moving to a clean area where their own clothes and other possessions are stored.

If these provisions are not met, there's a very real risk that you'll be putting the health of your employees and their families at risk, as well as falling short of government requirements, the consequences of which could be legal action.

Hand-arm vibration SYNDROME

Hand-arm vibration syndrome (HAVS) can occur as a result of using specific types of equipment or machinery at work. The most likely culprits generally are hand-held or hand-guided power tools. Misuse or overuse of such equipment can lead to severe health problems that can be disabling and painful. These include serious disorders affecting joints, nerves and blood vessels.

- Chipping hammers
- Concrete breakers and pokers
- Construction scabblers
- Disc cutters
- Grinders
- Hammer drills
- Hedge trimmers
- Needle guns
- Powered lawnmowers
- Sanders

Remember that you're also at risk if you hold tools or equipment, such as pedestal grinders, for example, which vibrate during processing by powered machinery. It's important that employers display appropriate warning and safety procedure signs where such machinery is in use. These can be customised to exact requirements so that instructions to employees are very clear.

Minimising risk

Suitable safety precautions should always be taken in the workplace. In 2005, The Control of Vibration at Work Regulations were introduced to improve protection against HAVS. These regulations set out specific values relating to exposure. For example, employees should be reminded not to operate any tools with a hammer action for more than 15 minutes in a single day. Similarly, there are some rotary or action tools that should not be used for more than approximately one hour per day.

Employers should first ensure that a risk assessment is carried out by a competent individual. This may be someone inside the company or it may be an external advisor with the appropriate level of expertise. The purpose of the risk assessment is to deliver a comprehensive set of guidelines detailing levels of risk associated with different levels of exposure.

The government has set out ways to measure the impact of vibration according to two criteria:

- Daily exposure action value (EAV)
- Daily exposure limit value (ELV)

In the case of exceeding EAV, it's the employer's responsibility to introduce a programme of controls that will either eliminate risk, or reduce employees' exposure to as low a level as is practicable. In the case of exceeding ELV, employers must take immediate action to reduce employees' exposure until it's below the limit value. It may also be possible to do this by substituting a different piece of manufacturing equipment for the power tool that is causing problems. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) website has a list of useful ideas for substituting equipment in foundries, on construction sites and in heavy steel manufacturing plants.

Early signs and symptoms

If you're worried about long term and permanent risks to your health and you use hand-held or hand-guided power tools regularly, be aware of the early signs that you may have a problem:

- Loss of strength in your hands – you may have difficulty picking up or holding heavy objects
- Loss of the ability to feel things with your fingers
- Persistent numbness and tingling in the fingers, which sometimes causes sleep disturbance
- Vibration white finger – the tips of your fingers turn white and then painfully red, especially in cold and wet environments.

Permanent problems can result from these symptoms if you continue to use vibrating power tools, such as:

- The strength in your hands may diminish so that it becomes difficult to pick up small objects, such as nails or screws
- Your hands may become permanently numb so that you are unable to feel things at all
- More of your fingers become affected by vibration white finger.

Employers who are worried about their employees' partial or total exposure to HAVS should make a point of keeping up

with current technological advances, as new products that could replace some of the more traditional machinery are in development all the time.

Vibration exposure monitoring

Employers often have questions about monitoring vibration exposure, such as:

- Do I need to monitor all the time?
- Do I need to measure exposure when a worker is actually using a power tool?
- Can I use a log book instead of an electronic monitoring system?
- Are wearable monitors appropriate for employees using power tools?
- How do I use monitoring data?

Visit the government website to access answers to all these questions and other helpful information. In brief, continual monitoring is not necessary. However:

- Monitoring the use of tools in a typical day or week should be undertaken as part of your risk assessment
- Interpreting the data you collect should result in positive actions to ensure employee welfare
- Employees whose exposure gets close to the recommended EAV or ELV should be provided with regular health checks
- You may find that your insurance company will require you keep records at specific intervals
- There is no harm in using electronic devices, however it's important to check how they are actually functioning as 'vibration meters'
- Remember that hand-arm vibration monitors must be firmly attached to the vibration tool
- It's strongly recommended by HSE that the data employers collect is compared with similar data from other sources for reasons of clarity and validity.

