

NISO Safety Observer
December 2020; Issue 53

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The Safety Observer



Newsletter of the National Irish Safety Organisation

December 2020 - Issue 53

Welcome to the December 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 3 November 2020 last and the next edition for NISO members is scheduled for late January 2021. The last edition of Safety Observer was distributed on 19 November 2020.

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HEALTH & SAFETY TRAINING

NISO CERTIFICATE IN SAFETY, HEALTH & WELFARE AT WORK



UPCOMING WEBINARS

NISO NEWS

NISO Health & Safety Training

Most of NISO's health and safety training is now taking place online. Compulsory courses are continuing in the classroom. Upcoming training includes Mobile Workers Assessor Training, Safety Representation and Manual Handling. View upcoming courses and book online [HERE...](#)

NISO Certificate in Safety, Health and Welfare at Work

NISO's flagship 13-week introduction to health and safety course, commencing spring 2021.

Further information [HERE...](#)

Upcoming Safety Webinars

NISO is facilitating and promoting free safety, health and wellbeing webinars. Keep an eye on this page in the coming weeks where we will post webinars that are coming up in the new year.

View the webinar booking page [HERE...](#)

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- Revised Work Safely Protocol Published
- HSA publishes its Annual Review for 2018-19
- COVID-19 Templates, Checklists and Posters updated
- Shipping group fined €850k following fatality

COVID-19 NEWS

New COVID-19 workplace regulations

The Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment has signed into law new regulations and a Code of Practice to protect workers exposed to COVID-19 in the workplace. The new Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Biological Agents) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 and Code of Practice for the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Biological Agents) Regulations 2013-2020, place a number of additional obligations on employers to ensure workers in COVID-19 risk environments are kept safe.

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

Revised Work Safely Protocol Published

The Work Safely Protocol is a revision of the Return to Work Safely Protocol published in May 2020. The revised Protocol incorporates the current advice on the Public Health measures needed to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the community and workplaces as issued by the National Public Health Emergency

Team (NPHE), the Department of Health and Government. The Protocol is a general document applicable to all sectors. It sets out the minimum measures required in every place of work to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to facilitate the re-opening of workplaces following temporary closures and the ongoing safe operation of those workplaces.

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

Key workers among first to get COVID-19 vaccine

It has been confirmed that frontline healthcare workers in direct patient contact (including vaccinators) will be among the first to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Healthcare workers who are not in direct patient contact are among those prioritised next for vaccination, once more pressing categories are immunised.

<https://bit.ly/3m0qO1b>

Nurses and midwives most affected by COVID-19

Nurses and midwives were the employees most affected by COVID-19 up to November, according to the Central Statistics Office. Despite only making up 2% of all employees in the April 2016 census, they accounted for up 6% of cases. The CSO's *'Profile of COVID-19 in Ireland March to November 2020 Report'* has highlighted the disproportionate amount of healthcare workers being affected by COVID-19.

<https://bit.ly/3oiOmA2>

54 school staff reassigned due to COVID-19 risk

Less than 15% of school staff who appealed the COVID-19 risk category assigned to them before returning to work were successful in their application to be redeployed to lower-risk duties. New figures show that 54 school employees, including teachers, special needs assistants (SNA), school secretaries, and caretakers saw their risk categories change from “high risk” to “very high risk”.

<https://bit.ly/3fYhJV3>

Anti-maskers in retail settings

This article takes a look at the experiences of retail staff in dealing with “anti-maskers”. Numerous retailers are advising staff to serve anti-maskers and to get them out of the premises as quickly as possible. Retail staff are not being actively encouraged to enforce mask wearing to mitigate threats to their safety and also legal threats.

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

Concerns raised following meat plant inspections

It has been reported that inspections of meat processing plants by the HSA have raised a range of concerns. Staff working face to face, ill-fitted specialist masks, lack of social distancing and tightly spaced locker rooms were among the issues highlighted following inspections.

<https://bit.ly/3g0R4ad>

IRISH NEWS

HSA publishes its Annual Review for 2018-19

The HSA has published its Annual Review of Workplace Injury, Illness and Fatality 2018-19 which presents the most recently available data on occupational deaths, injuries and illnesses in Ireland. In 2019, Forty-seven people were killed in workplace accidents and 9,335 non-fatal accidents were reported to the HSA. The report breaks down the details of the fatalities and accidents across various categories.

