- Learn Anytime
- Learn Anywhere
- Start Immediately
- UK-Based Human Support
- Expert-Designed Content
- Assured by Professional Bodies
- Track Progress Easily
- Cost-Effective Training
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Construction Companies Reminded to Keep Children Safe

iStock

Summary

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is urging construction companies to take extra precautions to keep children safe as the school holidays approach.

Construction sites contain numerous hazards, all of which can harm anyone entering without permission, both during, and outside of working hours.

The HSE said that the following specific steps particularly relevant to child safety:

- Where necessary, to reflect the nature of the site and the surrounding area, ensure suitable perimeter fencing or hoarding is erected.
- Regularly check and review site security to ensure fencing or hoarding is maintained and kept in good order.
- Secure sites adequately when finishing work for the day.
- Barrier off or cover over excavations and pits.
- Isolate and immobilise vehicles and plant and if possible, lock them in a compound.
- Store building materials (such as pipes, manhole rings, and cement bags) so that they cannot topple or roll over.
- Remove access ladders from excavations and scaffolds.
- Lock away hazardous substances.

More Information

HSE guidance can be accessed at:
https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/safetytopics/publicprotection.htm

Five-Minute Movement Breaks Could Improve Productivity & Wellbeing

Summary
New research suggests that taking a five-minute walking break every hour during the working day can improve mood, alertness and productivity while helping to reduce the negative effects associated with prolonged sitting.

Background
Many modern jobs involve extended periods of sitting, whether responding to emails, attending virtual meetings or working at a computer. Health experts have long warned that prolonged sedentary behaviour is associated with an increased risk of becoming overweight, developing heart disease and developing type 2 diabetes.

Researchers have therefore been exploring practical ways to encourage movement during the working day without reducing productivity.

What the Research Found
A study published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine examined the effects of different walking break schedules among more than 11,000 employees in the United States, most of whom worked in office-based roles.

Participants first followed their normal working routines before testing various walking-break patterns over a two-week period. These included taking a five-minute walk every 30 minutes, every hour or every two hours.

The researchers found that:
- A five-minute walk every 30 minutes improved mood and reduced tiredness but was often viewed as disruptive to work.
- A five-minute walk every two hours offered some benefits compared with not taking walking breaks at all.
- A five-minute walk every hour provided the greatest balance between wellbeing benefits and practicality.

Participants reported improvements in mood, alertness and productivity when following the hourly walking-break approach.

Why It Matters
According to the researchers, many adults spend a significant proportion of their waking hours sitting down. While advice to "sit less and move more" is widely accepted, people often struggle to understand what level of movement is realistic and beneficial.

The findings suggest that small, regular periods of activity can make a noticeable difference without significantly interrupting the working day. Walking may also support concentration, attention, memory and overall mental wellbeing.

The researchers noted that movement breaks do not necessarily require employees to stop working completely. Examples include walking meetings, taking phone calls while walking, or simply moving around the office.

Expert Commentary
The findings were welcomed by the British Heart Foundation, which noted that simple additions of movement throughout the day can support overall health.

However, it also highlighted some limitations of the research. The study relied on participants reporting their own experiences and only examined short-term effects. Further research will be required to determine whether similar benefits are sustained over longer periods and whether they translate into measurable improvements in heart health.

Key Learning Points
- Prolonged sitting is associated with a range of health risks.
- Regular movement during the working day can improve wellbeing and alertness.
- A five-minute walk every hour appears to provide a practical balance between health benefits and productivity.
- Walking meetings and walking while taking phone calls can help increase activity levels without disrupting work.
- Small changes to daily routines may have a positive impact on both health and work performance.

More Information
The study:
https://bjsm.bmj.com/content/early/2026/06/16/bjsports-2025-111221
British Journal of Sports Medicine – Research publication:
https://bjsm.bmj.com
Columbia University: https://www.columbia.edu
British Heart Foundation: https://www.bhf.org.uk

Worker Suffered Burns After Striking Live Underground Cable

Summary
A fencing contractor has been fined after an employee suffered an electric shock and multiple burns when a breaker struck a live underground electrical cable during fencing installation work.


HSE

What Happened
A worker was part of a team installing security fencing at a construction site on 21 May 2024. While using a mechanical breaker to excavate the ground in preparation for installing metal fencing, he struck a live underground electrical cable. The resulting electric shock caused the employee to sustain multiple burn injuries to his stomach, chest and arms.

The Investigation
An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the company had failed to implement suitable and sufficient control measures to manage the risks associated with underground services.

The investigation identified that appropriate precautions had not been taken before excavation work began. HSE guidance highlights that work involving underground services should only proceed after careful planning, obtaining and reviewing service plans, locating and identifying buried services using suitable detection equipment, clearly marking their positions, and following recognised safe digging practices.

The Outcome
The company pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 25(4) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015. It was **fined £10,000 and ordered to pay £5,487 in costs.**

Key Learning Points
- Always obtain and review plans showing the location of underground services before excavation work begins.
- Use suitable cable detection equipment to locate and clearly mark buried services before breaking ground.
- Ensure risk assessments and safe systems of work specifically address the risks from underground utilities.
- Follow recognised safe excavation and digging practices throughout the work.
- Ensure workers are trained and supervised so that control measures are consistently implemented.

Worker Suffered Life-Changing Electric Shock from Overhead Power Line

Summary

A tree surgery company has been fined after a worker suffered life-threatening injuries when a mobile lighting tower came into contact with an overhead power line during night-time hedge maintenance work.

What Happened

Shortly after midnight on 19 January 2024, a 26-year-old tree surgeon was working as part of a three-person team carrying out hedge maintenance on the A3102 near Royal Wootton Bassett.

The work was being undertaken at night to minimise disruption to traffic, as the road was being used as a diversion route for the M4 motorway.

During the operation, the worker was pushing a mobile lighting tower when it made contact with an overhead power line. He received a severe electric shock and suffered life-threatening injuries.

The injured worker later described how his body locked up as the electricity passed through him, preventing him from letting go of the equipment. He lost consciousness and was rushed to hospital, where he spent five weeks undergoing treatment from multiple specialist surgeons.

The incident left him with severe burns, including injuries that burned through tissue to the bone.

He continues to experience significant pain and other long-term effects and believes he may be unable to return to the profession he previously enjoyed.

The Investigation

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the company had obtained a permit from the local authority to undertake the work at night.

However, the investigation identified that the company had failed to adequately plan the work or properly assess the risks posed by the overhead power lines. Suitable control measures had not been implemented, including barriers, safe systems of work, appropriate instructions, or training relating to the use of the mobile lighting tower.

