

## HSE Releases Annual Workplace Fatality Figures

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has released its annual figures for work-related fatalities, as well as the number of people known to have died from the asbestos-related cancer, mesothelioma, in 2015.

The provisional annual data for work-related fatal accidents revealed that 137 workers were fatally injured between April 2016 and March 2017 (a rate of 0.43 per 100,000 workers), the second lowest year on record.

There has been a long-term downward trend in the number of fatal injuries to workers – they have halved over the last 20 years – although in recent years the trend shows signs of leveling.

HSE Chair Martin Temple said:  
“Every fatality is a tragic event that should not happen. While we are encouraged by this improvement on the previous year, we continue unwaveringly on our mission to prevent injury, death and ill health by protecting people and reducing risks.”

The new figures show the rate of fatal injuries in several key industrial sectors:

- 30 fatal injuries to construction workers were recorded. While this accounts for the largest share, this is the lowest number on record for the sector. However, over the last five years the number has fluctuated, The annual average for the past five years is 39. The annual average rate over the last five years in construction is around four times as high as the all industry rate.
- 27 fatal injuries to agricultural workers were recorded. This sector continues to account for a large share of the annual fatality count. It has the highest rate of fatal injury of all the main industry sectors, around 18 times as high as the all industry rate.
- 14 fatal injuries to waste and recycling workers were recorded. Despite being a relatively small sector in terms of employment, the annual average fatal injury rate over the last five years is around 15 times as high as the all industry rate.

The fatalities in the waste and recycling sector in 2016/17 include the single incident at Hawkeswood Metal Recycling Ltd in Birmingham on 7 July 2016 which resulted in five deaths.

Martin Temple continued:

“As we approach the one-year anniversary of this incident, our thoughts remain with the families of those who died. We continue to fully support West Midlands Police’s investigation.”

The new figures also highlight the risks to older workers – around a quarter of fatal injuries in 2016/17 were to workers aged 60 or over, even though such workers made up only around 10% of the workforce.

There were also 92 members of the public fatally injured in accidents connected to work in 2016/17. Almost half of these occurred on railways with the remainder occurring across a number of sectors including public services, entertainment and recreation.

Mesothelioma, one of the few work related diseases where deaths can be counted directly, contracted through past exposure to asbestos killed 2,542 in Great Britain in 2015 compared to 2,519 in 2014. The current figures relating to asbestos-related cancer reflect widespread exposures before 1980. Annual deaths are therefore expected to start to reduce after this current decade.

A fuller assessment of work related ill-health and injuries, drawing on HSE’s full range of data sources, will be provided as part of the annual Health and Safety Statistics release on 1 November 2017.

The HSE Chair added:

“We deal daily with the causes and consequences of work-related deaths, injuries and ill health. Today’s updated figures continue to inform our understanding of which areas we need to target.”  
“We concentrate our interventions where we know we can have the biggest impact. We hold dutyholders accountable for managing the risks they create in the workplace. This benefits workers, business performance, the economy and wider society alike.”

### Notes to editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. It helps Great Britain work well by applying a broad range of regulatory interventions and scientific expertise, to prevent work-related death, injury and ill health. It does so through research, information and advice, promoting training, new or revised regulations and codes of practice, and working with local authority partners by inspection, investigation and enforcement.

2. The average rate of fatal injury over the last five years has been 0.46 per 100, 000 workers. In each of the last five years, the number of fatal injuries has been:

- 2015/16 – 147 workers died
- 2014/15 – 142 workers died
- 2013/14 – 136 workers died
- 2012/13 – 150 workers died
- 2011/12 – 171 workers died

3. There were 2542 mesothelioma deaths in 2015, a similar number to the 2519 deaths in 2014. The increase in mesothelioma deaths in recent years has been driven mainly by deaths among those aged 75 and above. Of the deaths in 2015, 407 were among women and 2135 were among men – again this ratio is consistent with previous years.

The latest projections suggest there will continue to be around 2500 deaths per year for the rest of this current decade before annual numbers begin to decline. The current figures relating to asbestos-related cancer reflect widespread exposures before 1980.

4. The published fatal injury statistics also include a breakdown by country and region. Recent research suggests that variations in fatal injury rates between the countries and regions of Great Britain are largely explained by differences in the industry composition of the workforce between the countries and regions.

5. Britain has consistently had one of the lowest rates of fatal injuries to workers. In 2014, Britain had the lowest rate compared to other leading industrial nations in Europe – Germany, France, Spain, Italy and Poland  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/pdf/fatalinjuries.pdf>

6. The reporting of health and safety incidents at work is a statutory requirement, set out under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR).

A reportable incident includes: a death or specified injury; any accident which does not result in a specified injury, but the injured person still has to take seven or more days off their normal work to recover; a work related disease; a member of the public being injured as a result of work related activity and taken to hospital for treatment; or a dangerous occurrence, which does not result in a serious injury, but could have done.

7. The fatal injury figures do not include fatal accidents on non-rail transport systems or work-related deaths from fatal diseases.

