

NISO Safety Observer
October 2020; Issue 51

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The Safety Observer



Newsletter of the National Irish Safety Organisation

October 2020 - Issue 51

Welcome to the October 2020 edition of **The Safety Observer**, the newsletter of the National Irish Safety Organisation. The Safety Observer contains information that is current, informative and useful to subscribers. We keep you up to date on what is happening in occupational safety and health. NISO Update, the quarterly magazine, was circulated on 31 July 2020 last and the next edition for NISO members is scheduled for late October 2020. The last edition of Safety Observer was distributed on 28 August 2020.

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29th ANNUAL Occupational
Health and Safety
Awards
2020
Increasing Safety Performance

All Ireland
**Occupational
Safety Quiz
2020**

**HEALTH & SAFETY
TRAINING**

NISO NEWS

All Ireland Occupational Safety Awards

The Safety Awards Presentation Ceremony has been deferred to Friday, **22 January 2021** in the Great Southern Killarney, Co. Kerry. [Subject to change in line with Government recommendations].

All Ireland Occupational Safety Quiz [Cancelled for 2020]

The All Ireland Occupational Safety Quiz has now been cancelled for 2020. We look forward to organising the Safety Quiz in 2021 and to welcoming all the brave safety quizzers next year!

NISO Health & Safety Training

NISO has now resumed most of its health and safety courses which will take place in classroom and online. Training includes Safe Pass, Mobile Workers Assessor Training, Safety Representation, Manual Handling and more. View upcoming courses/book online [HERE...](#)

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- Beating cancer: improved protection for workers proposed
- UK: Company fined £2m following jet wash fatality

COVID-19 NEWS

Meat plant COVID-19 protocol on staff safety agreed

Meat Industry Ireland (MII) said it has reached agreement with trade union SIPTU on a detailed code of practice to protect staff in the meat processing industry from COVID-19. A union organiser said the agreed protocol “is the only national charter agreed by a union in this country with employers to cover safety procedures and processes aimed at protecting workers from COVID-19 infection”.

<https://bit.ly/3iSlqMV>

Cork meat plant with 226 COVID cases remained open

A meat plant in Cork had 226 positive COVID-19 cases but never closed down creating a major health risk, the Dáil has heard. Responding to criticism of the government’s handling of the outbreaks in meat plants, the Tánaiste stated that the decision to close any meat plant or any business is made by public health officials or by the HSA.

<https://bit.ly/3kESjwV>

COVID-19 adding to psychological distress for healthcare staff

Medics have warned of a "high level of psychological distress among healthcare staff" due to the COVID-19 virus and pre-existing issues, such as burnout, in the Irish healthcare system. An article published in the *Irish Medical Journal* compared the difficulties faced by healthcare workers during the SARS epidemic in 2003 and said the current COVID-19 outbreak was likely to exacerbate those problems.

<https://bit.ly/35Zr4cu>

Most August meat plant inspections unannounced

All but one of the COVID-19-related health and safety inspections carried out at meat plants during the month of August were unannounced, breaking with a practice of prearranging most visits. The HSA has said there were of 26 meat plant inspections carried out in August, 25 were unannounced.

<https://bit.ly/3kEwCx3>

Teachers' union issues warning to government

A body representing post-primary teachers and third-level lecturers has issued a warning to the Government saying they will not allow the health and safety of its members to be put at risk during the COVID-19 crisis. Similarly, the union representing secondary school teachers has also signalled its intentions to ballot members for industrial action over a range of school reopening issues including concern for high-risk staff members and physical distancing in schools.

<https://bit.ly/3iWu1OI>

Workers struggling to cope during pandemic

According to new research by a healthcare insurance provider, 39% of Irish workers are struggling to cope with everyday life during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey found that one in three employees in Ireland has an underlying health condition making them a "vulnerable worker". Some key challenges of working from home reported by those surveyed included loneliness and isolation (30%) and reduced interaction with work colleagues (40%).

<https://bit.ly/32Ui9Ho>

Employers to be notified of COVID-19 positive cases

Employers are to be notified if an employee tests positive for COVID-19 but without naming the worker involved under new rules being introduced by the

Health Service Executive (HSE). Up to now the HSE policy was to only inform employers of positive diagnoses in exceptional circumstances.