The investigation also found that the risks associated with the overhead power lines had not been properly assessed or controlled following the change from daytime to night-time working, which introduced the need for additional equipment.

The Outcome

The company pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 14 of the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989. The organisation was fined £60,000 and ordered to pay £6,237 in costs.

Additional Context

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) emphasised that overhead power lines present significant risks wherever work activities involve equipment capable of reaching them. HSE guidance states that employers should identify and assess the risks from overhead power lines before work begins and implement appropriate control measures. These may include establishing exclusion zones, using barriers, maintaining safe clearance distances, and ensuring workers receive suitable information, instruction, training, and supervision.

HSE noted that work methods should be reviewed whenever circumstances change, particularly when introducing new equipment or altering working arrangements.

Key Learning Points

- Always identify and assess the presence of overhead power lines before work begins.
- Review risk assessments whenever working methods or equipment change.
- Establish suitable exclusion zones and barriers around overhead power lines.
- Ensure workers receive appropriate training and instruction on equipment that could come into contact with electrical infrastructure.
- Plan and supervise work activities to maintain safe clearance distances from overhead power lines.
- Recognise that night-time working may introduce additional hazards requiring further risk controls.

More Information

Further guidance on working safely near overhead power lines is available from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE): https://www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/information/overhead.htm

Worker Drowned after Falling into Water-Filled Excavation

Summary

A construction company has been fined after a worker drowned when he fell into an unprotected, rainwater-filled excavation at a housing development in Hertfordshire. An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the site lacked safe pedestrian routes, adequate lighting and suitable protection around excavations, leaving workers and others at serious risk.

What Happened

The 35-year-old labourer had been working on the construction of several flats and was living in a property adjoining the site. After returning from a night out, he attempted to make his way home by crossing the construction site. During the journey, he fell into an exposed excavation that had filled with rainwater. His body was discovered the following afternoon.

The Investigation

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that excavation foundations crossed the site without designated safe walkways. Instead, workers relied on loose boards and planks placed across the excavations. These makeshift bridges were unsecured, lacked handrails, became slippery when wet and bowed underfoot, significantly increasing the risk of falls.

The site also had no dedicated lighting, making it particularly hazardous during hours of darkness. HSE concluded that the company had failed to take suitable precautions to protect people moving around the site. Following the fatal incident, HSE inspectors took enforcement action, resulting in the installation of properly constructed scaffold walkways over the excavations.

The Outcome

The company pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 22(2) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015. It was fined **£20,000** and ordered to pay **£5,000 in costs**. The company has since entered liquidation.

Key Learning Points

- Ensure excavations are protected with suitable edge barriers wherever people could fall.
- Provide designated, secure pedestrian walkways across construction sites.
- Never rely on loose boards or planks as permanent crossing points.
- Install adequate lighting where people may need to access sites during periods of darkness.
- Consider how weather conditions, including rain, can significantly increase slip and fall risks.
- Regularly inspect excavation controls and pedestrian routes to ensure they remain safe throughout the project.

More Information

HSE provides detailed guidance on safely managing excavation work, including preventing falls into excavations, providing suitable edge protection and ensuring safe access routes. It can be accessed at: https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/safetytopics/excavations.htm


HSE

The company had failed to take appropriate precautions to ensure the safety of those moving around and working at the site

Improvements were only made after the incident


HSE

Worker Injured Cleaning Machine

Summary
A manufacturing company has been fined after an employee suffered serious hand and arm injuries while cleaning machinery during a night shift.

What Happened
The worker was cleaning a machine used to manufacture pellets from a mixture of raw materials.

During the task, he manually raised a hydraulic ram inside the machine and opened the door. He then reached into the machine with his left hand to clean it.

As he withdrew his arm, the door fell at the front of the machine and activated the hydraulic ram, trapping his limb. He managed to pull his arm free, but suffered serious injuries, including torn nerves and tendons.

He required three operations to reattach his fingers, spent ten days in hospital, and continues to experience loss of sensation and movement in his fingers.

The Investigation
An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the company had failed to put suitable and sufficient measures in place to prevent employees being put at risk while cleaning the machine. The investigation also found that employees had not been given sufficient information and instruction on how to use and clean the machine safely. Training was inadequate and employees were not suitably supervised.

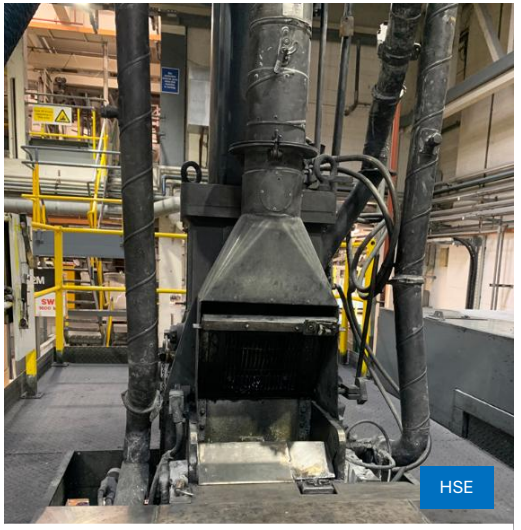
The Outcome
The company pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
It was fined £340,000 and ordered to pay £5,145 in costs.

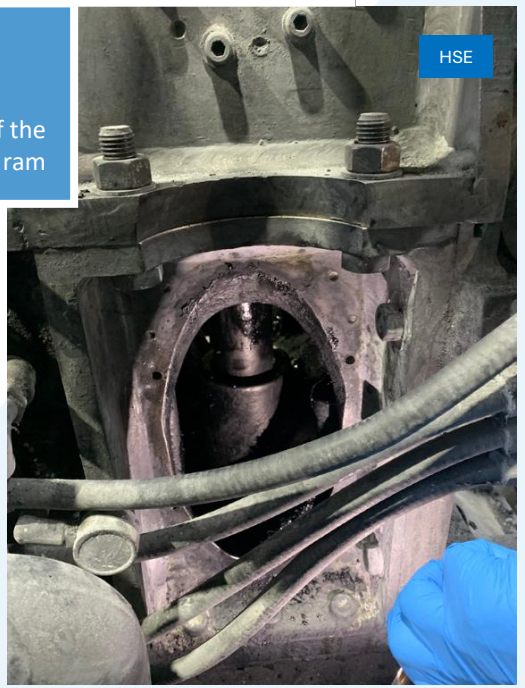
Additional Context
Cleaning, maintenance and intervention work on machinery can present serious risks if equipment is not properly isolated before work begins.

