

## NEWCASTLE CONSTRUCTION DIVISION NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2008 - ISSUE NO.6

### ***“Asbestos: The Hidden Killer” Campaign – Key facts & stats***

- 4,000 deaths last year
- 1,000 of those were tradesmen (20 workmen a week)
- The numbers of deaths of plumbers, heating & ventilation engineers & electricians continue to rise
  - ✦ Every week 6 electricians die from this hidden killer
  - ✦ Every week 3 plumbers die from this hidden killer
  - ✦ Every week 6 joiners die from this hidden killer
- Plateau in deaths from workers in ‘traditional’ industries such as shipbuilding, asbestos product manufacturing, metal plate workers etc
- The use of asbestos was banned in the UK in 2000
- Any building built or refurbished before 2000 could contain asbestos
- It is estimated that around 500,000 non-domestic buildings contain asbestos
- If 20 premiership footballers died every week then the premiership would be wiped out in 3 months!

Get your **FREE asbestos information pack** by calling **0845 345 0055** or by visiting [www.hse.gov.uk/hiddenkiller](http://www.hse.gov.uk/hiddenkiller) for further information

### ***Stolen industrial vacuum cleaners***

The police have brought to our attention that two industrial vacuum cleaners used in an asbestos removal job at Beck House, Faverdale, Darlington have been stolen. The police are to release a press release to warn public that the industrial vacuum cleaners have been used for asbestos removal. If you require further information please contact PC Walter Williams on 01325 742742.

### ***Safety Alert: Gas boilers – flues in voids***

HSE has issued a Safety Alert to raise awareness of the potential dangers from certain types of flue connected to gas-fired central heating installations in some properties. Specific guidance on flues in ceiling voids is contained in a CORGI Technical Bulletin TB200 “Room-sealed fanned draught systems concealed within voids” (first published in June 2007). It includes specific mention of the need to install means of access to the flue at strategic locations to allow for visual inspection. If you are a gas installer or builder/property developer undertaking work in premises where this issue may be relevant you should ensure you have a full and up-to-date knowledge of the industry guidance outlined in TB200. Further information can be found at – <http://www.hse.gov.uk/gas/domestic/alert021008.htm>

### ***Industry takes action on semi-automatic quick hitches***

HSE has confirmed that European manufacturers have voluntarily agreed to cease supply of semi-automatic quick hitches into the UK. The agreement comes after discussions between HSE and industry and are effective as of 1<sup>st</sup> October 2008. After four fatal incidents in the 12 month period between December 2006 and November 2007, all involving semi automatic quick hitches, HSE began talks with quick hitch and excavator manufacturers and others to highlight the problem and look for potential solutions. For further information and for HSE’s Safety Alert see – <http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/safehitch.htm>



Semi automatic quick hitch (safety pin about to be inserted)

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### ***Health and safety statistics***

The statistics for 2007-08 have now been released and show that construction has the largest number of fatal injuries of the main industry groups. In 2007/08p there were 72 fatal injuries giving a rate of 3.4 per 100,000 workers. The rate of fatal injuries in construction over the past decade has shown a downward trend, although the rate has shown little change in the most recent years. For more information see - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/index.htm>

### ***Recent prosecution***

A local company were recently convicted of two charges under the Work at Height Regulations 2005 following a three day trial at Sunderland Magistrates' Court. The Court heard evidence that a passing HSE Inspector had seen three workers undertaking re-covering work of a 50 metre long industrial roof at Rainton Meadow Arena with no edge protection along the eaves of the building. The workers had got onto the roof by way of a scissor lift and climbing over the machine's guardrails. The only measures in place to prevent the risk of them falling from the roof was inadequate guardrails on the eaves of the building and the short length of "protection" afforded by the scissor lift. There were no other measures, such as running lines and harnesses, on site. Furthermore the workers confirmed that they were working in accordance with the method statement and equipment provided by the Company. Defending, the Company contended that they had done everything reasonably practicable to ensure the men's safety and they had given instructions for them not to work outside what they called the "safety zone" provided by the scissor lift. Magistrates rejected this and found the Company guilty. The Company were fined £6,000 and ordered to pay costs of £17,028.



Guidance used by HSE inspectors on Work at Height can be found on the Construction Information Index webpages of HSE's website at - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/resources.htm>

### ***Myth of the month***

Despite the story of a rugby club showing a film of a bonfire instead of lighting a real one, health and safety legislation doesn't ban them! To find out more visit – <http://www.hse.gov.uk/myth/oct08.htm>

### ***Fire safety in construction projects***

Phil Burgess, an inspector in HSE's Construction Division who leads on fire and refurbishment, will be speaking at this seminar organised by Constructing Excellence North East on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2008 in Durham. After seven multi-storey timber-frame developments burned to the ground in the past two years, Phil's presentation aims to lift the profile of fire safety in construction, looking at safety in general but particularly higher risk situations such as timber frame, refurbishment and tall buildings. For further information or to register an interest please contact Nikki Silcock, Constructing Excellence on 0191 383 7436 or [nikki@constructingexcellence-ne-org.uk](mailto:nikki@constructingexcellence-ne-org.uk)