A happy workforce is a productive one and it's in an employer's best interests to ensure the workforce is also a healthy one. Taking the time to implement the regulations regarding the safe use of power tools will stand any employer in good stead.

Up to 2 million people in UK workplaces may be exposed to disabling health problems as a result of vibrations transmitted through work processes and tools. It's important to be aware that HAVS is entirely preventable, although its effects can be permanent, and responsible employers will take all necessary steps to ensure the safety and welfare of their workforce.

Health problems associated with HAVS

It's an employer's responsibility to be mindful of their employees' risk levels when scheduling work. Employers are also required to be vigilant about dealing promptly with any health issues that arise. Incorrect use of power tools can rob an individual of the ability to undertake work requiring delicate handling ('fine work').

Overexposure to cold conditions can also cause painful attacks of 'finger blanching', where the tips of the fingers become pale and cold.

Equipment

The types of equipment that can cause HAVS if used incorrectly or for too long include:

- Brush cutters
- Chainsaws

THE IMPACT OF Standing While Working

Five or six years ago, it became very fashionable in business circles to introduce the stand-up meeting. Up to that point, it was expected that everyone attending a traditional business meeting was seated and deemed to be sufficiently comfortable to concentrate, to talk for hours on end, and even to daydream and doze. In the modern meeting room, however, this custom was considered unproductive and alternative concepts were proposed. The updated concept was to hold meetings where everybody stands, in a bid to maximise the concentration of participants.

This was thought to result in shorter, if more uncomfortable meetings, in which decision-making was improved all round. The impact of standing while working, however, begs the question: Is standing at work really more efficient and beneficial for employees' health?

Standing while working at a desk

It didn't take too long before the next fashionable way to work in an office or at home was advanced: a standing desk.

Research in America demonstrated that office workers were sitting at their desks for an average of almost six hours every day. Suddenly there was a preoccupation with ensuring employees remained active, moving around at regular intervals, and the idea of the standing desk was born. The benefits associated with this change in working practices were said to include:

- A reduced risk of obesity. Research shows that standing burns 50 more calories per hour than sitting and improves core strength.

- Better posture. Ensuring the standing desk is set up correctly, posture improves particularly when using a computer screen.
- A reduced risk of cancer. According to a study in 2011, which found links between prolonged sitting and certain types of cancer, reduced risk of breast cancer and colon cancer were noted.
- Longer life expectancy. Research has shown that prolonged sitting may also be related to heart disease and diabetes.

While initial findings seemed very positive, there are also other considerations that must be taken into account when it comes to healthy and safe working practices. For example, new research has demonstrated that those standing on a hard surface for prolonged periods are likely to experience discomfort and pain, which may have long-term health implications. Individuals that work standing for long periods might develop problems with their feet such as bunions, tendonitis, swelling, and joint pain. Problems such as these are often referred to as musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs).

CONTINUED... ►►

Musculoskeletal disorders and statistical evidence

MSDs are health problems relating to one or more of the following areas:

- Cartilage
- Ligaments
- Nerves
- Muscles
- Skeleton
- Tendons
- Vascular system

Research into MSDs generally identifies two types: upper and lower MSDs. Work-related MSDs have been studied closely, with the World Health Organisation (WHO) highlighting that work environments and how work is performed are major contributors to these disorders. A bad back is a very common complaint. In fact, in 2011/12, statistics published by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) revealed that 40 per cent of workers suffered in this way – approximately 176,000 people. In the same period, problems with the upper limbs and neck affected 177,000 workers, while 86,000 workers had illnesses relating to their lower limbs.

