

NISO Safety Observer
October 2021 ; Issue 59

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Newsletter of the National Irish Safety Organisation

October 2021 - Issue 59

Welcome to the October 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 30 July 2021 last and the next edition for NISO members is scheduled for November 2021. The last edition of Safety Observer was distributed on 30 August 2021.

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The NISO Observer Newsletter is sent to **NISO Members** and **email subscribers only**. Please forward this newsletter on to any colleagues or friends who may wish to read or subscribe to the mailing list.

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NISO Annual Conference & Trade Exhibition 2021



HEALTH & SAFETY TRAINING

NISO NEWS

NISO Annual Conference & Trade Exhibition

The NISO Annual Conference & Trade Exhibition is scheduled for 4 November 2021 in the Great Southern Killarney, Co. Kerry [Subject to Government guidance]. Find out more [HERE...](#)

30th Annual Safety Awards

The 30th Annual Occupational Safety Awards Dinner is scheduled for 4 November 2021 in the Great Southern Killarney, Co. Kerry [Subject to Government guidance]. Find out more [HERE...](#)

H&S Training

NISO is continuing to hold both online and classroom-based health & safety training including Mobile & Home Working Assessors Training, DSE/VDU Risk Assessors Training, Safety Representation and Manual Handling Basic. Further information [HERE...](#)

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COVID-19 NEWS

Government updates Work Safely Protocol

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment has published an updated Work Safely Protocol. The updated protocol reflects the most up to date public health advice. It also clarifies that vaccinations are not mandatory in Ireland and employers cannot currently require staff to reveal their vaccination status.

<https://bit.ly/2XF145k>

Partitions give a “false sense of security” in offices

As employees continue to return to the workplace, the key safety message from experts is to keep wearing face masks, stay two metres from colleagues and try not to speak on public transport. Experts have also advised that employees should not come to work if they have any COVID symptoms and they should be paid for that time, and to continue to work from home where possible.

<https://bit.ly/3ob6U8a>

Vaccine “Mayhem” in offices

One of Ireland’s leading employment lawyers has said vaccinated employees have begun reducing physical contact with unvaccinated colleagues in the workplace. The lawyer said Ireland’s workplace safety protocol, which enable staff to refuse to disclose their vaccination status and entitles workers to refuse antigen testing, “is going to cause mayhem” for employers when people fully return to work.

<https://bit.ly/3uhnvZ2>

Union claims colleges not engaging staff on return to campus

A lecturers' union has claimed that some third-level colleges have not engaged adequately with staff around plans for a safe return to campus. The president of the union has said that in addition to key mitigation measures such as mask wearing, ventilation and distancing, there must be clear and consistent messaging that staff or students who have any COVID-19 symptoms should not attend campus. He also said that all classrooms, practical rooms, lecture halls and communal areas need to be risk-assessed to ensure the safety of all on campuses.

<https://bit.ly/3nx6l8r>

IRISH NEWS

Defence Forces “will cooperate” with any investigation

The Defence Forces has pledged to cooperate with any investigation that is launched after a series of allegations of sexual harassment, abuse and rape were outlined by former members. As a result of these experiences, some of the women involved suffered eating disorders, distress, trauma, mental anguish and suicide attempts. A number of opposition parties in Dáil Éireann have called for an independent inquiry following the allegations and for a zero tolerance approach to all forms of harassment, bullying and violence in all workplaces.

<https://bit.ly/3CeV7cV>

Harassment of women in Defence Forces “systemic”

The former army officer who blew the whistle on sexual abuse in the Defence Forces 20 years ago says the military still has not moved out of the last century. He said that bullying, harassment, sexual assault and rape of female members of the Defence Forces was widespread throughout the organisation and that the women who recently came forward must have a say in the terms of the official review.