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance highlights the importance of safe isolation and lock-off procedures before carrying out maintenance or cleaning work on machinery. Employers should ensure that equipment is isolated from all power sources and that systems are monitored and reviewed to prevent unexpected start-up.

Key Learning Points
- Machinery must be safely isolated before cleaning or maintenance work begins.
- Lock-off procedures should be clear, robust and consistently followed.
- Employees must receive suitable information, instruction, training and supervision.
- Employers should review work equipment risks, particularly where workers may need to access dangerous parts of machinery.
- Safe systems of work should be monitored to ensure they remain effective in practice.

More Information
Further guidance is available from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on the safe use of work equipment and isolation procedures at:
https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l22.htm





Close up of the hydraulic ram

Engineered Stone Dust – New HSE Measures to Tackle Silicosis Risk

Summary

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has announced a major package of measures aimed at reducing worker exposure to engineered stone dust and preventing silicosis, a serious and potentially fatal occupational lung disease caused by inhaling respirable crystalline silica (RCS). The initiative includes new guidance, a nationwide inspection programme, and stronger enforcement of existing legal requirements.

Background

Engineered stone is widely used for kitchen worktops, bathroom surfaces, and other construction applications. However, many engineered stone products contain very high levels of crystalline silica. When these materials are cut, shaped, or polished, fine silica dust can be released into the air and inhaled by workers.

Recent cases of silicosis, including the deaths of two young workers, have led to growing concern among politicians, trade unions, medical professionals, and workplace health experts. Silicosis is a progressive and irreversible lung disease that can develop after exposure to silica dust and, in severe cases, can be fatal.

In response, HSE conducted a two-year programme of research and engagement with industry stakeholders to identify the most effective and proportionate approach to reducing the risk.

What HSE Has Announced

HSE has published new guidance specifically for engineered stone work, making it clear that dry cutting of engineered stone is unacceptable due to the high levels of dust generated.

The regulator states that businesses should instead use water suppression techniques when cutting or shaping engineered stone. Research undertaken by HSE found that dry fabrication can expose workers to silica dust levels five to ten times higher than equivalent wet-working methods. The guidance also highlights the availability of lower-silica-content engineered stone products, which can provide a safer alternative without compromising quality.

Inspection and Enforcement Programme

To support the introduction of the guidance, HSE has launched a nationwide inspection programme.

Over the next 12 months, inspectors will carry out more than 1,000 visits to engineered stone fabrication businesses across Great Britain. The inspections will focus on whether employers have implemented appropriate control measures and are complying with their legal duties.

Enforcement action may be taken where businesses fail to meet the required standards.

Key Employer Responsibilities

HSE's new guidance outlines the measures employers must implement to protect workers from silica dust exposure. These include:

- Selecting engineered stone products with lower silica content where possible.
- Using on-tool water suppression systems during cutting and fabrication activities.
- Controlling and managing any mist or airborne contaminants generated during the process.
- Providing suitable respiratory protective equipment (RPE).
- Implementing health surveillance programmes for workers who may be exposed to silica dust.
- Ensuring all control measures are properly maintained, monitored, and used correctly.
- These requirements are based on existing duties under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations.

Why This Matters

Silicosis remains entirely preventable when appropriate control measures are used. HSE's research suggests that many of the necessary controls are already being successfully implemented by leading businesses within the industry.

The new guidance and inspection programme are intended to ensure that these good practices become standard across the sector, reducing the likelihood of workers developing life-changing or fatal occupational lung diseases.

Key Learning Points

- Dry cutting of engineered stone creates significantly higher levels of respirable crystalline silica dust and should not be used.
- Water suppression techniques are considered the appropriate method of controlling dust during fabrication activities.
- Employers must assess and control silica dust exposure risks under COSHH requirements.
- Suitable respiratory protective equipment should be provided and used where necessary.
- Health surveillance is an important part of protecting workers exposed to silica dust.
- Silicosis is a preventable disease when effective control measures are consistently applied.

More Information

Guidance on working engineered stone can be accessed at: https://www.hse.gov.uk/stonemasonry/working-engineered-stone-control-silica-risk.htm

We have updated our Silica Dust Awareness course and end of course assessment to reflect these changes. Existing customers that have unallocated courses have automatically been switched over to the updated course. New customers can access the updated course at: https://hsqe.co.uk/courses/silica-dust/

Diving Medical Certificate Falsified

Summary

A recreational diving instructor has been fined after falsifying a commercial diving medical certificate while seeking employment as a diving instructor.

What Happened

In March 2025, an individual submitted a falsified Health and Safety Executive (HSE) commercial diving medical certificate when applying for employment as a diving instructor. The document was identified as suspicious by a local diving school and subsequently reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

The Investigation

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), supported by the Approved Medical Examiners of Divers (AMED) board, confirmed that the medical certificate had been falsified.

Commercial divers are legally required to hold a valid medical certificate issued by an HSE-approved doctor to demonstrate that they are medically fit to undertake diving activities. This requirement is set out in the Diving at Work Regulations 1997 and is intended to protect both divers and others involved in diving operations.

The Outcome

The individual pleaded guilty to breaching Section 33(1)(m) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

The court imposed a fine of £700 and ordered the payment of £2,620 in costs, together with a victim surcharge of £280.

Additional Context

Under Section 33(1)(m) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, it is an offence to make or possess a document that closely resembles an official document where it is intended to deceive.

Medical fitness assessments form an important part of the safety framework for commercial diving activities, helping to ensure that individuals undertaking diving work do not present an unacceptable risk to themselves or others.

Key Learning Points

- Legal requirements relating to fitness for work must be complied with at all times.
- Official certificates and safety documentation must never be altered, forged, or falsified.
- Employers should verify qualifications, certifications, and medical documentation where appropriate.
- Safety-critical industries rely on accurate records to ensure risks are effectively controlled.
- Fraudulent safety documentation can undermine essential safeguards designed to protect workers and others.

More Information

Diving at Work Regulations 1997:
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1997/2776/contents/made

Commercial Diving Approved Codes of Practice:
https://www.hse.gov.uk/diving/acop.htm

Section 33(1)(m) HASAWA:
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/section/33

Worker's Hand Crushed in Machine Rollers

Summary
A tissue manufacturing company has been fined after an employee suffered serious crushing injuries while clearing a blockage from a machine.