<https://bit.ly/2G1L8jk>

Essential worker farmers don't have the "luxury of isolation"

A new report by Teagasc and the National Centre for Men's Health at the Institute of Technology Carlow has found that farmers, due to being essential workers, place themselves and their families at greater risk of exposure to COVID-19. Worryingly, farmers are also considered "highly vulnerable to adverse outcomes of COVID-19 infection".

<https://bit.ly/3hRQLOd>

IRISH NEWS

Mixing and spreading slurry safety

The coming weeks will be a busy time on farms as farmers and contractors work to empty slurry before the 15 October deadline. Mixing and spreading slurry are high-risk activities. Here is useful safety guidance on staying safe while working with slurry.

<https://bit.ly/2ROyqqO>

Make child safety a priority on your farm

Recent child fatalities on farms have been a stark reminder that farms are very dangerous places for children. According to the HSA the main causes of child farm fatalities have been tractors and vehicles (including quads) and machinery. This article outlines the five key child safety points to focus on to help keep children safe on farms.

<https://bit.ly/3csNMLk>

Female politicians report being harassed in survey

Twelve out of 25 female TDs who responded anonymously to a newspaper survey on sexual harassment in the Dáil reported that they had been sexually harassed in their place of work. One elected representative commented that figures released in the survey are just "the tip of the iceberg".

<https://bit.ly/3iX6fSl>

UK NEWS

Company fined £2m following jet wash fatality

A specialist industrial services company has been fined after a worker suffered a fatal injury while cleaning waste-water pipes. An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the company recognised the risks of operating high-pressure water jetting equipment, but they had failed to put in place appropriate measures to mitigate the risks. The company pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and was fined £2,000,000 and ordered to pay £30,000 in costs.

<https://bit.ly/32Vq5b4>

EUROPEAN NEWS

Beating cancer: improved protection for workers proposed

Press release from the European Commission detailing the Commission's proposal to help improve workers' protection against cancer by further limiting their exposure to cancer-causing chemicals. This fourth revision of the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive sets new or revised limit values for three important substances: acrylonitrile, nickel compounds and benzene. Estimates show that more than 1.1 million workers in a wide range of sectors will benefit from improved protection thanks to the new rules.

<https://bit.ly/2FUUXzN>

Factsheet: Seasonal workers in the EU in times of COVID-19

New factsheet published by the European Commission featuring practical examples and best practices related to proper application of the existing rules on seasonal work in the EU. The publication outlines the rights of seasonal workers and the difference in terms of rights between seasonal workers from EU and non-EU countries. Working and living conditions of seasonal workers is also addressed in the publication.

<https://bit.ly/303K19V>

US NEWS

US meatpacking giant fined following virus outbreaks

One of the United States' largest pork-processing plants has become the first major meatpacker to face fines in the US after COVID-19 outbreaks at several of its abattoirs. At least 1,294 workers contracted COVID-19 and four employees died from the virus. The Occupational Safety and Health

Administration (OSHA) proposed imposing a fine of \$13,494, the maximum allowed by law, which has sparked concerns that the threat of a small fine will not incentivise other meatpacking companies to take measures to protect staff.

<https://bit.ly/2FTboNd>

WORLD NEWS

WHO: Keep health workers safe to keep patients safe

The World Health Organization (WHO) has called on governments and health care leaders to address persistent threats to the health and safety of health workers and patients. The WHO released a new Health Worker Safety Charter as “a step towards ensuring health workers have the safe working condition, training, pay and respect they deserve”. The Charter calls on governments and those running health services at local levels to take five particular actions, which are outlined in the Charter, to better protect health workers.

<https://bit.ly/360wK5Z>

New inventions to help reduce the risk in farming

This article looks at various new inventions and technological innovations that promise to reduce the hard labour and the risk in farming. For example, “Smart” ear tags or collars on livestock can reduce the dangers associated with gathering and penning the animals to check them out. An Irish invention called “Slurry Solver” reduces the likelihood of anyone falling into the tank. Many of the inventions have productivity or the environment as its primary objective with increased safety implications an added bonus.