<https://bit.ly/3mdE5nj>

New €5m farm safety scheme revealed

Some €5m has been allocated to a new farm safety scheme by the Government which will allow farmers to offset the cost of farm safety equipment against their tax bill. Farmers who take part in the scheme will be able to offset 50% of the cost of equipment in year one and 50% in year two against their tax bill. The Department of Agriculture will operate the scheme and there will be an annual total equipment cost of €5m, excluding VAT. This article takes a detailed look at what equipment is included in the scheme.

<https://bit.ly/37AzRkb>

Meat industry accused of “disgraceful” safety record

The Migrant Rights Centre has claimed that the meat industry in Ireland is marked by a disgraceful record on health and safety. The research, which surveyed about 1% of meat industry workers in Ireland, found workers face immense physical and mental pressure on production lines, bullying and poor conditions. Meat Industry Ireland strongly refutes the claims.

<https://bit.ly/3g4Rlc5>

€1m fund for farm safety project launched

The Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) with responsibility for farm safety has announced the launch of a €1 million call for proposals for innovative farm health, safety and wellbeing projects under the European Innovation Partnerships (EIP). Stage 1 of the EIP call for proposals on farm health, safety and wellbeing is now being launched, with a closing date of Friday, January 29, 2021.

<https://bit.ly/39ZFH1a>

Fatigued drivers reminded about road safety risk

Driving for work is a high-risk activity with professionals who drive for work being 40% more likely than other drivers to be involved in a collision. It is estimated that driving for work accounts for involvement in 1 to 3 road collisions every year. Recent research looks at risk factors for professional drivers and driving while fatigued and offers safety advice.

<https://bit.ly/3gwYK4c>

Strained working conditions of games industry

A new report into the games industry in Ireland has found that workers are low paid, can work up to 70 hours a week, and more than one in ten have experienced discrimination. Twelve per cent of survey respondents have experienced harassment and/or intimidation based on their gender, ethnicity, age or sexuality.

<https://bit.ly/37RXNQ7>

Discussion groups can help boost farmer H&S

Recent research has shown that farm discussion groups have the potential to boost the adoption of health and safety practices among farmers. The research, sponsored by Teagasc and the HSA, was carried out among 84 dairy discussion groups involving 1,232 farmers over the course of four years. While farm discussion groups have been shown to increase uptake of technology and farming practices their use in promoting the adoption of health and safety practices had not previously been studied.

<https://bit.ly/2JS6S3i>

Marine body issues mobile phone and alcohol warning

The Marine Casualty Investigation Board (MCIB) has warned boaters of the danger of depending on mobile phones as the primary means of communication while at sea. It has also warned against drinking alcohol while

being a crew member on commercial or recreational craft in its annual review for 2019. The review does not name incidents where mobile phones or alcohol may have led to incidents or fatalities but the MCBI notes toxicology reports from two fatal incidents indicating alcohol.

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

Over 80% of farmers at risk of heart disease

A research project, which aims to support farmers in improving their lifestyles to reach sustainable levels of good heart health, has shown that four in every five farmers have a waistline which is bigger than what is considered healthy and puts them at a higher risk of developing heart disease. Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in Ireland and research has shown that it is more prevalent among farmers than in other occupational groups.

<https://bit.ly/3qqfz5w>

UK NEWS

Four workers killed in explosion at water treatment works

Four workers have been killed in an explosion at a waste water treatment works in the UK. A 16-year-old boy, who was working as an apprentice, was among the fatalities. The explosion occurred in a silo that treated biosolids. The police and the Health and Safety Executive have launched investigations into the explosion.

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

EUROPEAN NEWS

Concerns raised over EU vehicle safety standards

The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC), together with a coalition of organisations, has written to all 27 EU Transport Ministers and Industry Ministers expressing concerns that vital new EU vehicle safety standards, set to come into force from 2022, could be set for a severe blow. The proposed safety measures are predicted to prevent 25,000 road deaths within 15 years but at a recent meeting, a weaker, untested system was supported by officials from France, Germany, Italy and Sweden. An even weaker speed limit information function was supported by officials from Germany and Sweden, which experts predict could lead to an additional 1,300 road deaths a year in the EU.

<https://bit.ly/33Sll6f>

Results of multiannual research on work-related MSDs

Presentations and other useful materials from a recent online conference held by EU-OSHA are now available to download online. Conference speakers touched upon several main issues focussed on MSDs in relation with tangible topics such as chronic conditions, psychosocial risks, gender perspectives and workforce diversity.

