



### Prosecutions

#### BT Fined after Fatal Ladder Fall

Communications company BT has been fined £300,000 following the death of a worker who fell from a ladder while carrying out installation works.

Power construction engineer David Askew, 52, from Braintree, Essex, suffered fatal head injuries after falling from a wooden ladder at London's Canonbury Telephone Exchange on 27 October 2006.

British Telecommunications Plc (BT) was prosecuted after an investigation by the HSE.

Southwark Crown Court heard Mr Askew was installing distribution boards and running cabling as part of his work and would have been working at a height of more than four metres. He fell from a nine-step wooden ladder, sustaining a serious head injury and died 18 days later.

**The HSE investigation found a number of issues including a failure to ensure the work at height was properly planned, and that Mr Askew was provided with suitable access equipment for work at height.**

**Two wooden ladders found at the scene had not been subject to an annual inspection, contrary to BT's own health and safety policy.**

BT, based in Newgate Street, London, were found guilty of breaching section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 at a previous hearing. Today, they were fined £300,000 and were ordered to pay costs of £196,150

Nicola Maisuria, HSE inspector, said:

"The fact that this incident was entirely avoidable makes Mr Askew's death all the more tragic.

"The dangers posed by work at height are well known, yet BT failed to create the conditions to ensure this task was carried out safely and the appropriate access equipment was used.

**"Employers have a responsibility to ensure that work at height is properly planned and organised."**

Speaking of her husband's death, Denise Askew said:

"I spent over 30 happy, irreplaceable years with my husband. He was a remarkable father and husband. What do I have to look forward to now? My husband was my past and I thought he was my future.

"I feel sad my husband will never see two of his children get married. Most of all I feel sad that I see such sadness in my children's eyes when they talk of their father.

"I feel sad that my husband worked all his life and never got the chance to retire and enjoy the life he was working so hard towards.

"I share a massive disappointment that this happened within a workforce of such a large company and where the safety of every employee should have been assured".

**Falls from height remain the most common cause of workplace fatality. In 2008/09 there were 35 fatalities, 4654 major injuries and a further 7065 injuries that caused the injured person to be off work for over three days or more, due to a fall from height.**



### **£440,000 Fine Issued after Worker Dies Crushing Aerosol Canisters**

Two companies and a manager have been fined a total of £440,000 after a worker suffered 90 per cent burns and died, when the aerosol canisters he was crushing caught fire.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) prosecuted Deeside Metal Company Ltd, of Saltney, Chester, and Jeyes UK Ltd, of Bromfield Industrial Estate, Mold, for failing to have proper controls in place to manage the extremely flammable materials that led to 37 year-old, Mark Wright's fatal burn injuries on 12 April 2005. A separate health and safety charge was also brought by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) against the manager of Deeside Metal Company Ltd, Mr Robert Roberts.

Caernarfon Crown Court heard how Mr Wright's employer, Deeside Metal Co, had received the canisters from Jeyes UK who had failed to clearly label and segregate them from less hazardous waste.

This meant that employees handling the canisters assumed they were empty when in fact they contained substances which should have been labelled 'extremely flammable' and treated as such.

The court was told the manager of Deeside Metal Co, Robert Roberts, instructed Mr Wright to crush the canisters in a metal baler. When the baler was activated, a canister caught fire, engulfing Mr Wright in flames.

**Neither company had carried out suitable risk assessments before allowing workers to handle potentially hazardous materials such as aerosols, and both had failed to train or monitor staff in their disposal.**

HSE Head of Operations in Wales, Jane Lassey said:

"Both companies contributed to the death of Mr Wright by allowing this highly dangerous situation to arise. Jeyes UK had a clear responsibility to ensure the canisters were labelled correctly and separated from non-hazardous waste, and to have procedures to prevent such dangerous waste being inadvertently removed from their site. By failing to do this, they put workers in danger.

"Deeside Metal Co lacked proper procedures for handling hazardous materials and operating dangerous machinery. They assumed the canisters were empty, but this proved to be a fatal error of judgement."

"This is a tragic case and must serve as a warning to other companies handling potentially dangerous material about the consequences of not having safe working practices in place."

Deeside Metal Company Ltd pleaded guilty to charges under Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and Regulation 3(1) of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. The company was fined £100,000 and ordered to pay costs of £10,000.

Jeyes UK Ltd pleaded guilty to a charge under Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and was fined £330,000 with £50,000 costs.