What Happened
The 24-year-old lead machine operator was working at a factory in Blackburn when a tissue blockage occurred in the rollers of a machine.

While attempting to clear the blockage by hand, he instructed a colleague to "jog" the machine. Jogging, also known as inching, involves briefly energising a motor so that machinery moves in small, controlled increments.

During the task, the worker's right hand became trapped in the roller. He managed to pull his hand free but sustained serious crushing injuries.

The Investigation
An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that tissue blockages were a regular occurrence, happening around two to three times a day.

HSE also found that there was no safe system of work in place for clearing blockages. The company's risk assessment, last reviewed in 2021, had identified the need for formal safe operating procedures, but this had not been acted upon.

The Outcome
The company pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. It was fined £60,000 and ordered to pay £5,107 in costs.

Key Learning Points
- Machinery blockages should be cleared using a safe system of work.
- Moving parts must be isolated before maintenance or unblocking work begins.
- Risk assessment actions must be completed, not just identified.
- Regular machinery faults should trigger a review of controls.
- Safe operating procedures must be communicated and followed.

More Information
Further guidance is available from HSE on the safe use of work equipment, including isolation and lock-off procedures: https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l22.htm

The man had been attempting to clear a tissue blockage in the rollers of the machine

HSE

Worker Suffered Life-Changing Injuries after being Struck by Reversing Forklift Truck

Summary

A shipping company has been fined after a worker suffered serious and life-changing injuries when he was struck by a reversing forklift truck in a workplace transport incident.

What Happened

A 43-year-old employee was working at a shipping company's yard on 26 September 2024 when he was struck by a reversing forklift truck being driven by a colleague. The worker was on foot unclipping the curtain side of an articulated trailer when the rear nearside wheel of the forklift made contact with his right leg, pulling him to the ground.

He suffered multiple fractures to his right foot and lower leg, together with a de-gloving injury. He underwent two surgical procedures and skin grafts, required counselling following the incident, and has not yet returned to work.

The Investigation

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the company had failed to ensure the workplace was organised so that pedestrians and vehicles could circulate safely.

Although a traffic management plan was in place, it lacked sufficient detail to ensure that loading and unloading operations, which routinely took place at the same time in the same area, could be carried out safely without placing employees on foot at risk from moving vehicles.

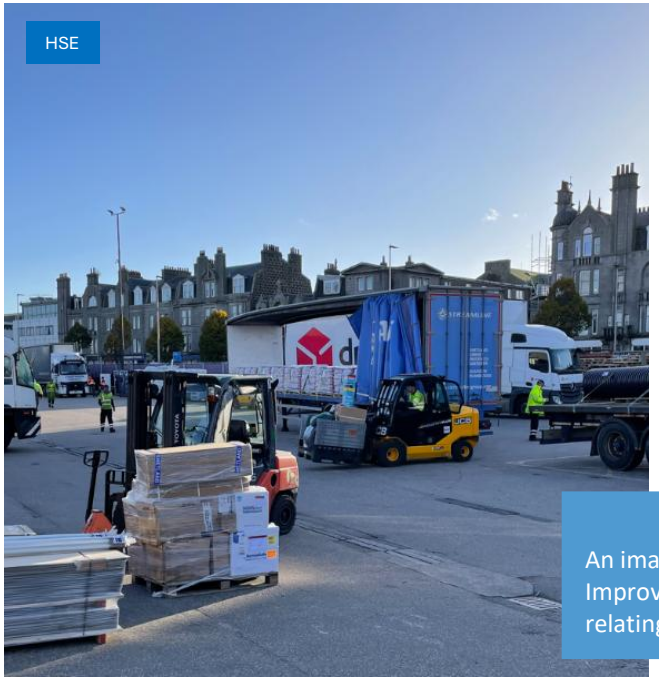
HSE concluded that it was reasonably foreseeable that a pedestrian could be struck by a moving vehicle where both the driver and the worker on foot were concentrating on their respective tasks in close proximity.

Following the investigation, HSE served an Improvement Notice. The company subsequently introduced a series of improvements to its traffic management arrangements to HSE's satisfaction.

The Outcome

The company pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 17(1) of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 and Section 33(1)(c) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

It was fined £146,700 and ordered to pay a Victim Surcharge of £11,000.



An image of the incident location taken shortly before the Improvement Notice was served. The image illustrates the issues relating to pedestrian and vehicle movement within the area.

Additional Context

Workplace transport remains one of the leading causes of fatal and serious injuries in UK workplaces. Employers have a legal duty to ensure that traffic routes are organised and managed so that pedestrians and vehicles can move around safely.

Effective traffic management arrangements should include suitable segregation of pedestrians and vehicles wherever reasonably practicable, clear traffic routes, appropriate supervision, and safe systems of work for loading and unloading operations.

Key Learning Points

- Ensure pedestrians and vehicles are segregated wherever reasonably practicable.
- Develop traffic management plans that reflect actual site operations and potential interactions between vehicles and pedestrians.
- Assess the risks created by simultaneous loading and unloading activities.
- Review workplace layouts regularly to identify and eliminate vehicle–pedestrian conflict points.
- Introduce suitable controls where reversing vehicles operate, including designated pedestrian routes and exclusion zones where appropriate.
- Regularly review traffic management arrangements following incidents, changes to site layout, or changes to work activities.

More Information

Workplace transport safety guidance can be accessed at:
https://www.hse.gov.uk/waste/transport.htm