Time is money

In addition to being an important issue for workers, absenteeism as a result of work-related illness or disease is an important factor for employers, particularly when it comes to managing costs. The loss of 7.5 million working days due to MSDs in 2011/12 is a serious burden, and those professions most at risk include:

- Assembly line and production workers
- Catering
- Engineers
- Hairdressers
- Healthcare workers
- Machine engineers
- Postal sorting office workers
- Retail staff
- Teachers

The problems of standing

Just as people who sit for too long can develop unnecessary health problems, so too can people who stand for too long. Fatigue from standing

is a very real issue, particularly when working on hard surfaces. Your heart has to work harder, for example, and standing also puts pressure on your veins, increasing your risk of stroke and heart attack. The more tired you become, the more physical damage is being done. Standing in one position can adversely affect the soft tissue in your back, while shifting from one position to another can make you feel even more fatigued, so that joints such as knees and ankles might become increasingly tense and lock.

Best practice and self-help

Balancing the time spent standing and the hours spent sitting can be problematic, especially if you're employed in an occupation that puts you at risk. However, there are measures you can take proactively to reduce the discomfort of standing. For example, it's important to take into consideration the kind of surfaces you're standing on.

A study carried out by Loughborough University examined the effects of anti-fatigue matting by using a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures. Comparative tests indicated that the 14 participants who were tested felt they benefited from reduced fatigue when standing on anti-fatigue matting, compared to concrete.

Anti-fatigue matting should be chosen to suit your specific location by obtaining professional and knowledgeable guidance from a trusted supplier. Performance is affected by the thickness and compression level of a mat. It's also important to remember that comfort levels can be subjective and are likely to vary from person to person.

If you decide to install anti-fatigue matting, ensure it's large enough for the area that needs to be covered. It should also be suitable for the job in question. If you're an employer, make sure your workers are given comprehensive training to ensure that they understand and recognise that physical discomfort can lead to chronic injury. Certain actions can be avoided to make sure you do not get injured. For example, try to avoid bending or twisting unnecessarily when working.

Whether you're conscious of spending a lot of time sitting or standing, make sure you take regular breaks and change your posture often. Frequent changes in position are generally regarded as more beneficial for your health. Always wear the correct footwear for your tasks and ensure that the layout of your workstation optimises your physical health.

Keep employees
safe, comfortable
and happy at work
with our range of
**Anti-Fatigue
Matting**

seton.co.uk/anti-fatigue-mats

Noise at work and work-induced hearing loss



Today's working environments vary greatly, from modern offices to noisy factory floors. If your workplace is an office, a shop or a restaurant rather than a factory or a construction site you probably won't have thought much about noise levels. However, there are regulations in place applying to what are legally deemed acceptable and unacceptable noise levels at work. It's best to familiarise yourself with these parameters as you may find they affect you or your business now or in the future. Here are a few guidelines to help clarify employer and employee responsibilities.

The law

New regulations came into effect for all sectors of UK industry in April 2006, apart from the music and entertainment sectors, where they were applied in April 2008. The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 are intended to protect hearing and prevent hearing loss or impairment, including tinnitus, sometimes described as 'ringing in the ears.' Noise is measured in decibels and the current level of exposure

at which employers must provide protection is 85 decibels, averaged per day or per week. At the lower limit of 80 decibels, employers must provide workers with information and training about noise levels and details of how to protect themselves from over exposure.

Is hearing loss through work a genuine problem?

You might think only a small number of people are affected by hearing loss because of their work environment in the UK but the statistics tell another story. For example, about 17,000 people in the UK experience deafness or tinnitus due to noise in their workplace. Thankfully, over time, reported incidents of hearing loss have reduced, from 74,000 people employed in the UK in 2004/5 to around 21,000 people employed in the 12 months to 2007/8. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the industries where hearing loss was most prevalent included construction, manufacturing, water supply and energy extraction.

Noticing a problem with noise

As you become familiar with a work environment, you may find you become accustomed to a certain level of

background noise. In some ways it's a bit like living next to a busy road – eventually the traffic noise may melt into the background. However, this doesn't mean it isn't having an impact on your hearing. You need to be aware of how intrusive noise can be in your workplace and over what period of time it can have a major impact. For example, if you have to raise your voice often to have a normal conversation or you need to use a noisy power tool for more than half an hour at a time you could be damaging your hearing.

