

November 2008

Disabled people and businesses in Guernsey – following on from the article in our last newsletter, have you been able to make any improvements to your workplace or working practices?

Vehicles at work - this site is for anyone involved in transport in the workplace - site designers, banksmen, fork lift drivers etc. It provides resources to help you tackle vehicle safety at work - including guidance, tools, safety signs, case studies and videos - www.hse.gov.uk/workplacetransport/index.htm

Chemicals in the workplace – there is a new chemicals portal page to help users navigate quickly to their area of interest. The page provides a simple signpost and direct link to the different parts of the website covering health and safety in chemical manufacturing, marketing and supply, carriage or use of chemicals as well as latest news - www.hse.gov.uk/chemicals/index.htm

Reducing Stress at Work – a new leaflet is available for employees. Here is the link www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg424.pdf. You will find our 29 January talk very useful – why not come along?

Too many signs! - Using too many signs just guarantees no one will read any of them. Safety signs are useful when there's a significant risk which can't be avoided or controlled in any other way. But that doesn't mean you should add a sign for every possible risk, however trivial. Where there are serious risks in your workplace, don't just rely on signs - take practical steps to deal with them. If you do need a sign, make sure it has the right symbol and is clearly visible.

Guidance for Small Businesses – You know that you must protect the health and safety of your workers and others who might be affected by your work. Health and safety is about sensible, proportionate actions that protect people - not unnecessary bureaucracy and paperwork. Check out the leaflets supplied by the Guernsey HSE (tel 234567) or follow the 10 point list at www.hse.gov.uk/business/must-do.htm

Christmas and other seasonal parties – good planning makes for a great time – don't forget to make sure someone is in charge of your event and carry out a review of the venue and all planned activities (risk assessment) to ensure that you, your employees and guests have a party to remember... for all the right reasons !

Christmas Decorations – dispelling a health & safety myth - Bah Humbug! Each year we hear of companies banning their workers from putting up Christmas decorations in their offices for 'health and safety' reasons, or requiring the work to be done by a 'qualified' person.

Most organisations including HSE manage to put up their decorations, celebrating the spirit of Christmas without a fuss. They just sensibly provide their staff with suitable step ladders to put up decorations rather than expecting staff to balance on wheelie chairs, desks etc.



www.hse.gov.uk/risk/principlespoints.htm

GOSHA news

- **Managing Health & Safety Briefing** – 12 November 4pm to 7pm – sadly, this briefing had to be cancelled due to a lack of support – just 8 people registered – such a shame.
- **Practical site visits** – we visited Channel Islands' Air Search on 15 October and had a very interesting evening – we also raised around £160 for this highly regarded charity – well done to all who attended and we will arrange another visit in the future for those who were unable to attend. Our sincere thanks to all at CIAS for looking after us so well.
- **AGM – 20 November** – Hannah Beacom, MD of Island Coachways is kindly speaking after our AGM. Please come along to hear Hannah speak and give us your ideas and views at the AGM.
- **Website** – we hope you continue to find www.gosha.org.uk helpful. It contains lots of practical help including the legally required Guernsey H&S law poster (see the links page)
- **GOSHA window stickers** – are a great way to make others aware of our association and highlight your concern for workplace health and safety in Guernsey. Please ask any member of the committee for yours.
- **Committee Meeting Minutes** – are displayed on www.gosha.org.uk, so you can keep up to date with all we are doing.
- **Raising issues/training needs etc** - our next committee meeting will be arranged after the AGM – if you would like to raise any matter, please contact a member of the committee (details at www.gosha.org.uk).
- **New Year talk** – the first open meeting of 2009 will take place on Thursday, 29 January and we are very pleased that our speaker will be Felicity Quevatre of Catalyst, Guernsey. Felicity is a trained psychotherapist, a qualified teacher and spent 15 years in broadcasting. She will be speaking about her work and the value an employee assistance service can add to a business.
- **Joel Lanyon** – Joe will be stepping down from the committee at the AGM and from managing our website and we'd like to record our thanks to him for all he has done to help GOSHA and the people who benefit from it.

A New Feature – some thoughts written by Paul Craig of Guernsey Electricity

A lot of media coverage goes to the apparent madness of health and safety; Christmas decorations being banned is an example. These sorts of things get people a bad name! Health and Safety is being blamed for the reduction of pupils in school taking science, because it is seen as too boring due to the lack of experiments being done in class.

The HSE has been slowly trying to combat the issue with their campaign to work towards sensible risk management. The problem is the drive to ensure that all the bases are covered, all jobs, functions and people are risk assessed and that all risks are removed. That way no one gets hurt, nobody gets sued and we are all live happy ever after. The issue with this is that it leads to a very risk averse society.

Quite simply we cannot go through life without taking risks. Some of you may have heard about my kayaking accident, the subject for much amusement among people who know me. The reality is risk taking can be fun. Without risk there is no reward. Obviously the downside is when things don't go according to plan and the consequences can be painful. Risk is often teamed up with either reward or consequence. This reflects the positive and negative possibilities of dabbling in risk and the fact that risk involves probability, chance or just plain luck.



So sensible risk, what does it mean? So far I haven't come across a proper definition, and I doubt I ever will. The problem is that we all view risk differently. How do you know you like a particular wine? You taste it and based on your experience, your senses of taste and smell. You decide that it's a good one or not, then you decide whether it's worth a fiver or more or less. Now some people can take a lifetime out of discussing wine, analysing it and making taste and value for money judgements, and us punters can either agree or disagree. If we think they know what they are talking about or they have proven experiences then the rest of us usually follow. Similarly our perception of risk varies by person and by situation. It depends on our experience of a given situation, it depends on how close we are in space and time, it depends on the fear factor and finally it depends on the scale factor, how big the effect could be.

Where does health and safety fit in? The answer is that it creates some rules based on proven experience to guide people into managing their risks. It is about making sure you are properly protected from real harm. The unfortunate thing is that there are too many 'experts' who sometimes go too far by trying to make society totally risk free, or by scaring people by exaggerating or publicising trivial risks or by stopping activities even where the risks have been properly managed and there are even those who just like generating useless paper mountains accessing 'risks'.



So did I fill out a risk assessment form before Kayaking? Well no! But the risk was well managed, I was experienced, I did have the correct safety equipment on, and I did have experienced paddlers out with me, so the probability and impact were reduced to a level where the risk was balance with the reward. It's much more difficult to view risks this way in your day job; after all what is the reward for not wearing your hard hat? Or not working to the safety rules?

Paul Craig, Health and Safety Manager, Guernsey Electricity