8. Further information on these statistics can be found at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics>

## Company Fined After Death

A North East based contractor Pyeroy Ltd has been fined due to failings in their work at height rescue planning.

Plymouth Magistrates Court heard that on 21 October 2013 Mr Keith Stevens, aged 57, was helping to dismantle temporary roofing at Devonport Naval Base using a mobile elevated work platform (MEWP). His colleagues found him trapped between a roof beam and the controls of the MEWP. There was a delay in Mr Stevens being lowered to ground. Mr Stevens died of a pre-existing heart condition.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Pyeroy had not properly planned the work on a MEWP in restricted overhead areas. It was also found that other Pyeroy employees had not received suitable training in the emergency lowering procedure of the elevated platforms and no practice drills had been carried out.

Pyeroy Ltd of St Omers Road, Western Riverside Route, Gateshead has pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 4 (1) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005. The company has today been fined £130,000 and ordered to pay costs of £14,388.36.

Speaking after the hearing HSE inspector Helena Allum said: "If Pyeroy had trained other employees to use the mobile elevated work platform in emergency situations, Mr Stevens would have been lowered to the ground more swiftly." "This case highlights the need for duty holders to properly plan all work at height beforehand, including emergency planning and rescue situations."

## Company Fined After Failing to Comply with Enforcement Action

Hatchmere Park Ltd has been fined after failing to comply with enforcement safety notices.

On 12 March 2015, a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspector visited the construction site at Falcon Park, Devon and observed serious health and safety failings.

Exeter Crown Court heard the HSE visited the site after being alerted of unsafe construction work taking place by the Local Authority, and noticed residents were being put at risk as some homes were at risk to falls taking place, with nearby walls creating drops of two to four and a half metres, with nothing in place to prevent falls from happening.

An investigation by the HSE and Torbay Council found multiple safety failings. There was overall a failure to take reasonable steps to manage the construction work without risk to the health and safety of both workers and residents.

The company failed to comply with improvement notices served by both the HSE and Torbay Council, relating to site security including the fencing, perimeter and signs that identify the construction site.

Hatchmere Park Ltd of Nottingham Road, Grantham, Lincolnshire has pleaded guilty to a total of eight charges laid by both HSE and Torbay Council for a failure to comply with the enforcement notices and for breaching Regulation 9(1) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007.

The company also pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 4(1) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015.

The company has been fined a total of £90,000 and ordered to pay costs of £25,000.

Speaking after the hearing HSE inspector Helena Allum said: "This company has a history of failing to comply with Health and Safety enforcement notices, in this case putting residents, some vulnerable, at risk of an accident, which was not acceptable. "This case highlights the importance of properly managing construction work from the outset and demonstrates what can happen if companies fail to take action when issued with enforcement notices."

## Alarm Over 14% Fall in HSE Construction Visits

The number of unannounced visits by HSE inspectors to construction sites has fallen by 14%, according to Freedom of Information requests obtained by construction union Unite.

The information from construction union Unite revealed that in 2015/16 there were 9,219 inspections, reducing to 7,912 in 2016/17.

The reduction in inspections follows a trend as there was also a 4% decrease in the previous 12 months, says the union.

Unite is now seeking urgent meetings with ministers and the HSE as the safety body faces major funding cuts.

Unite assistant general secretary Gail Cartmail, said: "These figures are alarming as they demonstrate a huge decrease in vital lifesaving inspections.

"Sadly there remain far too many employers who are all too willing to cut safety regulations and it is only the genuine prospect of an unannounced inspection which keeps them in check.

"The government has slashed funding for the HSE and it is clear that it is increasingly struggling to make ends meet. We also need answers from the HSE about whether they are taking steps to redress this fall in inspections and whether there are specific reasons for these reductions."

## Corporate Fines for H&S Breaches Up 43%, Hitting £54m

Total corporate fines for health and safety breaches have increased by 43% to £54m following tougher sentencing guidelines, according to Thomson Reuters.

The rise follows guidelines from the Sentencing Council being introduced in February last year, directing courts to sentence on a step-by-step approach – looking at culpability and likelihood and seriousness of harm.

It followed the removal of a £5000 cap on fines in March 2015.

The average corporate fine was £280,974 in the year following the removal – treble the average for the previous 12 months (£90,604).

Head of business crime and investigations at Thomson Reuters, Morag Rea, said firms are 'being forced to sit up and take note' as fines for health and safety offences were significantly higher – and with less regional variation – than before.

"The definitive guidelines and removing the cap on fines has proved a potent combination and any breach of health and safety regulations can now be a very costly mistake." Morag Rea

There have been far fewer corporate manslaughter convictions recently – 24 since the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act was implemented in 2008 – although this may now be on the rise as there were three convictions last March alone.

The news also comes as new guidance on gross negligence manslaughter sentencing was announced.

Rea said: "The other trend we are seeing is a rise in gross negligence manslaughter convictions where individual directors and site managers or foremen are prosecuted as well as the company. "The courts have indicated that where lives are put at risk a custodial sentence will usually be appropriate."