Employers' Liability Insurance Failure Leads to Prosecution

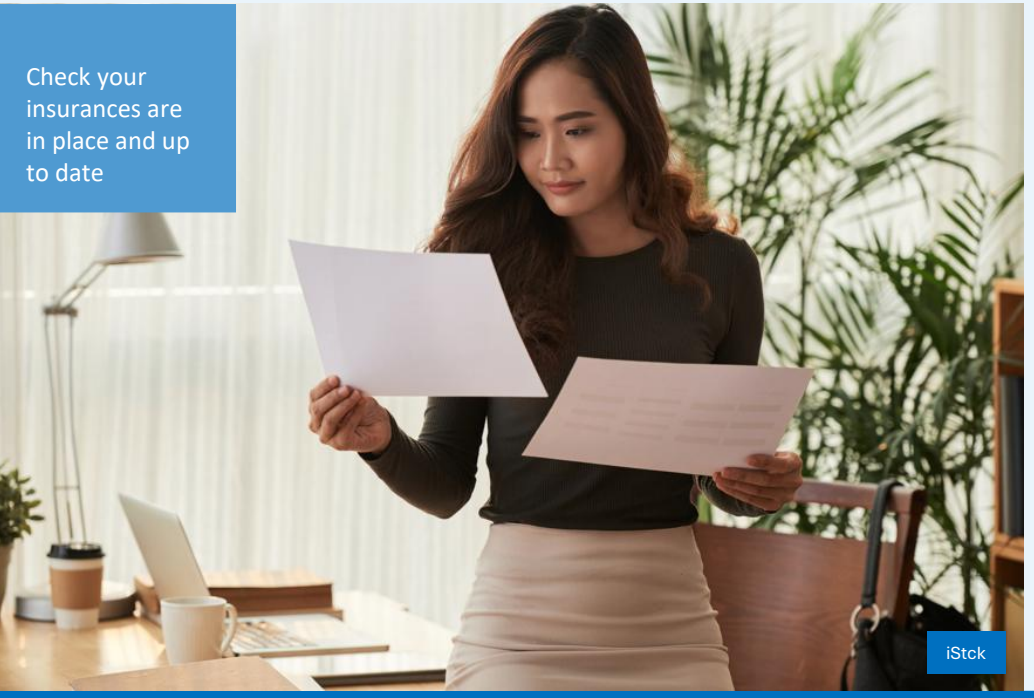
Summary

A scrap metal business has been fined after failing to hold valid Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance (ELCI), leaving employees without the protection required by law should they have needed to make a claim for a work-related injury or illness.

What Happened

Following an incident at a scrap metal site, an investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) identified that the company did not have a valid Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance certificate in place between April and September 2025.

Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance is a legal requirement for most employers and is intended to ensure that employees can pursue compensation if they suffer injury, illness, or disease arising from their work.



The Investigation

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the company was unable to produce a valid Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance certificate covering the period between 18 April 2025 and 30 September 2025.

As a result, employees would have had no guaranteed means of pursuing a civil claim against the business if they had been injured at work or developed a work-related illness during that period.

The Outcome

The company pleaded guilty to breaching the Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance Act 1969. It was fined £1,000 and ordered to pay £2,000 towards HSE's costs.

Additional Context

HSE is reminding all employers of their legal obligation to maintain valid Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance where required by law.

The insurance provides financial protection for employees by ensuring that compensation claims arising from workplace injuries or occupational illnesses can be met. Employers are also required to be able to produce evidence that valid insurance cover is in place. Failure to maintain appropriate insurance can leave employees financially exposed and may result in enforcement action, prosecution, and financial penalties.

Key Learning Points

- Employers must ensure valid Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance is maintained at all times where legally required.
- Insurance certificates should be regularly checked to ensure cover remains current and uninterrupted.
- Organisations should have systems in place to monitor renewal dates and prevent gaps in cover.
- Failure to maintain compulsory insurance can result in prosecution, fines, and legal costs.
- Employers' Liability Insurance helps ensure employees can seek compensation for work-related injuries and illnesses.

More Information

For further guidance, see the Health and Safety Executive's information on the Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance Act 1969 at: https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/hse40.htm

University Fined After Employees Developed Occupational Asthma

Summary

A university has been fined £280,000 after two employees developed occupational asthma and other respiratory conditions following prolonged exposure to animal allergens in the workplace.

What Happened

Two employees working at a university developed occupational asthma as a result of exposure to animal allergens over a prolonged period. Both workers were left with lifelong health conditions, and one was unable to continue in their role.

One of the affected employees reported a permanent reduction in lung function, requiring ongoing use of medication and experiencing significant limitations in daily activities, including walking, climbing stairs, and holding lengthy conversations.

The Investigation

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that between 2008 and 2025, the university failed to adequately identify and control the risks associated with exposure to animal allergens.

HSE determined that suitable measures had not been implemented to protect employees, despite legal requirements under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations having been in place since 1989. HSE also noted that specific guidance relating to laboratory animal workers had been available since 2011. The investigation concluded that the university had failed in its duty to assess and control employee exposure to hazardous biological substances.

The Outcome

The organisation pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
It was fined £280,000 and ordered to pay £11,745 in costs.

Additional Context

Occupational asthma is a recognised work-related disease caused by exposure to substances in the workplace that can trigger allergic reactions and respiratory problems. Once developed, the condition can be permanent and may significantly affect an individual's quality of life and ability to work.

Animal allergens are well-established causes of occupational asthma among laboratory and research workers. Employers have a legal duty to assess exposure risks, implement appropriate control measures, provide suitable training, and monitor employee health where necessary.

Key Learning Points

- Exposure to animal allergens can lead to serious and irreversible health conditions, including occupational asthma.
- Risk assessments must identify all hazardous substances and biological agents that employees may be exposed to.
- Control measures should follow the hierarchy of control and be regularly reviewed to ensure they remain effective.
- Health surveillance can help identify early signs of occupational ill health before conditions become severe.
- Existing guidance and industry best practice should be incorporated into workplace control measures.
- Occupational health risks require the same level of attention and management as safety risks.

More Information

Further information about COSHH can be accessed at:
https://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/index.htm

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Storage Tank Collapse Left Worker with Life-Changing Injuries

Summary

A company has been fined £350,000 after the catastrophic failure of a large storage tank left a self-employed worker with life-changing injuries. An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the incident was entirely preventable and resulted from a prolonged failure to inspect and maintain the ageing tank.

What Happened

On 21 June 2023, a self-employed rope access technician was carrying out surveys of storage tanks at an offshore supply base when one of the site's large bolted steel storage tanks catastrophically ruptured without warning.

The tank contained approximately 480,776 litres of calcium chloride solution, weighing around 700 tonnes. When it failed, the worker was engulfed to chest height by the escaping liquid. The force of the release displaced a cherry picker, a pickup truck and a skip.