<https://bit.ly/3u6hG0J>

Masculinity impacts male farmers seeking help for health

According to a new study, many farmers view seeking help as an “admission of failure” and a betrayal of a masculine image of themselves as men and farmers. For many farmers, the act of opposing health-enhancing behaviours, or help-seeking behaviour could be seen as an active demonstration of manliness and part of “being a farmer”. The study noted that unless greater attention is paid to male farmers’ health, they will be left unsupported, and in danger of adding to the poor health statistics.

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

Safety training credited for saving lives in factory fire

The managing director of a manufacturing plant that was completely devastated in a

fire has said that their “training saved a lot of lives”. He said that it is still unclear exactly what caused the fire and that smoke was first noticed in the incubation room and within seconds the fire quickly spread along a wall. Despite shock among the staff, the building was evacuated quickly because of the regular drills.

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

The right to disconnect in a farming context

Under a new Code of Practice, all workers have a “Right to Disconnect” from their employment outside of their working hours. This article takes a look at applying this in a farming context and on how farmers need to collaborate with their employees when developing their Right to Disconnect policy for their business.

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

Second annual “Ag Mental Health Week” in October

The second annual “Ag Mental Health Week” is set to begin on Sunday, 10 October, which coincides with World Mental Health Day. The event, which organisers hope will “unite the ag community around the world and highlight the crucial importance of taking breaks, enjoying nature and clearing our minds”, will include panel discussions that explore mental health issues from various perspectives.

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

Irish finance staff suffer more mental health issues

A new report has found that Irish finance workers suffer more from mental health issues than their global peers. The survey found that nearly 60% of Irish respondents cited mental health as the most significant issue facing their finance function compared to 48% worldwide.

<https://bit.ly/39btOE2>

Tractor drivers on phones flagged by motorists

The issue of tractor drivers travelling on the road while on their mobile phones was flagged several times as the harvest and silage season began to wind down. A Crime Prevention Officer, who also raised the issue after noticing several neighbours on mobiles while using driving farm machinery, emphasised that “Farm safety includes road safety”.

<https://bit.ly/3kaPFS3>

UK NEWS

Grenfell: Contractors were “ignorant of fire regulations”

Lawyers representing the victims of Grenfell Tower said a culture of carelessness led to the tragic 2017 blaze which claimed 72 lives. It was claimed at the Grenfell Tower Inquiry that professionals responsible for the cladding did not look at existing guidance and regulations for fire safety. A speaker on behalf of the Fire Brigades Union also said that a culture of profit allowed players in the industry to cut corners,

including not reading important guidance such as Part B of the building regulations in England, which deals with fire safety matters within and around buildings.

<https://bit.ly/39e6q8A>

Changes to HGV driving test a “risk to road safety”

Changes to the HGV testing systems designed to address a shortage of drivers are a risk to road safety, the Road Haulage Association (RHA) has said. The UK has an estimated shortfall of 90,000 lorry drivers, a problem that has worsened since Brexit and COVID-19. In an effort to resolve the issue, the UK government announced plans to encourage more new drivers onto the road by freeing up to 50,000 HGV test slots and has insisted the streamlined process would not affect HGV driving standards. The RHA is concerned that changes like removing the reversing manoeuvre from the test, which makes it shorter, and assessing it separately is a step backwards when it comes to safety.

<https://bbc.in/3loQoP7>

Chemical company fined £1m after fatal explosion

A chemical company has been fined £1 million after a man died in an explosion at its plant in Norwich. The deceased was carrying out repair work on a mixing vessel during a planned period of shutdown maintenance. An investigation by the HSE found that a quantity of flammable Toluene residue had been left inside the vessel causing the explosion.

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

Teachers not at higher risk of COVID-19

Teachers are at no more risk of being hospitalised with COVID-19 or suffering severe illness than any other working-age adults, a new study published in the British Medical Journal has found. It found neither school staff nor their household members were at any increased risk of severe outcomes at any time during the 2020–2021 academic year.

