

NISO Safety Observer
April 2021; Issue 55

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Newsletter of the National Irish Safety Organisation

April 2021 - Issue 55

Welcome to the April 2021 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 29 January 2021 last and the next edition for NISO members is scheduled for late April 2021. The last edition of Safety Observer was distributed on 25 February 2021.



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HEALTH & SAFETY
TRAINING

Workers'
Memorial Day
2021

NISO NEWS

All Ireland Safety Awards 2021

NISO/NISG are now accepting entries for the All Ireland Occupational Safety Awards 2021! Visit safetyawards.ie for the safety awards brochure, closing dates, entry forms and lots more! Visit safetyawards.ie

Online H&S Training

NISO is continuing to hold H&S training courses online. Upcoming training includes Mobile & Home Workers Assessor Training, Safety Representation and DSE/VDU Risk Assessor Training. View upcoming course dates and book online [HERE...](#)

Workers' Memorial Day 2021

Every year on 28 April we remember those who lost their lives during the course of their work. Further information on Workers' Memorial Day 2021 will be available soon on niso.ie.

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- Cabinet approves new personal injuries guidelines
- HSA launches Irish leg of the Good Practice Awards
- Prevention strategies for MSDs in Healthcare

COVID-19 NEWS

Warning over increase in people attending the workplace

A “very strong note of caution” was recently being urged by the National Emergency Public Health Team (NPHE) amid fears that people are beginning to “slip” amid prolonged COVID-19 restrictions, with reports of 60pc of people now attending the workplace. Despite the country being in the highest level of restriction the amount of movement and number of people attending workplaces leaves us in a high risk of another surge.

<http://bit.ly/318u02C>

“Shocking disregard” for frontline workers

The Garda Representative Association has said the change in the priority list for vaccinations is a “shocking disregard for frontline workers”. Age will become the sole factor in deciding when people are vaccinated, replacing previous hierarchies relating to certain occupations. This means that gardaí, teachers, childcare workers, special needs assistants (SNAs) and other workers will not be a priority for

vaccination based on their jobs.

<https://bit.ly/39u39m9>

Antigen test approved for meat plants

An antigen test has been cleared for use in meat plants while trials are continuing for other workplaces. The test can rapidly detect the presence or absence of the COVID-19 antigen. Testing will ramp up to twice a week using the antigen test, but as this method of testing is resource intensive, it has been warned that the process may not be straightforward.

<http://bit.ly/3134sUv>

Burnout increasing among senior medics

New medical research has found that more than three-quarters of hospital consultants have shown signs of burnout, with 77pc of consultants screening positive for burnout using an internationally-recognised measurement scale. The pilot study, led by UCD, also reports that one quarter responded that either they or colleagues had experienced “long-COVID” after being infected with the virus, among other findings.

<http://bit.ly/395MS6N>

Remote workers facing burnout

A recent survey found that 43pc of remote workers reported experiencing frequent stress and that employers should be wary of employee burnout. The survey found that 44pc of remote workers are logging longer hours, with an average of 22 hours overtime a month, and 65pc feel pressure to stay connected afterward. The study also surveyed 180 HR leaders, 69pc of which said managing mental wellbeing is now their biggest challenge.

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

IRISH NEWS

30th All Ireland Safety Awards 2021

NISO and NISG are now accepting entries for the 30th All Ireland Occupational Safety Awards. Visit our dedicated awards website, safetyawards.ie, for all the resources you need to enter the safety awards including the awards workshop video, entry forms, guidance, awards flyer and lots more!

Early Bird deadline: 28 May 2021 at 17.00hrs

Standard deadline: 2 July 2021 at 17.00hrs.

<https://safetyawards.ie/>

Cabinet approves new personal injury guidelines

The Minister for Justice has received approval from the Cabinet to implement new guidelines aimed at reducing the level of awards in personal injury cases. The draft guidelines to replace the guidance in the Book of Quantum were recently backed by a majority of judges. The guidelines will apply to all new cases that have not yet been assessed by the Personal Injuries Assessment Board (PIAB).

<http://bit.ly/3d2C6zt>

Views sought on reform of Personal Injuries Board

A public consultation on enhancing and reforming the remit of the Personal Injuries Assessment Board (PIAB) has commenced. The objective of the consultation is to enhance the board's remit, to bring more cases within its ambit and to reduce the number of cases that progress to litigation. The deadline for submissions or comments as part of the consultation process is April 17.