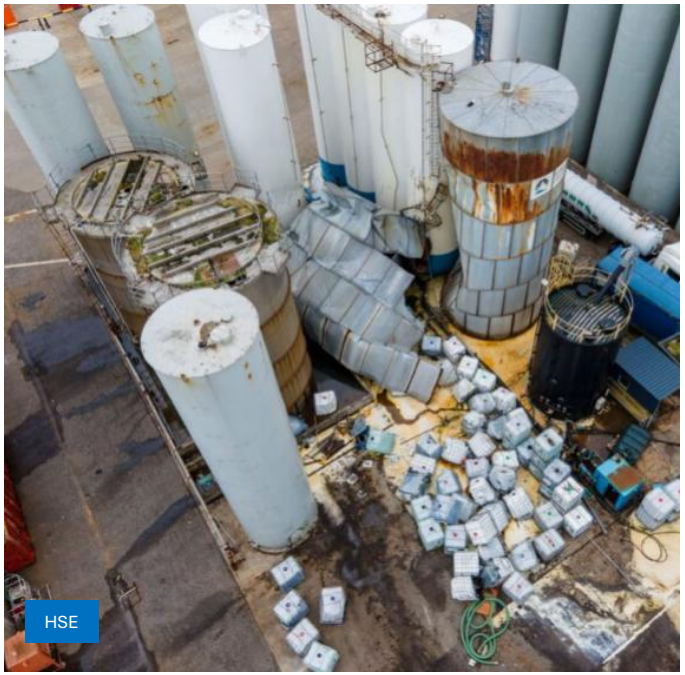
The worker suffered multiple serious injuries, including fractures to his spine, pelvis, ribs, sternum and wrist, as well as a punctured lung, a lacerated liver and extensive chemical burns requiring skin grafts. He has been unable to return to work and is no longer able to climb ladders or work at height.

The Investigation

The HSE found that the storage tank failed because severe external corrosion had weakened its steel shell. Around 4.5 mm of the original 5.5 mm steel plate had been lost through corrosion, leaving only 1 mm of steel in places, which was insufficient to withstand the pressure of the liquid inside. The investigation established that the loss of the tank's protective coating had exposed the steel to the corrosive coastal environment, accelerating deterioration. The calcium chloride solution stored in the tank, being significantly denser than water, increased the stresses placed on the already weakened structure.

The tank was more than 30 years old, and the manufacturer's maintenance instructions required six-monthly inspections of seams and bolts, together with annual external corrosion inspections. Although a 2013 inspection identified extensive corrosion and deterioration, no remedial work was undertaken. The company was unable to provide evidence that routine inspection and maintenance requirements had been followed in subsequent years.

HSE concluded that the catastrophic failure of the tank was foreseeable and could have been prevented through appropriate inspection, maintenance and timely repairs.



The Outcome

The company pleaded guilty to breaches of sections 3(1) and 33(1)(a) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and was fined £350,000.

Additional Context

The storage tank had been filled to capacity on the morning of the incident to create storage space at another company site. It failed less than 30 minutes after the final load had been pumped into it.

Following the incident, the company removed all bolted storage tanks from its sites and closed the affected operation, relocating activities to another premises.

Key Learning Points

- Ensure storage tanks and similar structures are subject to documented inspection and maintenance programmes throughout their service life.
- Act promptly on inspection findings, particularly where corrosion or structural deterioration is identified.
- Follow manufacturers' inspection and maintenance requirements and retain evidence that inspections have been completed.
- Recognise that ageing plant and equipment require increased attention to ensure continued structural integrity.
- Consider how the type, density and volume of stored substances can increase the forces acting on storage vessels.
- Regularly review asset condition to ensure equipment remains safe for continued use.

More Information

HSE guidance on plant maintenance and inspection:
https://www.hse.gov.uk/maintenance/
HSE guidance on managing ageing plant:
https://www.hse.gov.uk/comah/sragtech/techmeasper.htm

Worker Lost Parts of Three Fingers in Machinery Incident

Summary

A biomass company has been fined after a worker suffered life-changing injuries when his hand came into contact with moving machinery while clearing a blockage at a fuel processing plant.

What Happened

On 8 June 2023, an experienced 57-year-old shift operator was attempting to clear a blockage in a surge hopper at a biomass fuel plant. The blockage was located within a rotary lock valve containing rotating blades.

To gain access, the worker removed a metal clip and rubber gaiter. Communication with the control room, which remotely operated the valve, was carried out using hand-held radios. There was no direct line of sight between the worker and the control room, and the radios were known to experience interference.

A misunderstanding over the radio led the worker to believe the rotary lock valve had been switched off. Believing it was safe, he inserted his right hand into the hopper. However, the blades were still rotating and partially severed the index, middle and ring fingers of his right hand.

The worker has not returned to work since the incident.

The Investigation

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the company had a documented safe system of work for clearing blockages on surge hopper rotary lock valves and that the injured worker had received refresher training on the procedure only two months before the incident.

However, HSE found that the company had failed to ensure access to the dangerous moving parts of the machinery was prevented. The reliance on radio communication alone, particularly where there was no direct line of sight and known interference, meant there was an unacceptable risk that machinery could still be operating while maintenance or blockage clearance was being undertaken.

The Outcome

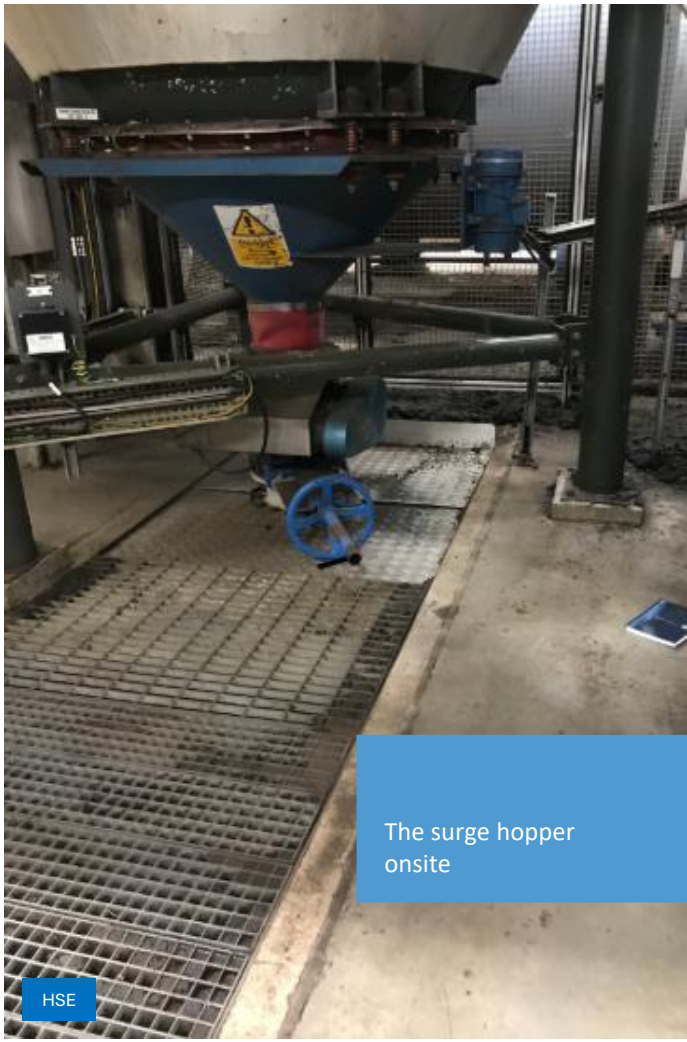
The company pleaded guilty to breaching Regulations 11(1) and 11(2) of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER), together with Section 33(1)(c) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £120,000 and ordered to pay a Victim Surcharge of £9,000.

