

HSE SAFETY

CORNERSTONES

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The accident at Alton Towers illustrates the importance of a robust health and safety programme.

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The HSE has launched COSHH guidance to provide businesses with advice on handling, using and storing hazardous substances.

Recent HSE News and Prosecutions

Read about a new safety scheme developed to counter slips and trips, a trainee death due to safety oversights, a firm that refused to purchase mandatory insurance, and how a young boy lost his life at an Oxfordshire retailer.

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Alton Towers Crash Proves Value of Health and Safety

On 2nd June, the Smiler, a steel rollercoaster featuring a world-record 14 inversions at Staffordshire's Alton Towers theme park, was carrying 16 passengers and travelling 32 km/h when it struck an empty, stationary carriage, injuring 11 riders—four of whom required serious medical attention.

In its investigation, the HSE uncovered that the accident was representative of a pervasive failure throughout the park to enforce and comply with safety regulations. Within the last three years, 32 accidents have occurred at Alton Towers. Yet, the Smiler crash was what finally revealed severe gaps in the park's health and safety procedures—principally, the lack of training on what to do during such an emergency. It took the park an additional 11 minutes, after informing the Alton Tower managers, to contact the emergency medical services and nearly an hour to contact the fire service. Alton Towers' response to the accident demonstrates the importance of a robust health and safety programme—something that businesses of all sizes and industries should have in place.

Regardless of whether you own and operate a theme park, a corner pub or a paper company, it is essential that your business implements and regularly updates your health and safety programme. A comprehensive and detailed programme provides safety to your employees and the public, protection from fines and loss of revenue, and is able to preserve your reputation. Incorporate these three universal health and safety practices into your risk management scheme to ensure that your company does not experience a tragic and preventable accident that could be fatal to your reputation:

1. Require that your employees routinely rehearse the safety procedures for every potential risk. Include the names and contact information for supervisors, managers and emergency services that would need to be informed in the event of an emergency. It may be beneficial to require your employees to take a quiz on certain procedures, before and after each drill, to ensure that they have internalised the information.
2. Scrutinise your business on a regular basis to identify any potential risks to your employees or the public, and develop a risk management scheme to address the potential hazards. You may want to consult with your employees in an effort to identify any risks you may have overlooked. Additionally, your employees may offer beneficial strategies on how to handle a particular risk.
3. Schedule business inspections as well as regular maintenance inspections for your major equipment and machinery.

Alton Towers failed to properly assess the risks that its rides posed to guests, and it neglected to perform regular maintenance on its health and safety plan. The consequences of that neglect have been severe—a damaged reputation and loss of trust, a decrease of 2.6 per cent in the value of Alton Towers' stock and an estimated loss of £500,000 each day the park's gates remained closed. Had Alton Towers taken the time to develop a comprehensive health and safety plan, properly train its employees and perform the required maintenance on its rides, this tragedy may not have occurred.

HSE Launches COSHH Guidance

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) is a law that requires employers to regulate and monitor potentially hazardous substances. The focus of the law is to encourage businesses, regardless of size or industry, to consider the potential risks that the hazardous substances they use may pose and to develop procedures to minimise those risks. COSHH governs a diverse set of industries, such as agriculture, hairdressing and woodworking, and helps ensure that businesses are more accountable for their safety practices and training.

As a part of the COSHH, the HSE has developed COSHH Essentials, documents that provide businesses with additional guidance on safety. The documents, referred to as 'control guidance sheets', are divided into two groups: industry-specific 'direct advice sheets' and 'generic control guidance sheets'. A business that may be unfamiliar with how to properly handle, use or store a particular hazardous substance can access the direct advice sheets to gain a better understanding of the chemical.

COSHH materials provide businesses with the following benefits:

- Improved quality of safety schemes and training for employees
- Reduced costs associated with hazardous substances-related accidents and fines for not providing adequate protection for employees
- A display of your business' commitment to safety and the quality of workplace for your employees, investors and the public

If you would like to learn more about the materials provided in the COSHH Essentials, visit: www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/essentials/index.htm



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NEWS AND PROSECUTIONS

Firm fined for failing to maintain mandatory workers' insurance

A Hedgesford-based company, was fined £2,500 and ordered to pay £3,191.80 in costs and a victim surcharge of £120 for failing to maintain mandatory employers' liability insurance. The HSE had warned the company repeatedly of the legal consequences if it failed to have insurance in place that protects its employees.

Hugo Boss admits to safety failings after a boy is fatally crushed

Hugo Boss could be fined up to £100,000 after a changing room mirror crushed and killed a 4-year-old boy. The boy was with his father, who was trying on suits at the retailer's Bicester Village location when the boy began playing with an almost 2-metre-high, 18-stone mirror, causing it to collapse on top of him. In the initial investigation, the HSE found that the mirror was not firmly attached to the wall.

Bedford company fined after teenage trainee loses his life

Grundfos Pumps Ltd was fined £300,000 and ordered to pay £115,000 in costs after a trainee was electrocuted to death. The 19-year-old trainee design engineer was conducting electrical testing of the facility when he came into contact with a live, 3-phase electrical system. In its investigation, the HSE found that the company had failed to provide proper training, assess the potential risks associated with testing live panels and adequately supervise the trainee.

New GRIP scheme helps actively reduce slips

The Health and Safety Laboratory has developed GRIP, a slip-resistant footwear rating scheme. GRIP was developed in response to the 1.5 million working days lost due to workplace trips and slips during 2013 and 2014. The scheme uses rigorous, scientific testing to measure and grade the slip-resistant quality of any given footwear. With GRIP, manufacturers will be able to show the slip-resistant quality of their footwear as well as drive development of increased slip-resistant materials and designs. The scheme will benefit employers through the reduction of slip-related accidents and business costs associated with slip-related absences. It will also increase the amount of protection for their staff.