<http://bit.ly/3tQdlb7>

Slips, trips and falls cost the State up to €363m

Slip, trip and fall personal injury claims against the State cost €90m over a five-year period – but a report warns the true expense could be four times that when indirect costs are included. Indirect costs include absenteeism, substitution of personnel resulting from absenteeism, additional administration and loss of service and expertise. The report found that, of the claims analysed over the period, the average cost of 353 finalised slip, trip and fall claims was €42,345 – made up of legal costs, expert costs and awarded damages.

<http://bit.ly/3f4A0BQ>

HSA launches Good Practice Awards

The HSA has launched the Irish leg of the EU-OSHA Healthy Workplaces Good Practice Awards. The closing date for entries is 4 June 2021. The Good Practice Awards are one of the main elements of the EU-OSHA's "Healthy Workplaces Lighten the Load" campaign designed to highlight and promote best practice in relation to the prevention and management of MSDs in the workplace.

<https://bit.ly/3lYGB28>

Irish mental health initiative presented to European Parliament

The Irish mental health training organisation "Mental Health First Aid Ireland" (MHFA

Ireland) has presented to the European Parliament staff different mental health initiatives to highlight their importance and the benefits of introducing them to organisations. MHFA Ireland has also conducted the pan-European webcast “Let’s Talk About Mental Health” which focused on creating a better working environment, raising awareness and removing stigma.

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

Military sex abuse victims urged to come forward

An Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces have appealed for victims of sexual abuse in the military to come forward after reviewing dozens of allegations of historical abuse. The allegations relate to abuse of both male and female soldiers, often by senior personnel, and abuse of children in the residential area of an army base. The Minister for Defence ordered that the allegations be treated as protected disclosures under whistleblower legislation.

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

Public Consultation: COP for the Chemical Agents Regulations and Carcinogens Regulations

Closing date for submissions to the Draft 2021 Code of Practice for the Chemical Agents Regulations and Carcinogens Regulations is Friday, 2 April 2021 at 17.00hrs.

<http://bit.ly/397ro9P>

Half of HGVs found with defects

Almost 50% of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) have been found to have a roadworthiness defect, according to new figures. Data from the Road Safety Authority (RSA) and An Garda Síochána has found that one in four HGVs surveyed over three years contains a “major defect” such as worn braking components. Drivers are now being urged to carry out daily walk-around checks before undertaking any journey.

<http://bit.ly/3vYt1R2>

Cliff rescues temporarily suspended by Coast Guard

The Coast Guard has temporarily suspended its cliff rescue teams nationwide. It is understood the decision was made by the search and rescue operation after a risk assessment was carried out. The organisation informed volunteers that it is working to reinstate the teams “as quickly as possible”.

<https://bit.ly/3w94sAL>

Crew of stricken vessel airlifted to safety

The seven-man crew of a fishing vessel has been airlifted to safety after their boat got into difficulty off the Cork coast. A spokesperson expressed relief that there was no loss of life during the rescue operation. The fishing vessel sank some time following the rescue operation.

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

UK NEWS

Theme park fined £1m following fatality

A theme park has been sentenced following the death of a schoolgirl on one of its water rides in 2017. The crown court heard the circumstances that caused the 11-year-old girl to drown. An investigation by the HSE found the risk assessment in place was not suitable and sufficient and it did not properly assess or address the risk of passengers being ejected/falling from the raft, despite previous similar incidents. The theme park pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and was fined £1 million.

<http://bit.ly/3d104Lsa>

UK government downplaying COVID-19 workplace risk

New research from the Institute of Employment Rights has found that the risk of COVID-19 transmission in UK workplaces remains significant and is being dangerously downplayed by the Government's "light touch" approach. The report identifies a serious mismatch between the risk to workers' health and the government's claims to make workplaces "COVID-secure".

<https://bit.ly/317HoUX>

HSE grilled over its COVID response

Unions and the UK Health and Safety Executive (HSE) leaders clashed over the enforcement of COVID guidance at work, as MPs on the Department of Work and Pensions Select Committee heard diametrically opposing views on the regulator's activities as the two sides gave their accounts of the last 12 months. The deputy general secretary of a prominent union argued that the HSE had been "found wanting" during the pandemic, where around 14,500 people of working age had lost their lives.