Additional Context

The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER) require employers to prevent access to dangerous parts of machinery wherever practicable. Where maintenance, cleaning or blockage removal is required, effective isolation procedures and suitable safeguards must be in place to ensure machinery cannot start unexpectedly or continue operating while workers are exposed to moving parts.

Key Learning Points

- Ensure dangerous machinery is fully isolated before maintenance, cleaning or clearing blockages begins.
- Use positive isolation and lock-off procedures rather than relying solely on verbal confirmation that equipment has been stopped.
- Prevent access to dangerous moving parts through effective guarding and engineering controls.
- Ensure communication methods used during maintenance are reliable and cannot be affected by interference or misunderstanding.
- Regularly review safe systems of work to confirm they remain effective in practice, not just on paper.
- Provide suitable supervision to ensure safe procedures are consistently followed.



The surge hopper onsite

More Information

Safe use of work equipment guidance is available at: https://www.hse.gov.uk/work-equipment-machinery/puwer-overview.htm

UK to Introduce Social Media Ban for Under-16s

Summary

The UK Government has announced that children under the age of 16 will be prohibited from accessing major social media platforms from early 2027. The measures form part of a wider package of online safety reforms designed to reduce children's exposure to harmful content, cyber-bullying, online exploitation and other digital risks.

Background

The planned restrictions will apply to major social media platforms, including Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, X and YouTube. YouTube Kids, which is specifically designed for younger users, will remain available.

The Government has stated that the ban will cover services whose primary purpose is social interaction and which allow users to post content. Messaging services such as WhatsApp and Signal are not expected to be included.

The reforms also extend beyond traditional social media. Certain high-risk features on gaming platforms, such as chat functions that enable communication with strangers, are expected to face tighter restrictions for younger users.

What Will Change?

The proposed legislation introduces several new protections for children and young people, including:

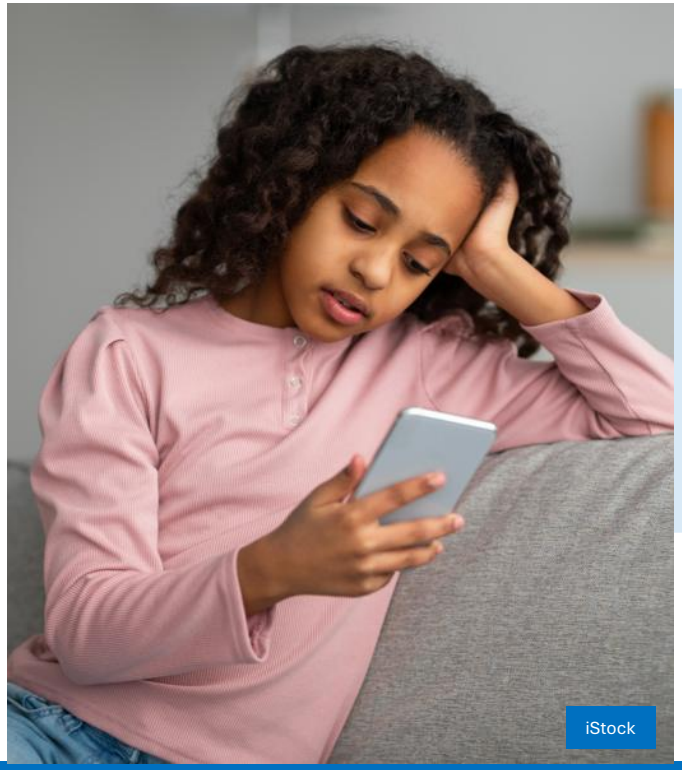
- A ban on under-16s using major social media platforms.
- Default restrictions on livestreaming and communication with strangers for under-17s.
- Consideration of overnight curfews and mandatory breaks from infinite scrolling for under-18s.
- A minimum age of 18 for AI "romantic companion" chatbots.
- Restrictions on intimate AI chatbot functionality for users under 18.

The Government intends to introduce regulations before the end of the year, allowing the measures to come into force during spring 2027.

Age Verification

Social media companies will be required to use highly effective age assurance measures to verify users' ages. These may include technologies such as facial age estimation or identity verification.

The communications regulator, Ofcom, has been asked to assess the most effective methods of age verification before the new rules are implemented. The Government has indicated that further details on enforcement will be published separately.



International Context

The UK is following a growing international trend. Australia introduced similar restrictions in 2025, although enforcement has proved challenging. Several other countries are introducing or considering comparable measures as governments seek to strengthen online protections for children.

Why This Matters

For parents, schools and organisations working with young people, the announcement represents a significant change in how children are expected to access online services. Although the legislation is primarily aimed at protecting children from online harms, successful implementation will depend on effective age verification, cooperation from technology companies and continued education about safe and responsible online behaviour.

Key Learning Points

- Major social media platforms are expected to be unavailable to under-16s from spring 2027.
- Additional protections are planned for under-18s, including restrictions on high-risk online features.
- Age verification is expected to become significantly more robust across online platforms.
- Gaming platforms may also face tighter controls over communication features.
- Parents, educators and organisations should continue promoting digital literacy and online safety alongside technological safeguards.

More Information

UK Government – Online Safety:
https://www.gov.uk/government/topics/online-safety
Ofcom – Online Safety:
https://www.ofcom.org.uk/online-safety

Scotland's Net-Zero Economy Supports More Than 105,000 Jobs

Summary

Research has found that Scotland's net-zero economy supports more than 105,000 jobs and contributes £10.2 billion annually to the country's economy. The findings highlight the growing economic significance of renewable energy, low-carbon technologies, and supporting infrastructure across Scotland.

Background

Research conducted by CBI Economics on behalf of the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit (ECIU) examined the scale and impact of Scotland's net-zero economy.