Robert Roberts pleaded guilty to a charge under Section 7(a) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and was fined £10,000.



### Hotel Group pays out £127,000 for 'Substantial Risks'

A hotel group has paid out more than £127,000 after a judge ruled that guests at a 160-capacity luxury hotel in Cheshire had been put at 'substantial risk'.

The failures at the Belfry House Hotel, which is situated in Wilmslow, resulted in owners Hallmark Hotel Group pleading guilty to three serious breaches of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order.

Firefighters first identified the problems during a routine visit on 11 April 2008. The visit was carried out under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to obtain information needed to fight a fire on the premises, should one occur.

Specialist fire safety inspectors from Cheshire Fire and Rescue's Community Fire Protection Department subsequently visited the hotel, which was undergoing major renovations.

**Numerous failings were identified, including the fire alarm not working, breaches in fire-resisting walls, an inadequate fire risk assessment, poor staff training and conflicting safety signage. In addition, there was not a single working fire alarm on the third floor of the building, while faulty smoke detectors and substandard fire escape routes were found on other floors.**

A prohibition notice was served on the hotel that day, since the deficiencies posed a very real threat to guests, staff and contractors. The notice was withdrawn four days later following remedial fire alarm work and the implementation of new procedures, as well as a new fire risk assessment being in place.

Judge Elgin Edwards told the court: "For people who run hotels, fire security is particularly important. This company carried on trading and taking guests when quite clearly the guests were put at substantial risk."

Hallmark Hotel Group was fined £25,000 for each of the three offences and ordered to pay costs of £52,585 to Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.

### Karaoke Bar Fined for Ignoring Safety Procedures

The owners of a new karaoke bar in Manchester risked the lives of workers and the public after a string of fire safety procedures were ignored during construction.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) at the site of the K2 nightclub on George Street in the city centre found large quantities of cardboard and other packaging discarded throughout the site.

Middleton-based Chi Yip Group Ltd, which has an annual turnover of £35 million, and site manager Marc Royle appeared at Trafford Magistrates' Court to admit breaching three health and safety regulations each.

When HSE inspectors visited the K2 site on 28 January 2009, **they found potentially flammable materials piled high to the ceiling in the basement, escape routes were not marked and in some cases were blocked entirely.**

The court heard the HSE inspectors were shocked at the scene that confronted them and, had a fire been ignited at the site, the risk to life would have been extremely serious.

**The building's fire alarm had been switched off and the fire extinguishers found on site had not been tested for seven years. HSE immediately issued two prohibition notices closing the site down until significant improvements were made.**

It took a total of 14 large skips and several people more than two days, working through the night, to clear the waste materials.

Neil Martin, the investigating inspector at HSE, said:



"We were called in after receiving a complaint about the safety standards on site and were shocked by what we found. The basement and corridors were blocked with waste materials so it would have been extremely difficult to escape in a fire.

"There was a Chinese restaurant open to the public on the first floor and the neighbouring buildings were also occupied. Just one spark could have set light to any of the piles of cardboard, and then dozens of lives would have been put in danger.

"Chi Yip Group and Marc Royle both seemed to be ignorant of the health and safety laws that applied to them, despite having years of experience dealing with construction projects."

Chi Yip Group Ltd, of Greengate Industrial Estate, Greenside Way, Middleton, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulations 14(1), 16(a) and 21(1) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007 and fined £6,000 with costs of £3,313. Marc Royle, 37, of Lambton Road, Worsley, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulations 38(a), 39(1) and 41(1) and fined £450 with costs of £2,710.

### **Fine Issued after Man injured with Steel Plate**

An Edinburgh steel fabricating firm has been fined after an employee's arm and hand were severely injured while lifting steel plates.

On 21 August 2009, Ian Sutherland was working with a colleague to mark a delivery of sheet metal plates with unique identifying numbers before they could be accepted into the factory.

The metal plates, each weighing more than two tonnes, were placed on top of each other. This meant that they each had to be lifted in turn so that the next plate down could be marked.

At the time of the incident, it was the company's practice for a crane operator to lift the plates by approximately 18 inches using bare hooks. A wooden baton would then be placed in between the plates, the intended purpose of which was to protect the operators while reaching in to mark the lower plate.

Only a month before the incident occurred, the HSE had carried out an inspection of the site. At that time, the HSE inspector had highlighted the importance of using the proper lifting equipment and the need for employees to have the correct training and supervision.