<https://bit.ly/2JU97Dd>

WORLD NEWS

Safety charges filed following volcano deaths

Authorities in New Zealand have filed safety violation charges after a volcanic eruption at White Island last year killed 22 people. Experts had raised the volcano's alert level two weeks before the eruptions and questions are now being raised as to why tourists were allowed to visit the island. The names of 10 organisations and three individuals charged are being kept secret for now by authorities under New Zealand's legal rules.

<https://bit.ly/37FcKF3>

Lebanese judge charges prime minister over Beirut port blast

Lebanon's investigating judge has charged its caretaker Prime Minister and three former ministers with negligence over the Beirut port blast that killed 200 people and ruined a broad area of the capital in August. Officials have said the cargo of ammonium nitrate, a highly explosive chemical, was stored unsafely for years at the port, which lies in the heart of Beirut.

<https://bit.ly/3m8yluS>

FATALITIES AND ACCIDENTS

Man dies following workplace accident in Co. Kerry

A 68-year-old man has died following a workplace accident in Co. Kerry. The man died after a chimney collapsed on a building he was renovating and that he became trapped in the rubble. He was pronounced dead at the scene. Five other men were injured in the accident and taken to hospital but their injuries are not believed to be life threatening. The HSA and an Garda Síochána have launched investigations into the incident.

<https://bit.ly/3oxV998>

Man dies following accident in Cork industrial estate

A man in his 30s has died after an accident at an industrial estate in Cork City. The man was found unconscious by a work colleague and emergency services were alerted. The man was taken to hospital and passed away later that day. The HSA is investigating the incident.

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

IN THE COURTS

Shipping group fined €850k following fatality

A fine of €850,000 has been imposed on a shipping group in the Dublin Circuit Criminal Court following an incident in 2018. The company pleaded guilty to a breach of the Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 which caused an employee to suffer a personal injury resulting in death. An investigation by the HSA concluded that all the appropriate safety measures were not in place at the time of the incident.

<https://bit.ly/3naC78k>

€285k awarded to widow following farm fatality

A widow whose husband was killed, along with his close friend and neighbour, in a farm accident has secured €282,500 under a settlement of her High Court action over his death. The two men, both aged 52, died six years ago when a punctured tractor tyre they were fixing became overinflated causing the steel rim to blow off and hit them causing fatal head injuries. The judge said that the offer was a very good one and that there were significant issues concerning causation and contributory negligence.

<http://bit.ly/3oSEz3D>

€80k fine following serious incident in warehouse

A Circuit Court Judge has imposed a fine of €80,000 on a property development company following a serious incident at one of their warehouses in 2014. The company pleaded guilty to two charges under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005. An investigation by the HSA concluded that all appropriate safety measures were not in place at the time of the incident.

<https://bit.ly/2JKdoJ1>

Woman awarded €83k following supermarket fall

A 58-year-old has been awarded €83,000 in the High Court after she slipped, fell and injured her knee at a Dublin branch of a supermarket chain. The supermarket denied the claims but the judge said that he was satisfied that the woman had fallen due to a small amount of an oil-like substance being on the floor of the supermarket and was entitled to damages. The supermarket claimed she contributed to her own injuries by failing to look where she was going. Her injury caused significant soft tissue injuries to her knees and she needed to undergo knee replacement surgery.

<https://bit.ly/37Hgp5d>

Employee awarded €3.5k over manager's boxer shorts pictures

A catering chain has been ordered to pay out €3,500 to a former female employee after a manager circulated two images to staff, including one of himself wearing only his boxer shorts. The Workplace Relations Commission found that the 19-year-old catering worker was sexually harassed by the incident. The manager posted further inappropriate images and comments to the group. The quantum of the award is being appealed in the labour court as it is believed the level of compensation awarded does not compensate for the sexual harassment endured by the incidents.

<https://bit.ly/33O4i5u>

STATISTICS

Forty-five people have been killed in workplace accidents since 1 January 2020 - Correct at 18 November 2020. Source: www.hsa.ie

<http://bit.ly/34bJFyp>

PUBLICATIONS

Mental health handbook for vets launched

The Veterinary Council of Ireland (VCI) has launched a new *Safevet Smart Handbook*, which it says will provide practical mental health advice and support for veterinary professionals. The *Safevet Smart handbook* is described by the VCI as an “evidence-based practical guide to managing stress and building resilience” for members of the veterinary profession which offers tips and practical advice to help establish good habits, maintain a healthy body and mind and more.