Early signs of hearing problems – employee responsibilities

If you leave work at the end of the day and your hearing is muffled you should take action, even if you find that your hearing has improved by the start of the next day. There are other symptoms to look out for as well:

- If you experience difficulty having a normal conversation, or this becomes impossible in your workplace, you need to alert your employer
- If at home, after work, you find it difficult to make a telephone call or

find you have to turn up the TV to hear it properly – maybe enough for your family to complain – you need to take action

- If words become confusing because you can't distinguish between consonants such as 'd', 's' and 't' then your hearing is becoming impaired
- Remember also that tinnitus can consist of buzzing, humming or whistling in the ears and is not confined to a 'ringing' sound.

Employer responsibilities

All employers have a duty to assess any risks to the hearing of their employees in the workplace as a protective measure. Sometimes this risk level will be relatively low, in which case there is little to be put in place and not much cost involved. Where risk levels are moderate or high, attention must be paid to preventative measures and to hearing protection. In fact, as an employer you may need a 'noise control action plan' to help you ensure the safety of your workers. This is something you can build into your business plan and review annually.

Risk assessment

To conduct a thorough risk assessment of noise levels in the workplace you'll need to check the following:

- Where there might be a risk from noise and which employees it might affect
- How employee exposure compares to the guidelines issued alongside the regulations
- If you might need to provide hearing protection in certain circumstances in order to comply with the law.

You need to ensure your risk assessment is competent and you may want to employ a qualified consultant to ensure that is the case.

Types of hearing protection

There is a wide range of effective hearing protection available for workers operating in noisy environments, however, if you can reduce noise by using technical or operational means you should do this first. Make sure you regularly supervise employees who require hearing protection to ensure they use the equipment you have issued when needed. Training and information is

important in this respect, as is proper use and maintenance of hearing protection equipment. When choosing protective equipment, pay particular attention to:

- Comfort and fit for each employee
- How ear protection works when your employees are also using other protective clothing
- The enforcement of regular cleaning and hygiene practices.

Finally, ensure your workplace policies include the appointment of someone to oversee hearing protection and its implementation. Carry out spot checks so that the policies are seen to be taken seriously and be aware of any modifications that lessen the protection provided. As a manager or supervisor visiting areas where hearing protection is required make sure you comply fully with the regulations and set a good example to your employees.

Q&As

Work Breaks

Q. What breaks am I obliged to give employees?

A. Under the Working Time Regulations 1998, every worker is entitled to an uninterrupted break of 20 minutes when working 6 hours or more. This break cannot be taken at the beginning or end of the working shift.

Workers are also entitled to 11 hours of consecutive rest in each 24 hour period although there are a number of circumstances where this rule doesn't apply. When activities require continuity of service or production or where there is a foreseeable surge of activity, the regulations don't apply. Also, when a shift pattern changes it may not be possible for the worker to take their full rest entitlement before the start of their new pattern. In these circumstances the daily and weekly rest entitlement does not apply. An adult worker is also entitled to one day off each week, which can be averaged over 2 weeks.

For young or adolescent workers the rules are slightly different and they are entitled to a break of 30 minutes when working four and a half hours or more. They are also entitled to 12 uninterrupted hours in each 24 hour working period. Young workers are required to have 2 working days off each week, and unlike adult workers, this cannot be averaged over 2 weeks.