<https://bit.ly/3fgE9Tr>

HSE's COVID-secure spot checks queried

The HSE's decision to use two private sector firms to carry out workplace “COVID security” assessments is being scrutinised by employers and their legal advisers, amid concern that staff at the two debt collection firms involved might not be best qualified for the role. The two firms were appointed in December to provide staff as “spot check support officers” visiting businesses' premises to assess compliance with COVID guidance, including masks, sanitation, two-metre segregation and bubble arrangements. The HSE has defended the move saying that it has allowed them to significantly scale up its operations at a time when they’ve been overwhelmed by calls and requests for help.

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

Workspaces not safe for return to work

Safety representatives are warning that workspaces may not be safe for workers to return to, citing lack of risk assessments, PPE and social distancing. The survey of union safety reps suggests almost half of employers have not carried out a COVID risk assessment or have outdated, inadequate measures in place that may not prevent transmission of the virus.

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

Rapid testing kits set for some NI workplaces

Rapid COVID-19 testing kits are being distributed to employers in four key sectors in Northern Ireland: agri-food, manufacturing, essential retail and construction. The tests will give results within half an hour.

<http://bbc.in/395yyv4>

Bullying claims at Sellafield nuclear site

Whistleblowers at Sellafield have claimed that a “toxic culture” of bullying and harassment at the nuclear site could let serious safety concerns go unreported. The BBC investigation has found multiple claims of serious bullying and sexual harassment among its 10,000-strong workforce, allegations of racial abuse and allegations about the working culture at the site and how it could impact nuclear safety. A spokesperson for Sellafield said they accept that they have more work to do in this area and remain as committed as ever to eradicating unacceptable behaviour from the workplace.

<http://bbc.in/3ILzauX>

EUROPEAN NEWS

Overhaul of EU rules on driver medical fitness needed

According to a new report by the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC), the current EU approach to assessing whether drivers are medically fit to hold a licence needs substantial revision. The report shows that, regarding the assessment of medical fitness to drive, the starting point for many EU countries is still age-based despite the fact that studies have concluded that other factors including substance abuse and specific medical conditions are more important factors when it comes to medical fitness to drive.

<http://bit.ly/399MHaB>

EU-OSHA's Official Campaign Partner and Media Partners 2020-22

EU-OSHA is pleased to welcome a diverse range of Official Campaign Partners and Media Partners to the 2020-22 campaign: "Healthy Workplaces Lighten the Load." The support of the new official campaign partners and media partners will be crucial to help prevent and manage work-related MSDs through the promotion and exchange of good practices.

<https://bit.ly/3szzM9N>

New approaches in MSDs prevention called for

The prevalence of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) remains high among EU workers due to a combination of elements. These include the impact of changing ways of working, an ageing workforce, and psychosocial factors. New approaches to prevention can help to achieve a long-term reduction in the prevalence of MSDs among EU workers.

<https://bit.ly/3ssrd0l>

WORLD NEWS

Citibank introduce "Zoom-free Fridays" to ease fatigue

American investment bank Citigroup has urged its staff to limit video calls on Fridays in an effort to promote better work-life balance, ease "Zoom fatigue" and increase employee wellbeing. Citibank CEO introduced the changes following feedback from employees around the world.

<https://bbc.in/39psIVB>

FATALITIES AND ACCIDENTS

Man dies in workplace accident in Co. Wexford

A man in his 40s has died in a workplace accident in Co. Wexford. It is understood that the fatal accident happened in a grain store. An Garda Síochána and the HSA are both investigating the incident.

<http://bit.ly/3d1NP18>

IN THE COURTS

Carpenter hoping to have €2m “bionic arm” fitted

A carpenter who lost his right arm in a sawmill accident is hoping to have a €2 million "bionic arm" fitted, the High Court heard. The claimant was seriously injured when he was changing saw cut settings on a machine in a work premises in Co Kerry in 2018, it is claimed in court proceedings. The man is suing his employer for negligence and breach of duty. The claims are denied. Following talks between the lawyers, the judge was told the employer had agreed to pay the €50,000 upfront and that the case could be adjourned to May, on consent between the parties.