<https://bit.ly/37yxCxP>

COVID-19: Rapid risk assessment for care facilities

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) has published *Rapid Risk Assessment: Increase in fatal cases of COVID-19 among long-term care facility residents in the EU/EEA and the UK* in collaboration with the EU-OSHA. The publication offers specific measures for care-home workers and residents in the areas of COVID-19 prevention, control of transmission, environmental cleaning, waste management and vaccination. EU-OSHA contributed information regarding measures to protect workers in these facilities, including those related to biological agents exposure and measures addressing increased workload and psychosocial risks.

<https://bit.ly/2L9r2q0>

Handbook on how to manage cancer at work

The European Cancer Leagues - Patient Support Working Group has launched a handbook on managing cancer at work which is targeted at employers, managers, HR professionals, public bodies and civil society organisations across all types of sectors and employers. The handbook explains why employers must adopt a comprehensive policy and set of procedures to effectively manage cancer in the workplace, providing useful tips to support those affected by this disease.

<https://bit.ly/33X8uQm>

The challenge of biomechanics risk assessment in agriculture

A new paper describes how Italy's work safety authority INAIL has helped standardise biomechanical risk assessment through the use of the OCRA — Occupational Repetitive Actions — checklist. It also explores the use of a newly developed web tool to raise worker awareness of risks, such as repetitive upper limb movements associated with fruit harvesting.

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

RESEARCH/STUDIES

Preventing MSDs among women, migrants and LGBTI workers

Work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) can affect anyone, but research shows that groups of workers at risk of discrimination, such as women, migrants and LGBTI workers, are particularly at risk. A new, comprehensive report establishes why these groups typically have poorer

occupational safety and health conditions and what companies and public bodies can do to address the issue.

<https://bit.ly/343FjLw>

Taxi drivers at risk of cancer from diesel exposure

Recent research funded by IOSH has shown that professional drivers are disproportionately affected by exposure to diesel exhaust fumes, including taxi drivers (the worst hit group), couriers, bus drivers and drivers working for our emergency services. The study analysed 11,500 hours of professional drivers' exposure data.

<https://bit.ly/3gsO8TU>

Night shift workers at higher risk of asthma

A recently published medical study has found that about 20 per cent of employees in the developed world work permanent or rotating night shifts, which can disrupt a person's circadian rhythm. It found that after taking account of age and sex, and a wide range of other potentially influential risk factors, there was a 36 per cent increase in the odds of having moderate to severe asthma in permanent night shift workers compared to those working normal office hours.

<https://bit.ly/3n00mpJ>

GUIDANCE

Guide to safe tractor-trailing braking

An updated edition of the *Look Behind You* guide to tractor-trailer braking has been published by the Agricultural Engineers Association (AEA) in the UK. The contents and safety advice is also very applicable and informative for Irish farmers and operators. The guidance is aimed at farmers, tractor drivers, mechanics, technicians and anyone using, purchasing or maintaining tractors or trailers.

<https://bit.ly/36WZAEq>

Addressing violence against women in the transport sector

New guidance has been published by the European Transport Federation on addressing violence and harassment against women in the transport sector. A European Transport Federation (ETF) survey in 2017 revealed that half of the women in the transport sector had experienced violence and harassment at the

workplace. This guidance is a step towards addressing this issue.

<https://bit.ly/3mZfYK0>

RESOURCES

HSA COVID-19 Templates, Checklists and Posters

The HSA's COVID-19 templates and checklists have been revised in line with the Government's updated Work Safely Protocol which was published on the 20 November 2020. The resources have been drafted based on the protocol and should be read in conjunction with the Work Safely Protocol.

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

Results of multiannual research on work-related MSDs

Presentations and other useful materials from a recent online conference on work-related MSDs held by EU-OSHA are now available to download online. Conference speakers touched upon several main issues focussed on MSDs in relation with tangible topics such as chronic conditions, psychosocial risks, gender perspectives and workforce diversity.

<https://bit.ly/2JU97Dd>

Ventilation and air conditioning during COVID-19

Good ventilation is among the measures that can help reduce the spread of COVID-19. Here is useful guidance from the UK's Health and Safety Executive to help you identify poorly ventilated areas of your workplace and includes steps you can take to improve ventilation that will apply in most workplaces.