Mr Sutherland placed his right arm between the two plates to mark the lower plate, when the upper plate slipped from the hook it was held by and fell onto his arm.

Mr Sutherland's right forearm was broken and needed surgery to insert a six inch steel plate to support it. His middle finger on his right hand was also broken and needed to be pinned in three places. More than a year after the incident, Mr Sutherland still has a constant dull ache in his arm and has limited strength, and is unable to grip items properly.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) showed that Forth Steel Ltd had an unsafe procedure in place for lifting the steel plates. The investigation also showed that the company had not carried out a suitable assessment of the risks involved when employees worked under a suspended load and that the crane operator had not received any formal lifting training, despite the company identifying this need some months earlier.

Forth Steel Ltd of South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh, pleaded guilty to breaching section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 by failing to ensure that there was a safe system of work for the lifting of the plates, and not providing their employees with the information, instruction and training they needed to ensure their health and safety. At Edinburgh Sheriff Court today (8 December), the company was fined £50,000.

Following the case, HSE inspector Kerry Cringan said:



"This was a serious and entirely preventable incident that has left Mr Sutherland with lasting pain and discomfort, and affected his quality of life.

"Forth Steel Ltd was using a wholly inappropriate system of work, and despite previous discussions about lifting activities, used inappropriate equipment when the propriety plate grabs were available."

### **Builder prosecuted for ignoring health and safety rules**

**A builder whose employees were forced to work in unsanitary conditions, with no toilet or washing facilities, in Rochdale has appeared in court.**

Michael Connolly, 46, was prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) after he repeatedly ignored calls to improve conditions at the site in Littleborough where he had employed contractors to convert a house into flats and shops.

Inspectors deemed the site to be dangerous

**HSE inspectors who visited the site in Church Street found that there were no toilets or washing facilities. They also discovered live wires sticking out of plug sockets, unsafe scaffolding and plaster and rubble scattered all over the site.**

Inspectors deemed the site to be so dangerous that Mr Connolly was immediately served with three improvement notices and two prohibition notices following the visit on 4 November 2009.

Despite Mr Connolly's assurances that he had complied with all the notices, when inspectors revisited the site on several occasions over a 10-week period, they discovered he had still not provided adequate washing facilities for workers, including soap and hot running water.

Mr Connolly showed a complete lack of regard for the welfare of the people he employed.

HSE Inspector Alan Pojur said:

"In failing to provide basic amenities like hot water, especially when workers would have been covered in building site dust and plaster, Mr Connolly showed a complete lack of regard for the welfare of the people he employed.

"Mr Connolly was given every opportunity to correct this problem over three months, but he chose not to do so. I hope his subsequent prosecution sends out a strong message to other employers."

Michael Connolly, of Simonstone Lane in Burnley, **pleaded guilty to failing to comply with Regulation 22(1)(c) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007 by not providing suitable and sufficient washing facilities, and Section 33(1)(g) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 by failing to comply with an improvement notice.** He was fined £400 and ordered to pay £1,000 costs.



### **Bury firm sentenced after woman's fingers severed**

A worker in a factory, manufacturing lids for food containers, had four fingers severed in a lid-punching machine that had been modified by her employers.

Chadwicks of Bury Ltd, which produces lids for yogurt pots, ice cream cartons and other food containers, was prosecuted by Health and Safety Executive (HSE) following the incident at the company's Villiers Street factory on 15 May 2008.

The 51-year-old worker, who has asked not to be named, was rethreading silver paper through the machine when the cutting tool restarted, severing four fingers on her right hand.

The HSE investigation found the company had covered the sensors on the machine so it could be used to cut paper instead of foil lids. The sensors would have stopped the machine operating when paper was being rethreaded through the cutting tool, if they had not been disabled.

Chadwicks of Bury pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 11(1) of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 by failing to prevent access to dangerous parts of machinery. The company was fined £22,500 with £8,708 costs at Manchester's Minshull Street Crown Court.

Nanette Cox, the investigating inspector at HSE, said:

"This lady suffered life-long injuries in a completely avoidable incident. She has been unable to return to work, and finds it difficult to carry out everyday activities.

**"Chadwicks of Bury disabled the sensors on the machine and failed to install an alternative guard to stop employees accessing the dangerous cutting tool inside the machine while it was operating.**

**"We would remind all companies to ensure machines are properly guarded.** This employee has to live with the consequences of these management failings, but lessons must be learnt by other employers."