The study found that more than 3,000 businesses operate within net-zero-related sectors, supporting over 105,000 jobs and generating £10.2 billion in economic value. Activities within the sector include the development and maintenance of wind farms, hydropower schemes, electricity transmission infrastructure, solar panel installations, heat pumps, electric vehicle charging systems, hydrogen production, and carbon capture technologies. According to the research, average earnings within the sector are approximately 5.2% higher than the Scottish average, reflecting the concentration of skilled technical and engineering roles.

The report identified several regional centres of activity. Perth and Kinross was highlighted as having the highest concentration of net-zero economic activity, with around 12% of local economic output linked to the sector. Other significant areas include Aberdeen and the wider north-east, where offshore wind, hydrogen, and carbon capture projects are prominent, and East Lothian, where investment is focused on electricity transmission infrastructure and specialist manufacturing.

The findings were published amid continuing debate about the economic implications of net-zero policies. Supporters argue that investment in low-carbon technologies creates jobs, attracts investment, and improves energy security. Critics have questioned the costs associated with achieving net-zero targets and the pace of transition away from fossil fuels. The report also noted that Scotland has a potential investment pipeline valued at £211 billion, representing approximately one-third of the UK's identified net-zero investment opportunities.

More Information

CBI Economics (part of the Confederation of British Industry): https://www.cbi.org.uk
Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit (ECIU): https://eciu.net
Information on Scotland's net-zero targets: https://www.gov.scot/policies/climate-change

We're Making It Easy for You to Support Plastic Free July 2026

Plastic Free July is a global movement that empowers millions of people to reduce single-use plastic waste through their everyday choices.

By participating, individuals take simple steps to avoid disposable plastics, fostering long-term, sustainable habits.

To support the initiative, we are giving away our 'Environmental Awareness - Giving Up Plastic' online course, completely **FREE** of charge for the whole of July.

Enroll at: https://hsqe.co.uk/courses/environmental-awareness-giving-plastic/

Environmental Awareness - Giving Up Plastic

FREE Course in support of **Plastic Free July 2026**

- 100% Online Course
- CPD Approved
- Immediate Start
- Self-Paced Learning
- All Course Materials Included
- Final Assessment Included
- Digital Certificate Included
- No Hidden Charges
- FREE of Charge in Support of Plastic Free July 2026 (Usual Price £15+VAT)

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IOSH Managing Sustainably
IOSH Approved | £125+VAT | View

IOSH Safety for Executives and Directors
IOSH Approved | £95+VAT | View

IOSH Working Safely
IOSH Approved | £60+VAT | View

IOSH Safety Health & Environment for Construction Site Managers
IOSH Approved | £195+VAT | View

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IOSH Approved | £95+VAT | View

IOSH-Approved Online Course Bundles

IOSH Managing Safely
+ 5 IATP, RoSPA, IoH, CPD Assured Courses
IOSH Approved | £125+VAT | View

IOSH Managing Occupational Health and Wellbeing
+ IOSH Managing Sustainably
IOSH Approved | £230+VAT | View

IOSH Managing Safely
+ IOSH Managing Sustainably
+ 5 IATP, RoSPA, IoH, CPD Assured Courses
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Asbestos Awareness (IATP)
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Asbestos Awareness for Architects and Designers
RoSPA & CPD Assured | £6.50-£15.00+VAT | View

Asbestos Awareness for Architects and Designers (IATP)
RoSPA & CPD Assured | £6.50-£15.00+VAT | View

Banksman (Traffic Marshal) Awareness New
CPD Assured | £6.50-£15.00+VAT | Coming Soon

Confined Space Awareness
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COSHH Awareness
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Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Awareness
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Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Assessor Awareness
CPD Assured | £6.50-£15.00+VAT | View

Electrical Safety Awareness
RoSPA & CPD Assured | £6.50-£15.00+VAT | View

Fire Extinguisher Awareness
RoSPA & CPD Assured | £6.50-£15.00+VAT | View

Fire Safety Awareness
RoSPA & CPD Assured | £6.50-£15.00+VAT | View

Fire Warden / Fire Marshal
RoSPA & CPD Assured | £6.50-£15.00+VAT | View

Health, Safety and Welfare Awareness for Workers
RoSPA & CPD Assured | £12.50--£25.00+VAT | View

Infection Prevention and Control Awareness
CPD Assured | £6.50-£15.00+VAT | View

Ladder Safety Awareness
RoSPA & CPD Assured | £6.50-£15.00+VAT | View

Legionella Awareness
RoSPA & CPD Assured | £6.50-£15.00+VAT | View

Lone Working Awareness
RoSPA & CPD Assured | £6.50-£15.00+VAT | View

Manual Handling Awareness
RoSPA & CPD Assured | £6.50-£15.00+VAT | View

Mental Health Awareness
RoSPA & CPD Assured | £6.50-£15.00+VAT | View

Mental Health Awareness for Managers
RoSPA & CPD Assured | £6.50-£15.00+VAT | View

Method Statement Awareness
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Risk Assessment Awareness
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Sharps Safety Awareness
CPD Assured | £6.50-£15.00+VAT | View

Silica Dust Awareness
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Slips and Trips Awareness
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Slips, Trips and Falls Awareness
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Stress Awareness
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Stress Awareness for Managers
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Vibration Awareness
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Working at Height Awareness
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ISEP Approved | £460+VAT |

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ISEP Environmental Sustainability Skills for Managers
ISEP Approved | £125+VAT |

View

ISEP Environmental Sustainability Skills for the Workforce
ISEP Approved | £70+VAT |

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ISEP Pathways to Net Zero
ISEP Approved | £175+VAT |

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Sustainability Online Courses

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Environmental Awareness at Home and Work
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Environmental Awareness at Work
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Environmental Awareness for Construction Workers
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FREE for July in support of Plastic Free July 2026

Food Safety and Hygiene Online Courses

Food Allergen Awareness
IoH, RoSPA & CPD Assured | £6.50-£15.00+VAT | View

Food Safety and Hygiene—Level 1
IoH, RoSPA & CPD Assured | £6.00-£10.00+VAT | View

Food Safety and Hygiene (Catering) Level 2
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Food Safety and Hygiene (Manufacturing) Level 2
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Food Safety and Hygiene (Retail) Level 2
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HACCP for Catering Level 2
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HACCP for Retail Level 2
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Modern Slavery Awareness
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Safeguarding Adults Level 1
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Safeguarding Adults (Advanced) Level 2
CPD Assured | £7.50-£20.00+VAT | View

Safeguarding Children Level 1
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Safeguarding Children (Advanced) Level 2
CPD Assured | CPD Assured | £7.50-£20.00+VAT | View

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Modern Slavery Awareness
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Time Management
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