<https://bit.ly/32W68RK>

FATALITIES AND ACCIDENTS

Man dies in Co. Galway workplace accident

It has been reported that a man in his 30s has died in a workplace accident in Co. Galway. The HSA has been notified of the fatality.

<https://bit.ly/33Ti3if>

Man dies following fall from roof in Co. Louth

A man in his 60s has died after falling from a shed roof in Co. Louth. An Garda Síochána and the HSA have launched separate investigations into the incident.

<https://bit.ly/3ctAjTw>

Man dies after tractor overturns in Co. Wexford

An Garda Síochána has appealed for witnesses after a man in his 70s died when the tractor he was driving overturned in Co. Wexford. No other vehicles were understood to be involved in the incident.

<https://bit.ly/2G89zvp>

IN THE COURTS

Nursing home ordered to pay €150k to care assistants

A nursing home has been ordered to pay €150,000 to three care workers who were sexually harassed by a 93-year-old male resident. All three care assistants were dismissed following an incident in January 2018 involving the resident when he returned from a pub. The Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) has ordered that the nursing home pay each care worker €50,000 compensation, €30,000 of that sum for distress caused by the sexual harassment and €20,000 for the victimisation and penalisation by the nursing home. The care home denied that management permitted the resident to have unlimited access to alcohol and explained that the pub where the resident attended permanently closed in April 2019. The care home also denied that any allegations of sexual harassment were made by the complainant or her co-workers prior to the critical incident in January 2018.

<https://bit.ly/366ECmm>

Hotel worker loses €60k for foot injury

A former hotel housekeeper has lost a €60,000 damages claim against her employer after injuring her foot while moving a coffee table. The complainant told the Dublin Circuit Civil Court how she had been rolling the table, as instructed in training, back to its proper position when a sharp edge on one of the table legs sheared through the top of her canvas shoe. She suffered a laceration to her foot and was given first aid by her superior before being driven to hospital. A forensic engineer told the judge that he does not consider it necessary for the hotel to issue safety shoes to its housekeepers for duties of tidying and preparing rooms for new guests. Dismissing the claim, the judge said that while he considered the injury to her right foot to have been the result of a genuine accident, he was satisfied she had failed to prove negligence against the defendant.

<https://bit.ly/35ZDOjj>

Solicitor ordered to pay costs after losing damages claim

An investment surveyor, who slipped on steps approaching offices where he worked in one of Dublin's Georgian commercial blocks, has lost a €60,000 damages claim against two companies he sued and has been ordered to pay both their legal costs. The investment surveyor claimed he had been caused to fall on a wet day on polished granite steps leading up to his place of work. The Circuit Civil Court judge, when throwing out the personal injuries claim, told the complainant that he had failed to show proof of negligence.

<https://bit.ly/3kJSMOy>

STATISTICS

Thirty-nine people have been killed in workplace accidents since 1 January 2020 - Correct at 18 September 2020. Source: www.hsa.ie

<http://bit.ly/2U9LQRV>

PUBLICATIONS

Safe Quarry - A Guide to Pedestrian Safety in Quarries

This guidance, published by the HSA, has largely been developed from the Quarries National Joint Advisory Committee (QNJAC) *Follow our Footsteps - Guide to Pedestrian Safety in Quarries* document. This publication is for all those with responsibilities for the management of quarries and surface mining operations, including managers and supervisory staff and is available from the HSA website.

<https://bit.ly/305iaXc>

GUIDANCE

Legionella risks during the COVID-19 pandemic

Advice from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) UK on managing legionella risks during the COVID-19 pandemic. If your building was closed or has reduced occupancy during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, water system stagnation can occur due to lack of use, increasing the risks of Legionnaires' disease. Employers, the self-employed and people in control of premises should review risk assessments and manage the legionella risks when a water system is reinstated or is used again and when restarted some

types of air conditioning units. Further information is available from the HSE.
<https://bit.ly/3kGZnJq>

RESOURCES

COVID-19 prevention and the hierarchy of controls

Selecting an appropriate method to control a hazard in the workplace is not always easy. When it comes to the transmission of viruses such as COVID-19, workplaces should consider establishing control measures that have the greatest impact. This new infographic from EU-OSHA shows how the hierarchy of controls can be applied to COVID-19 in the workplace and includes examples of controls for each level.