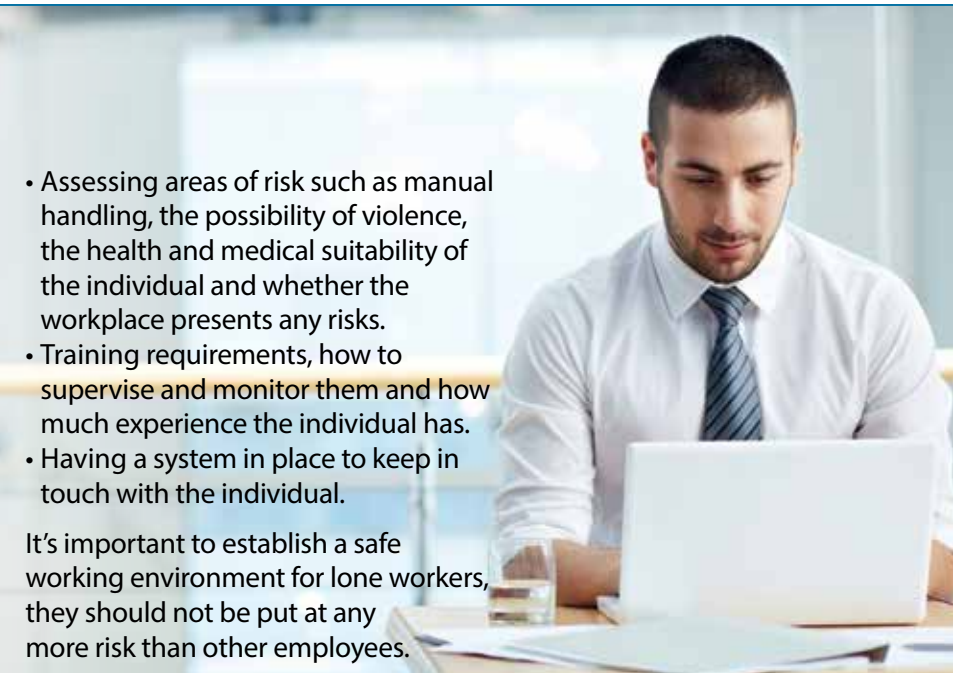
Working Alone

Q. Can an employee be left alone in the workplace?

A. It is not illegal for an employee to be left on their own to work and often it is perfectly acceptable and safe to do so. The law does require employers to ensure employees are reasonably safe, which means the health and safety risks of the job must be considered, as well as any risks that may arise as a result of the employee working alone. Things to consider to help ensure lone workers are not put at risk include:

- Assessing areas of risk such as manual handling, the possibility of violence, the health and medical suitability of the individual and whether the workplace presents any risks.
- Training requirements, how to supervise and monitor them and how much experience the individual has.
- Having a system in place to keep in touch with the individual.

It's important to establish a safe working environment for lone workers, they should not be put at any more risk than other employees.



Jury Service

Q. We have an employee who has been called up for jury service; however he has just been notified that he may be required to sit on a lengthy trial, lasting up to 12 weeks. Can we claim anything off the Courts for the disruption caused and any losses incurred as a result of lack of staffing resources or the cost of employing temporary cover? Although we are happy to pay him for the usual two weeks' jury service, we will be unable to pay him for the full 12 week trial.

A. There is no entitlement to compensation for loss of productivity or replacing the individual and the rules are that you have to give the employee time off. You don't have to pay them at all, unless you wish to. The employee can claim expenses and loss of earnings from the court. Some employers agree to a part payment, topping up the attendance allowance.



News ROUND UP

May 2017



Heinz Baked Bean advert banned

A Heinz Baked Beans advert has been banned by the Advertising Standards Authority after three viewers complained it could encourage unsafe practice. The advert featured young people beating out a song on tin cans but there were fears that this could lead to people cutting their fingers and hands.



Wilko fined £2.2 million

A 20 year old female working for household goods giant, Wilko, has been left paralysed after a cage filled with tins of paint fell on her. Corisande Collins was trying to manoeuvre the cage from an uneven lift floor when the incident took place, causing severe and permanent spinal injuries.



Heineken plead guilty to 7 offences

Universal Beverages Ltd, a subsidiary of Heineken UK Ltd has been fined £36,000, ordered to pay £20,825 in costs, along with a £15 victim surcharge. Between October 2008 and January 2009 there were a number of incidents where the brook which runs through the site, was found to be heavily polluted with leachate from apple waste.