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

EUROPEAN NEWS

Unvaccinated workers in Italy to be suspended without pay

The Italian government has approved some of the strictest anti-COVID measures in the world, making it obligatory for all workers either to show proof of vaccination, a negative test or recent recovery from infection. Any worker who fails to present a valid health certificate will be suspended without pay, but cannot be sacked, according to a draft of the decree set to come into force from 15 October.

<https://bit.ly/3AL3LzJ>

3,000 unvaccinated health staff suspended in France

Hospitals, care homes and health centres have suspended around 3,000 workers

across France for failing to comply with mandatory COVID vaccination, the government announced. France's Health Minister claims the suspensions have not resulted in chaos but unions warn of likely disruptions to care as a result.

<https://bit.ly/3AL6wB5>

WORLD NEWS

Global energy company weighs “job or job” policy for employees

A global energy company is considering making it mandatory for workers in some operations to get COVID-19 vaccinations or risk being fired, an internal company document reveals. The multinational oil and gas company, which employs some 86,000 workers in more than 70 countries, will weigh the pros and cons of the policy at an executive meeting.

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

Almost two million die from work-related causes every year

Work-related diseases and injuries were responsible for the deaths of 1.9 million people in 2016, according to the first joint estimates from the World Health Organization (WHO) and International Labour Organization (ILO). According to the first joint estimates the majority of work-related deaths were due to respiratory and cardiovascular disease. Non-communicable diseases accounted for 81% of the deaths while occupational injuries caused 19% of deaths.

<https://bit.ly/3ERhJ5w>

FATALITIES AND ACCIDENTS

Man dies in Co. Sligo farm accident

A man in his 30s has died in a workplace accident on a farm in Co. Sligo. Emergency services attended the scene and the man was taken to Sligo University Hospital where he later passed away. An Garda Síochána and the HSA are investigating the fatality.

<https://bit.ly/3Aiwqf0>

Man injured in livestock mart in Leitrim

A man was injured in an accident involving livestock at a mart in Co. Leitrim. The man was a member of staff at the mart. He was taken to Sligo University Hospital with non-life threatening injuries and the HSA is investigating the incident.

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

Driver hospitalised after tractor overturns

The driver of a tractor which overturned was taken to hospital after being extricated from the vehicle by members of the Fire Brigade. The firefighters used specialised collision equipment and managed to extricate the driver from the vehicle, provide treatment and transport to hospital.

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

IN THE COURTS

Bank employee wins sexual harassment case

A bank employee in Belfast who was harassed by a male colleague nearly twice her age won her sexual harassment case at an industrial tribunal in June 2019 and was awarded £18,483. An anonymisation order prevented her or the employer being named, until now. The employee said it was important that her voice had been heard as she didn't want what happened to her to be "hidden under a cloak of anonymity". The tribunal concluded that the man's conduct towards his female colleague was clearly in breach of the bank's harassment policy and noted that it was not convinced that the managers dealing with the incident had any relevant knowledge of the policy or had even read it. The bank issued a statement expressing its acceptance of the decision and its commitment to creating a culture and work environment of respect with zero tolerance for bullying and harassment.

<https://bbc.in/3khwGWi>

Coffee chain to pay €20k for sexual harassment

The Labour Court has ordered a coffee chain to pay a former barista €20,000 compensation for sexual harassment at work after the manager posted a picture of himself in boxer shorts and promised to promote staff who could draw male genitalia on a flat white. The complainant was previously awarded €3,500 by a Workplace Relations Commission adjudication officer who found the manager's behaviour to be in the less serious category of complaints, but she appealed the level of award. The Labour Court ordered the employer to develop a workplace anti-harassment and sexual harassment policy, an anti-bullying policy and social media policy.