<http://bit.ly/31cJLWg>

Garda awarded €12k after arm injured by tiepin

A garda, whose arm was injured by a colleague's tiepin as she helped him break up a fight, has been awarded €12,000 damages in a garda compensation hearing in the High Court. The garda had been left with a 6.5cm keloid scar on her forearm, which had caused her embarrassment for up to four years. A consultant plastic reconstructive surgeon was of the view that the only treatment that might help reduce the red colour of the scar was laser therapy. The judge said that the garda had been injured in an ugly incident and that the court was taking into consideration her embarrassment for up to four years.

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

Teacher’s alleged bullying case cannot continue

An art teacher’s action claiming she was bullied and harassed for nearly 10 years at her school cannot continue, a High Court judge has ruled. The 56-year-old teacher sued the board of management of the Co. Louth school, claiming, between April 2008 and October 2017, she was subjected to bullying by four other teachers. The school denied her claims. An independent investigator in 2016 upheld the vast majority of her 26 complaints, the court heard. The judge ruled that there was a deliberate decision made by the teacher’s solicitor not to serve her personal injury summons on the defendant until a separate dispute in relation to her application for early retirement was resolved in 2019.

<http://bit.ly/2QzTjJ3>

STATISTICS

Seven people have been killed in workplace accidents since 1 January 2021 - Correct at 24 March 2021. Source: www.hsa.ie

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

SAFETY ALERTS

Failure of a road tanker pressure/vacuum relief valve

The UK's Health and Safety Executive has issued a safety alert to all haulage contractors, users of tank containers and road tankers, companies servicing pressure/ vacuum relief valves and authorised inspection bodies contracted to verify the functioning of these valves. The alert is being issued following an investigation into a road incident in April 2020 which found evidence that a pressure/vacuum relief valve, originally manufactured by Fort Vale Engineering Ltd, had been modified by a third party. The valve cap had a nut welded to the top, most likely to allow it to be serviced without the use of a special tool to remove the valve cap. The unauthorised modification prevented the valve's safe operation.

<https://bit.ly/2O9p8Yo>

PUBLICATIONS

Early intervention for MSDs among the working population

The EU-OSHA recommends early intervention where work is compromised by or aggravates a musculoskeletal problem. The sooner a musculoskeletal problem is managed, the less likely it is that it will lead to long-term work loss. Early healthcare intervention consists of: rapid referral; diagnosis and clinical management by musculoskeletal specialists in the first week of work disability; patient education; early mobilisation; recommendations for physical activity; and support for returning to work. The main focus of the article is on how health care systems can provide early intervention, in cooperation with other services, to support the worker to continue in employment. Early intervention in the workplace and the role of the employer is also discussed.

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

Working with Chronic MSDs - Good Practical Advice

This report takes an in-depth look at working with chronic musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) and makes a clear case for the benefits of enabling those with chronic conditions to remain in work.

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

Working with chronic rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases

This info sheet provides a simple explanation of chronic rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) and highlights the importance of ensuring that people with such conditions are supported to remain in work or return to work through workplace accommodations — particularly as RMDs become more common as the workforce ages.

<https://bit.ly/3sBv0Zn>

RESOURCES

Prevention strategies for MSDs in the healthcare sector

OSH Wiki page from EU-OSHA on prevention strategies for MSDs in the healthcare sector. Musculoskeletal disorders or MSDs are the leading cause of work-related health problems in the healthcare sector. The effects for staff, organisations and society include sickness absence, injuries and disability, increased costs, higher employee turnover, lower productivity and staff leaving the healthcare profession. This page includes data on work-related health problems and MSDs in the healthcare sector, risk factors, preventive measures and guidance for a comprehensive approach.

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

Expanding the outreach of online risk assessment

Protecting the safety and health of workers in micro and small enterprises (MSEs) presents a bigger challenge than in larger companies. Incorporation of user friendly and interactive online risk assessment tools such as OiRA into national strategies and legislation can contribute in diverse ways to improve the OSH situation in MSEs. A comprehensive overview about OiRA and other online risk assessment tools in national OSH strategies and legislation is available from the EU-OSHA.

<http://bit.ly/3rj4Rgu>

HSA Quarry Safety Campaign 2021

Resources from the HSA and the Irish Concrete Federation arising from Quarry Safety Week 2021 including presentations on Pedestrian Safety Guidance, Vehicle

Safety, Brake Testing/Lifting Equipment/Visibility and Traffic Management Plan.