British Airways prosecuted over HAVS

British Airways PLC has been prosecuted for not protecting their workers from hand-arm vibrations. The HSE investigated the company's failure to make a suitable and sufficient risk assessment to control the effect of exposure to the vibrations from hand held tools. The company pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 5 (1) of the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations (2005) and was fined £6,500.



Children banned from waiting in car at Recycling centre

A recycling centre manager requested that children be removed from their parent's car and taken outside the centre to wait as they are not allowed on site for health and safety reasons. There is specific industry guidance which clearly states that "children should stay in the car" at civic amenity sites, so this is a badly misinformed and dangerous myth that could have led to a greater risk to the children.

New vaping laws

New laws are set to come into force this month restricting the sale of e-cigarettes and e-liquids. Online sellers and high street stores could face imprisonment if they don't comply. It comes after an undercover investigation found that 9/10 vape shops in the UK are willing to sell e-cigarettes to non-smokers – against the industry code of conduct.



Sausage wrapping could be a 'choking hazard'

A deli refused to leave plastic wrapping on liver sausage stating that it was a 'choking hazard'. The HSE's Myth Busters Panel confirmed that there should be no health and safety reason for refusing to leave the original plastic wrapping on fresh liver sausage, especially as the product is likely to be wrapped in some other form of plastic bag before being handed to the customer.

Volvo sentenced for worker fall

Volvo was fined £900,000 after one of their workers fell and suffered head injuries while servicing a delivery truck and repairing the driver's access rope for the cab. After losing consciousness he was placed in a medically induced coma for two weeks and is still suffering from ongoing complications.



UK businesses struggling to recruit

A recent survey conducted by the British Chambers of Commerce revealed that 74% of manufacturing firms and 58% of services firms are struggling to find staff. After speaking to 7,300 businesses, the BCC found the percentage seeking to hire has grown by up to 9% yet most are experiencing high levels of recruitment difficulties.



Mothers paid 3% less per child

According to a French study by Lionel Wilner, mothers are paid 3% less for every child they have compared to female colleagues who do not have children. Mothers may be allocated a role with less risky assignments so are less likely to receive bonuses or more likely to become trapped in low-wage trajectories.



Knowledge Centre: Help & Advice

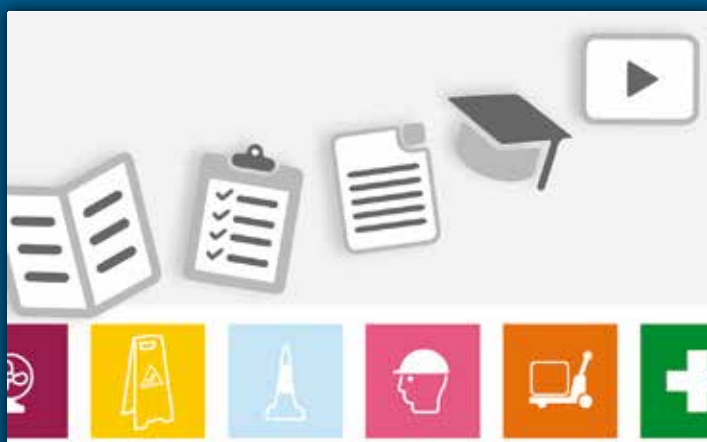
Vital information on health and safety legislation, detailed product guides and the latest hot topics and industry news.



LegislationWATCH

Helping you comply with legislation

- Browse hundreds of articles on current, new and pending legislation
- Download our popular Legislation Watch magazines



PRODUCT GUIDES & TRAINING TOOLS

Your free product guides and training resources

- Seton product guides
- Useful checklists
- Downloadable training presentations

seton.co.uk/knowledge-centre

Ask the expert...

Do you have a question related to Health & Safety or Workplace Law?

Our team of IOSH accredited experts are here to help!

Simply go to www.seton.co.uk/legislationwatch
and click on 'Ask the Expert'

**Free
service**