<https://bit.ly/3id1MN5>

INQUESTS

Inquest hears worker died from fall from scaffolding

A construction worker fell to his death from scaffolding that was erected by unqualified tradesmen, an inquest has heard. The roofer died at the scene from injuries he sustained after falling eight metres from the fourth floor of a scaffolding structure at a house in Dublin. The inquest heard evidence that the scaffolding was non-compliant with building regulations. The HSA inspector who examined the scene said that the scaffolding work was in breach of legislation governing health and safety in the workplace. The owner of the company responsible for the faulty scaffolding was fined €5,000, another of his companies was fined €40,000 after they each pleaded guilty to a single charge of failing to ensure an employee was not exposed to risk. The company owner also brought €20,000 of his personal money to court to give to the deceased's widow and family.

<https://bit.ly/3i6lOb5>

STATISTICS

Twenty-five people have been killed in workplace accidents since 1 January 2021 - Correct at 28 September 2021. Source: www.hsa.ie
<http://bit.ly/34bJFyp>

SAFETY ALERTS

Catastrophic failure of marine loading arm

The HSE UK has issued a safety alert aimed at users and companies that service marine loading arms (MLAs) to ensure they carry out suitable and sufficient inspection and maintenance. The safety alert was issued following a HSE investigation of a failed MLA that revealed concerns that not all components were being suitably inspected and maintained due to problems accessing the highest pivot point. The lack of lubrication of this greased joint presents a serious risk of the joint failing with the potential for complete collapse of the arm, leading to possible death, serious injury or damage to process equipment and subsequent loss of containment.
<https://bit.ly/3ofiDmg>

Lubrication of circuit breakers

The HSE UK recently issued this safety alert regarding lubrication of circuit breakers. Investigation into an explosion of a HV circuit breaker indicated that recently carried out maintenance may have been a causal factor. The incident resulted in catastrophic failure of the HV circuit breaker leading to fire / explosion and could have resulted in fatal injuries. Maintenance of HV and LV circuit breakers typically involves both the cleaning and lubricating of the operating mechanism. The HSE investigation found that the same physical product was used for both maintenance activities, but evidence shows the product was in fact only suitable for cleaning and NOT lubrication. This situation may have arisen because of the availability of different products, (for different purposes), within the same product range, or changes to the products composition over time whilst retaining the original name. It is essential that the correct product is used for each task.
<https://bit.ly/3zQfAmC>

PUBLICATIONS

ETSC Safety Monitor 132

September 2021 newsletter from the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) featuring the following articles:

- US authorities begin investigation of Level 2 driver assistance systems
- Paris moves to 30km/h across the city, as Brussels hails safety gains
- France u-turns on technical inspections for motorcycles
- UK weakens HGV driver testing requirements

- ETSC partners on new project looking at assessment methods for “fitness to drive”

<https://bit.ly/3opBn2q>

REPORTS

A Review of Work-Related Fatalities in Agriculture in Ireland 2011-2020

This new report from the HSA focuses on the characteristics of the 208 work-related fatalities in agriculture between 2011 and 2020 and is based on comprehensive data on all work-related incidents that resulted in a fatality.

<https://bit.ly/3D1Dkqd>

New reports on static postures and MSDs

Prolonged sitting and standing at work are the focus of two new reports from EU-OSHA on the health risks of sedentary work. The reports look at which workers are most susceptible, what the guidelines are for sitting and standing at work and how employers can prevent risks and help workers increase their physical activity.

<https://bit.ly/398xxlL>

RESEARCH/STUDIES

Tips to counter negative impact of prolonged sitting

A new study has found that standing up and moving every 30 minutes for about three minutes might lessen the health impacts of over-sitting. Activities such as climbing several flights of stairs, jumping jacks or even taking just 15 steps during these mini-breaks improved aspects of blood sugar control among office workers, without noticeably interrupting their work flow.

<https://bit.ly/39ek37Q>

GUIDANCE

Legal options after an on farm injury

This article provides legal advice if you or a family member suffer a personal injury as a result of an accident on the farm and outlines several options that may be pursued in respect of taking legal action.

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

Returning to work following COVID-19 illness

Step-by-step guidance from EU-OSHA on getting back to work following COVID-19 and long COVID for managers and workers. The two new guides explain the challenges that returning workers face after suffering COVID-19 and provide simple solutions for both managers and workers on how to manage getting back to work.