## News

### End to 'Gold-Plating' of European Regulations

Secretary of State for Business, and Chair of the Reducing Regulation Committee, Vince Cable has set out a series of new principles that the Government will use when introducing European measures into UK law. These will end so-called 'gold-plating' so that British businesses are not put at a disadvantage relative to their European competitors.

The key to the new measures will be the principle of copying out the text of European directives directly into UK law. The direct 'copy out' principle will mean that British interpretations of European law are not unfairly restricting British companies.

The new measures are part of a wider Government policy to tackle EU regulations at the source. Government will be talking with business organisations about the European Commission's plan for future legislation, working closely with other European countries to make sure that regulations work well on the ground and improving how evidence is used by the European Parliament and Council.

Business Secretary Vince Cable said:

"I want British business to be a powerhouse for economic growth and among the most competitive in the world. This move will bring an end to the charge of "gold-plating". The way we implement our EU obligations must foster, not hinder, UK growth by helping British businesses compete with their European neighbours.

"The new principles are a first step towards working with British business and Europe to make sure that we introduce EU rules in a way that will not harm the UK economy. By cutting the red-tape that can reduce competitiveness and making sure that businesses are involved in the process both before, and after through five-yearly reviews, we can get the best deal possible for British companies."

The new measures will place an express duty on ministers to conduct a review of European legislation every five years. The review process would involve a consultation with businesses and provide a unique opportunity to improve how European legislation is implemented, to ensure that it poses as small a burden as possible on business.

Government will also start work early on how to implement EU directives to ensure that there is certainty and early warning about how legislation will be introduced, but will not implement the regulations early unless there is a compelling case to do so. Businesses will be invited to take part in this process and work with Government to make sure that European laws place the least possible burden on companies.

The key elements of the principles are:

Work on the implementation of an EU directive should start immediately after agreement is reached in Brussels. By starting implementation work early, businesses will have more chance to influence the approach, ensuring greater certainty and early warning about its impact. Early transposition of EU regulations will be avoided except where there are compelling reasons for early implementation. This will ensure that British businesses are not put at a disadvantage to their European competitors.

European directives will normally be directly copied into UK legislation, except where it would adversely affect UK interests eg by putting UK businesses at a competitive disadvantage.

A statutory duty will be placed on ministers to conduct a review of domestic legislation implementing a European directive every five years. This will allow businesses to influence any necessary improvements based on their own practical experience of applying the rules.



### Guidance

#### Working Safely in Cold Weather Conditions: Employee Factsheet

It is vital that all members of staff are vigilant at times of extreme weather. Your health and safety and the safety of those around is your responsibility too. Use caution, and contact your health and safety representative if you are unsure about anything. If you feel that your safety, or the safety of others around you is compromised, you must inform your employer:

- policies - make sure that you have read and understood any policies or advice issued by your company about local rules and procedures in the event of snow and ice
- travel - when travelling to work, leave extra time for your journey and ensure that your car is prepared for the weather. Please see the Barbour guide on driving in snow and ice for more information. Keep in communication with your health and safety representative when and where possible
- slips trips and falls - walking to and from car parks or between buildings at work during this weather requires special attention to avoid slipping and falling. Slips and falls are some of the most frequent types of injuries during the winter months. You should be reminded to avoid boots or shoes with smooth soles and heels, such as plastic and leather soles and instead, wear a pair of well insulated boots with good rubber treads and to walk slowly and with shorter steps when on icy surfaces. Main pathways and steps should be cleared as far as possible of snow and ice to allow safe access to the buildings. You should also be reminded to remove as much snow and water from your boots as they can when entering buildings as water from melting ice on the floor can also lead to slippery conditions
- updates - any company specific news should be sent out by email and published on any intranet sites
- contact - ensure you have contact details of people within the company, in case you are unable to go into work - ensure you have read and understood information concerning home or lone working
- parking - where possible park in a safe and well lit area, within a short walking distance of your workplace
- clothing and footwear - ensure that you have ample extra clothing and suitable footwear, for ice and snow. Footwear should have grips and heels should be avoided in deep snow and ice. See Slips and Trips above
- travelling home - when leaving your workplace in bad weather, make sure you have a fully charged mobile telephone, plenty of fuel and that you have consulted relevant guidance. You should inform someone of what time you can expect to arrive, taking into account hazardous driving conditions.