<https://bit.ly/37UwB37>

The physical work environment and work-related stress: mechanisms and consequences

This OSH wiki article from EU-OSHA entitled "The physical work environment and work-related stress: mechanisms and consequences" discusses the interface between the physical and psychosocial work environment and the role of stress there within, in relation to worker's wellbeing and performance. Two particular bodies of research are examined in this article, namely noise and windows in the workplace.

<https://bit.ly/36XwO6n>

Twelve OiRA tools to help risk assess office work and administration

Ergonomic risk factors such as prolonged sitting as well as psychosocial aspects pose threats to employees' health. A number of OiRA tools have been published to help micro and small enterprises carry out proper risk assessments and comprise a variety of measures suggesting different improvements.

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

Managing low back condition and low back pain

OSH Wiki article from EU-OSHA on managing low back conditions and low back pain takes a look at the management of back pain at work and includes information on avoiding what causes pain, managing risk factors, managing the individual, acting quickly and the role of employees and employers.

<https://bit.ly/33Z6DdE>

Alert and sentinel systems in OSH

How to identify situations or workplaces where occupational safety and health (OSH) management needs to be improved? An important step is the monitoring of work-related diseases considered to be early warning signs. EU-OSHA has translated two presentations on *Alert and sentinel approaches for the identification of work-related diseases in the EU*, for experts and for non-experts, into more language versions which are available to download on its website.

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

Risk Assessment for Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs)

A PowerPoint presentation on Risk Assessment for Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) from EU-OSHA which suggests a straightforward stepwise approach to risk assessment that should work well for most businesses (specifically micro and small enterprises).

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

LEGISLATION UPDATE

SI No 539/2020 Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Biological Agents) (Amendment) Regulations 2020

The Regulations amend the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Biological Agents) Regulations 2013 and give effect to Commission Directive (EU) 2019/1833 of 24 October 2019 (relating to general worker safety from exposure

to biological agents) and Commission Directive (EU) 2020/739 of 3 June 2020 (relating specifically to SARS-CoV-2, the causative agent of COVID-19), both of which amend Directive 2000/54/EC the protection of workers from risks related to exposure to biological agents at work.

<https://bit.ly/3qG23Ld>

SAFETY TECHNOLOGY

New technology for remote worker ergonomics

An Irish-owned company has introduced wearable technology to tackle the problem of health and safety ergonomic assessments for remote workers. This new technology is being marketed as a cost-effective method of accomplishing ergonomic assessments when an in-person assessment isn't possible or allowed.

<https://bit.ly/3n1wTvn>

Wearable “panic button” for workers

An Irish-owned wearable safety company is targeting the US market with its wrist-worn “panic button” device for hotel workers. Hotels in the US are making the portable devices available to staff as part of an initiative to improve staff safety. The aim is to help protect guest-facing and lone workers, such as cleaners, in the event that they are subjected to assault or harassment.

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

TRAINING AND EVENTS

Training scheduled at NISO Training Centre, Dublin 12 OR Online

[Manual Handling Basic](#), NISO Certificate (half day); 11 January

2021 [Book online](#)

[VDU/DSE Assessor Training](#) (ONLINE) NISO Certificate (1 day); 19 January;

16 February 2021 [Book online](#)

[Mobile Working Assessor Course](#) (ONLINE) NISO Certificate (1 day) 2

February 2021 [Book online](#)

Upcoming Dates TBC

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

[Safety Representation](#) (ONLINE), NISO Certificate (2 day)

Regional Courses

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

Westmeath: Athlone IT; Commencing 25 January 2021; 19.00hrs

Limerick: Limerick IT; Commencing 26 January 2021; 19.00hrs

Cork: CSN College of Further Education Cork; Commencing 16 February 2021; 19.00hrs

Dublin: NISO Training Centre, Ballymount, Dublin 12; Commencing 16 February 2021; 18.30hrs

Mayo: Commencing 16 February 2021; 19.00hrs

Wexford: Commencing 16 February 2021; 19.00hrs

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

[58th Annual NISO Conference](#), 8 October 2021

[Trade Exhibition of H&S Products and Services](#) 8 October 2021

[30th NISO/NISG All Ireland Safety Awards Presentation](#), 8 October 2021

[NISO/NISG All Ireland Safety Quiz Finals](#), 2021 dates TBC

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