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

Ventilation and air conditioning during COVID-19

Guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) UK on ventilation and air conditioning in workplaces during COVID-19. This guidance includes information on identifying poorly ventilated areas and using CO2 monitors, improving natural ventilation, improving mechanical ventilation and more.

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

RESOURCES

COVID-19 - adapting workplaces and protecting workers

OSH Wiki page from EU-OSHA entitled "COVID-19: Back to the Workplace - Adapting workplaces and protecting workers". This guidance includes information on updating risk assessments, resuming work after a period of closure, taking care of workers who have been ill, sector-specific guidance related to COVID-19 and more.

<https://bit.ly/3Aw6ixq>

Musculoskeletal disorders and telework

OSH-Wiki page from EU-OSHA with information on MSDs and telework. This comprehensive article includes information and useful links on topics such as the main MSDs risk factors related to telework, workstation ergonomics and related body postures, psychosocial factors, preventive/protective approaches to address MSDs risk factors related to telework, recommendations to the employer and more.

<https://bit.ly/2W2hWkK>

Healthy Workplaces Stop the Pandemic

COVID-19 resources for the workplace from EU-OSHA. A compilation of resources from different sources under different headings including EU guidance, Telework, Resources from EU and international organisations and Biological agents.

<https://bit.ly/39HO7Jq>

SAFETY INTERVIEWS

Discussion about farm accidents and farm safety in Ireland

An interview with a Teagasc Health and Safety Specialist on farm accidents in Ireland. The interview questions include whether farmers underestimate how dangerous cows can be, whether most farm accidents are preventable, top ten safety tips and farm safety training.

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

SAFETY COMMENTARY/OPINION

Do employers know how to manage mental health risks?

A Professor of Work Organisation & Wellbeing in University College Cork discusses challenges that many organisations experience with tackling mental health and work-

related stress effectively and systematically and asks “What will motivate employers to develop good quality and mentally healthy workplaces?”. Article featuring radio and TV interviews and links to useful resources.

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

Is a four-day working week the next step towards wellbeing?

The Scottish government has announced they will be trialling a four-day working week, without a loss of pay, with the exact logistics of how it will be carried out yet to be confirmed. With flexible and remote working taking the spotlight in a post-COVID world and a greater focus on wellbeing than ever before, is a four-day week the next logical step to further move towards a more wellbeing orientated approach to working? This article discusses the “case for a four-day week” under the headings of logistics and mental health & wellbeing.

<https://bit.ly/3tT4E6E>

SAFETY IN VIDEOS

Suicide prevention video to help construction workers

Almost 500 construction workers take their own lives every year in the UK and Ireland. This emotive video has been released to provide guidance for anybody affected. This short film aims to enable and encourage those affected by suicidal thoughts to find a way to talk about what they are feeling.

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

Woman narrowly avoids oncoming train

A video clip shared by a Dutch railway company shows the danger of ignoring closed barriers at a railway crossing. The video shows a woman narrowly avoiding a high speed train, after crossing the closed barriers twice.

<https://bit.ly/3AP0U8X>

TRAINING AND EVENTS

Training scheduled at NISO Training Centre, Dublin 12 OR Online

[DSE-VDU Risk Assessor Course](#) (ONLINE) NISO Certificate (1 day); 5 October; 9 November [BOOK NOW](#)

[Safety Representation](#) (ONLINE), NISO Certificate (2 day); 12-13 October [BOOK NOW](#)

[Manual Handling Basic](#), NISO Certificate (half day); 18 October; 29 November [BOOK NOW](#)

[Mobile & Home Working Assessor Course](#) (ONLINE) NISO Certificate (1 day); 19 October [BOOK NOW](#)

Regional Courses

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

Nationwide: Spring 2022

Athlone (AIT): Spring 2022

Limerick (LIT): Spring 2022

National Events [subject to Government guidance]

[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