#### Driving in Snow and Ice

Driving to and from work in snow and ice is far more hazardous than driving to work in normal conditions. Cold weather of this magnitude is when the roads are below freezing temperatures and snow and ice is on the road.

Where possible, leave extra time for your journey. Pack additional clothes, warm drinks and extra food. When driving, leave yourself more time to do everything. Your braking distance will increase considerably when driving in these conditions.

If you spin your wheels when accelerating, ease off the throttle as much as you can to stop the wheels spinning and if you slide your car, take your foot off the accelerator, don't brake and turn into the slide.



### TUC Snow Advice

In light of the recent weather conditions across the UK, the TUC is urging employers to adopt a flexible attitude to staff attendance, and where possible allow employees to work from home.

As the arctic conditions spread across the UK, causing hundreds of schools to close, working parents have the added problem of what to do with their children even if they can make it into work, says the TUC.

The TUC adds that if employees have internet, e-mail and phones at home, the most sensible solution for employers is to allow them to work there during snowy periods.

Communication between employers and their staff, and between workers and their managers is key when the weather takes a turn for the worse, says the TUC.

Good employers will already have 'bad weather' policies in place and will have told their workforce what is expected of them when snow and ice close the workplace or make the usual commute difficult or hazardous. Any 'snow' policy should also cover what parents should do if their local schools close and they have no alternative means of childcare.

Clearly workers should make every effort to get in to work and not simply give up at the first sight of a few snowflakes, says the TUC. But embarking on a journey which could put themselves or the emergency services in danger, is not a sensible move either, particularly if they live in isolated, rural areas.

Employers also need to be careful that they aren't putting undue pressure on their employees to get into work, or are putting them in a situation where staff feel they have no choice but to go into work or risk facing possible disciplinary action or losing a day's pay.

Not every kind of job can be done from home and the blizzard-like conditions are putting undue pressure on the health and emergency services in some areas. Often staff will be struggling to cover for colleagues who haven't been able to make it in, says the TUC.

TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber said: "In many parts of the country the advice from the police is not to travel unless journeys are absolutely necessary. And given that the adverse weather conditions are causing huge delays across the road and transport networks, it would be very unfair if an employer decided to dock pay from staff who failed to make it in because of the snow.

"Workers everywhere have been braving the snow and ice to get into work, but where the weather makes someone's usual commute unsafe, or where working parents find themselves with children but with no childcare, a more sensible approach is needed.

"Best practice is simply to pay as normal those staff who cannot make it in. Asking employees to take a day's holiday is less reasonable and may create unnecessary resentment. Where possible staff should be encouraged to work from home. That way the job still gets done, most of the wintery hazards are avoided, and good workplace relations are maintained."

Advice on workSMART, the TUC's world of work website, to individuals living in snow-bound parts of the country says:

- many companies recognise the benefits of having 'bad weather' policies to advise employees of what they should do if they cannot reach work because of the weather and lack of transport
- many employees are now able to work from home, thanks to technology linking them to an office network, and this might be a useful alternative for both staff and employers to consider
- whether an employer has a right to withhold pay if an individual fails to get into work due to bad weather will depend on the person's contract, or the policies or custom and practice in the



workplace. In cases where the office or factory does not open, many employers will have a contractual duty to pay staff who turn up to work

- if an employer refuses to pay staff or forces them to take holiday, this could cause unnecessary resentment among those who have been kept away from work through no fault of their own, or create a risk for people travelling to work in genuinely dangerous situations. Individuals may in some circumstances have legal rights to recover their pay, depending on the rules in the workplace.

### Gas boilers - flues in voids

This safety alert, issued by the HSE, is an update to an alert issued in October 2008.

The purpose of the original Alert was to raise awareness of the potential dangers from certain types of flues connected to gas-fired central heating installations in some properties (particularly, but not exclusively, a large number of flats and apartments completed since about 2000) that may not have been installed properly, or may have fallen into disrepair.

Where boilers are located away from external walls, flues are more likely to run through ceiling (or wall) voids. In such cases when the gas appliance is serviced or maintained it can be difficult, or impossible, to determine whether the flue has been installed correctly or whether it is still in good condition.

Where a flue fault exists in combination with a boiler which is not operating correctly, dangerous levels of carbon monoxide (CO) could be released into the living accommodation. CO is a colourless, odourless, tasteless, poisonous gas produced by incomplete burning of carbon-based fuels. It stops the blood from bringing oxygen to cells, tissues, and organs and can kill quickly, without warning.