<https://bit.ly/3mQ7Nju>

Working safely with bales - info sheet

New information sheet from the HSA entitled *Working safely with bales on the farm*. This info sheet is intended for all farmers, contractors and all workers on farms who need to know and understand the risks involved when dealing with all types of bales.

<https://bit.ly/2HjJOsH>

SAFETY COMMENTARY/OPINION

Interview: “What can happen on farms can keep you awake at night”

Interview focussing on farm safety with Martin Heydon, the Minister of State with responsibility for new market development, farm safety and research and development. Mr. Heydon is the first minister in the history of the state to have farm safety included as a specific area of responsibility in their portfolio.

<https://bit.ly/3mPdDli>

Sexual harassment survey paints bleak picture of culture of silence

Commentary from a political correspondent on the findings in a recent anonymous survey of female politicians on sexual harassment in their workplace.

<https://bit.ly/305TAFt>

SAFETY IN VIDEOS

Gardaí issue warning on securing loads

A video which has emerged on social media of a dangerous incident involving tumbling bales of straw has prompted a warning from local Gardaí on the importance of securing loads when on the road.

<https://bit.ly/3czWSG8>

TRAINING AND EVENTS

Training scheduled at NISO Training Centre, Dublin 12 OR Online

Upcoming dates for all courses will be confirmed in due course.

[Manual Handling Basic](#), NISO Certificate (half day); 5, 19 October; 5

November [Book online](#)

[Safety Representation](#) (ONLINE), NISO Certificate (2 day); 27-28

October 2020 [Book online](#)

[Safe Pass](#), SOLAS (1 day); September and October dates fully booked

Upcoming Dates TBC

[Manual Handling Instruction](#) QQI L6 (5 day)

[Mobile Working Assessor Course](#), NISO Certificate (1 day)

[VDU/DSE Assessor Training](#), NISO Certificate (1 day)

Regional Courses

[NISO Certificate in Health, Safety and Welfare at Work](#) (13 wks/2 hrs p/wk)

Cork: CSN College of Further Education Cork; Commencing February 2021

Dublin: NISO Training Centre, Ballymount, Dublin 12; Commencing February 2021

Kerry: Tralee (Venue TBC); Commencing February 2021

Mayo: GMIT Castlebar Campus; Commencing February 2021

Waterford: Waterford IT; Commencing February 2021

Westmeath: Athlone IT; Commencing February 2021

Working at Height and Scaffolding COP - Seminar

Galway and Dublin dates/venues to be rescheduled in due course

Promoting Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace - Workshop

Dundalk, Limerick, Dublin, Cork and Athlone dates/venues to be rescheduled in due course

National Events

[NISO/NISG All Ireland Safety Awards](#), Great Southern Killarney; 22 January 2021 [**Subject to change in line with government advice**]

[NISO/NISG All Ireland Safety Quiz Finals](#), Cancelled for 2020

[57th Annual NISO Conference](#) Cancelled for 2020

[Trade Exhibition of H&S Products and Services](#) Cancelled for 2020



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2020 SAFETY AWARDS

Closing date for entries: 25 September 2020
Early bird closing date: 31 July 2020
29th Annual NISO / NISG All Ireland Occupational
Safety Awards Ceremony and Dinner: 22 January 2021
Great Southern Killarney

CLICK ME for further information or visit
safetyawards.ie



NISO OSH CERT COURSE

NISO Certificate in Safety, Health and Welfare at Work
One two hour evening per week over 13 weeks in Dublin.
Commencing 6.30pm on Tuesday, 15 September 2020
Also at 7pm in the following locations:
Cork (14 September); GMIT Castlebar (15 September);
LIT Limerick (15 September); Tralee (15 September);
WIT Waterford (15 September); AIT Athlone (21
September).

CLICK ME to register online or call 01 465 9760

OSH TRAINING



All courses listed available to be delivered in Dublin, nationwide or in-house on request.

NISO Certificate in Safety, Health and Welfare at Work |
Safe Pass | Health & Safety Representation QQI L5 |
Manual Handling Instruction | Manual Handling Basic |
Risk Assessment | Safety Rep | VDU/DSE Assessor |
Introduction to H&S for the Non Safety Specialist

CLICK ME to view all upcoming courses