<http://bit.ly/2P5QYFI>

Napo in...Lighten the Load - 2021

The EU-OSHA has produced six new video clips which aim to highlight prevailing MSD issues in workplaces. Sedentary work, monotonous and repetitive movements, lack of physical activity and lifting heavy loads are some of the risk factors that characters Napo, Napette and the Boss confront to stop or reduce the musculoskeletal suffering in the workplace. The educational videos are full of humour and good advice.

<http://bit.ly/3tPAEY3>

HSA Remote Working webpage

The HSA's Remote Working webpage contains guidance and information below to help you plan for working remotely as well as information on responsibilities under safety, health and welfare law. It has resources for employees and employers and includes information on ergonomics and remote working stress.

<http://bit.ly/3slvv9T>

EU-OSHA multilingual OSH thesaurus

The EU-OSHA has launched a multilingual thesaurus consisting of a list of OSH terms grouped together in a hierarchy. You can search and browse nearly 2,000 OSH related terms or download the complete Thesaurus in an Excel format in any of the 25 EU languages.

<http://bit.ly/3clvcq0>

SAFETY COMMENTARY/OPINION

Employers urged to speak out on home working issues

Employees who are currently working from home are being urged to communicate any issues that they may be having to their employers and to not suffer in silence. Employers have a duty of care to employees whether they are in the office or not and if they don't know what their employees' problems are, they can't try to fix them. Home working may give rise to many issues including poor ergonomics and mental health concerns.

<http://bit.ly/3f2kczq>

Union rep reflects on COVID-19 challenges in meat plants

A major Irish union has said that meat plants are proven vectors for the transmission of COVID-19 and estimates that 25% of the meat processing industry's workforce has contracted the virus. Reflecting on the past 12 months, a union representative discusses times that were "extremely frustrating" as it fought for improved working conditions for meat processing plant workers during the pandemic.

<http://bit.ly/3sn6T0q>

"Nurse by nurse, day by day, we are coming undone"

Nurses were already exhausted, disempowered and demoralised before COVID arrived. It's time to stop adapting and demand change. One nurse outlines the stark reality and working conditions experienced by nurses working in Ireland's hospitals.

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

CASE STUDIES

Preventing low back pain in bricklaying work

This series of short informative case studies from EU-OSHA looks at a range of policy level initiatives across Europe and beyond aiming to prevent and manage work-related MSDs. The studies focus on achievements, factors contributing to their success and challenges encountered, and transferability to other sectors and countries.

<https://bit.ly/31eeoL7>

SAFETY IN VIDEOS

Firefighters called to scene of explosive tractor fire

Fire and Rescue Services were called to the scene of an explosive tractor in Co. Tipperary. Thankfully there were no reported injuries following the incident.

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

SAFETY IN PICTURES

Farmer rescued after fall down 60ft sinkhole

A farmer in the UK was rescued after he fell down a 60ft sinkhole in a field while he was driving a quad bike. The rescue involved a multi-agency response.

<http://bit.ly/3cjwsK4>

TRAINING AND EVENTS

Training scheduled at NISO Training Centre, Dublin 12 OR Online

[DSE/VDU Risk Assessor Course](#) (ONLINE) NISO Certificate (1 day); 6 April (Fully Booked); 11 May; 8 June [BOOK NOW](#)

[Mobile & Home Working Assessor Course](#) (ONLINE) NISO Certificate (1 day) 11 May; 9 June [BOOK NOW](#)

[Safety Representation](#) (ONLINE), NISO Certificate (2 day); 25-26 May; 29-30 June [BOOK NOW](#)

Upcoming Dates TBC

[Manual Handling Basic](#) (half day)

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

Regional Courses

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

Dublin: Commencing 14 September 2021

Other venue dates TBC

Safety Awards Entry Deadlines

Early Bird Deadline: 28 May 2021 at 17.00hrs

Standard Entry Deadline: 2 July 2021 at 17.00hrs

Late Entry Deadline: 30 July 2021 at 17.00hrs (additional fee applies)

National Events

[57th Annual NISO Conference](#), Killarney, Co. Kerry; 4 November 2021

[Trade Exhibition of H&S Products and Services](#) Killarney, Co. Kerry; 4 November 2021

[30th NISO/NISG All Ireland Safety Awards Presentation](#), Killarney, Co. Kerry; 4 November 2021

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