The 2008 Alert referred to the relevant gas industry technical guidance which gas engineers were expected to follow. A revised version of this guidance has now been published by Gas Safe Register. This changes the approach that Gas Safe registered engineers will take when they encounter relevant installations.

Gas engineers are legally required to check the flue after carrying out any work on the boiler. This will include a visual inspection. Similarly, when an engineer installs a boiler they need to ensure that it can be used without constituting a danger to anyone; this would include checking whether the flue is safe. The original installer and every subsequent servicing or maintenance engineer need to be able to check that:

- the flue is continuous throughout its length
- all joints are correctly assembled and are appropriately sealed
- the flue is adequately supported throughout its length.

The original industry technical guidance (aimed at registered gas engineers) advised that where the flue to the boiler was concealed within a void and could not be visually inspected it should be assessed as "not to current standards" (NCS) in accordance with the Gas Industry Unsafe Situations Procedure (GIUSP - see Reference section for explanation). This was dependent on there being no other risks being present which may have made the boiler unsafe.

Revised guidance takes effect on 1st January 2011. This is the result of the industry working group who undertook a review of the original guidance and concluded that the potential risk from such systems, should it not be possible to inspect the flue, requires an alternative approach to ensure that the necessary remedial action is taken.

The revised technical guidance requires inspection hatches to be fitted in properties where the flue is concealed within voids and cannot be inspected. The homeowner (or landlord etc.) has until 31st December 2012 to arrange for inspection hatches to be installed. Any gas engineer working on affected systems after 1st January 2013 will



## HEALTH & SAFETY NEWS

<b>Issue</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>20/12/10</b>
<b>Page:</b>	<b>11 of 11</b>

advise the homeowner that the system is "at risk" (AR) in accordance with the GIUSP and, with the owner's permission will turn off the gas supply to the boiler so it cannot be used.

In the interim period, where no inspection hatches are fitted, the registered gas engineers will carry out a simple risk assessment which should ensure that the risk from exposure to CO is managed in the short-term. This risk assessment includes:

- looking for signs of leakage along the flue route
- carrying out a flue combustion analysis check (and obtaining a satisfactory result)
- checking for the presence of suitable audible carbon monoxide (CO) alarms (and installing such alarms where they are not already fitted).

As long as this boiler passes the series of safety checks and the risk assessment does not identify any concerns about its safety, it can be left on. Suitable inspection hatches will however need to be fitted to the ceiling (or wall, as appropriate) by end 31st December 2012. Wherever possible it is recommended that inspection hatches are fitted before this date.

Once inspection hatches have been fitted, the gas engineer will be able to make sure that the flue is safe and was installed in line with the relevant standards and manufacturers instructions.

## Reports

### Safe Maintenance in Practice

According to the European Standard EN 13306, maintenance can be defined as: "(the) combination of all technical, administrative and managerial actions during the life cycle of an item intended to retain it in, or restore it to, a state in which it can perform the required function." These items can be workplaces, work equipment, or means of transport like cars, ships, trains and aeroplanes.

In a report from the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, maintenance is described as being critical to ensure productivity, to produce products of high quality and to maintain a company's competitiveness. However, it also has an impact on occupational safety and health. Regular maintenance has an important role in eliminating workplace hazards and providing safer and healthier working conditions. Lack of maintenance or inadequate maintenance can cause serious and deadly accidents or health problems affecting not only workers but also the general public. But maintenance itself is a high-risk activity and it has to be performed in a safe way, with appropriate protection of maintenance workers and other people present in the workplace.

The cases presented in this report focus on the safety and health and protection of the maintenance workers themselves.

The hazards to which maintenance workers are exposed can also be very different depending on the task and the sector being worked in. They include physical, chemical, biological, and psychosocial hazards. Chronic exposure to certain hazards may cause health problems such as asbestosis, cancers, hearing problems, skin diseases, respiratory diseases, musculoskeletal disorders with, as a consequence, a higher-than-usual sickness absence rate.

This report supports the Agency's campaign on Safe Maintenance by providing information on successful initiatives in the workplace illustrating how safety and health risks associated with maintenance can be managed.

The report is primarily aimed at maintenance managers and engineers, production managers who procure external maintenance services, managers of maintenance companies that carry out contract maintenance, and safety and health representatives.