



By Andrew Mills

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Health & Safety makes sense for CI businesses.

Managing health and safety well in businesses throughout Guernsey will help to lower this statistic. It also adds a whole host of other benefits including the preservation of a good reputation and the well-being and retention of employees. We all have a responsibility to ensure that others are not harmed by our actions (or inactions). The law defines the duties of businesses (and gives responsibilities to employees too). Know your responsibilities, know how to fulfill them and do your bit to ensure that Guernsey is a healthy and safe place in which to work. GOSHA can help you and you can also contact the Guernsey HSE for free advice and guidance. There are a number of professional consultants and trainers based in Guernsey who can assist - see our website www.gosha.org.uk.

Why should business adopt good health and safety practices? Well not only does it make good business sense, they have to, so as to comply with the law - the 1987 health and safety ordinance is the main law in Guernsey but there are a number of other legal provisions too, such as regulations, which businesses should know about and details can be obtained from www.hse.gov.gg.

The UK has lots of regulations and, whilst not law here, they can be referred to as best practice guidelines to help you comply with Guernsey law. It makes good business sense to adopt good practices - accidents and injuries in the workplace can have lots of adverse con-

In 2007, over 430 injuries occurred in Guernsey workplaces which were so serious they had to be reported to the HSE.

This statistic should make us think - most were completely avoidable and all have resulted in someone suffering as a result - the effects can last a lifetime.

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sequences including financial (huge costs can be incurred), reputational and personal (such as distress, loss of a good employee or loss of a family member's health).

How does health and safety relate to business efficiency? Good business practices help businesses to perform more efficiently,' Properly assessing and managing workplace health and safety will help to avoid errors and costly mistakes. It will also help a business to get things right first time, to improve productivity (processes often flow more effectively), to work in the most effective ways, to carry out potentially hazardous activities which may not otherwise be possible and to implement new ideas safely.

Can it actually help save unnecessary costs rather than be expensive? Yes many good health and safety practices cost nothing or very little but save a lot of unnecessary costs. Examples of simple things which can be done include, placing non-slip matting on floors near to external doors to prevent slips, fixing loose carpet to prevent trips, training employees to lift and move items/goods properly, giving guidance to employees on working with PCs (lots of problems can result from sitting in a poor position for example), checking equipment to ensure it remains safe, being aware that all lifting equipment needs to be inspected by an expert every 6 months, replacing old ladders with a sound working platform (not only safer but likely to get the job done better and quicker) and ensuring that chemicals used in the workplace (e.g. office cleaning liquids) are kept in a safe place and are properly marked. A regular walk around a work environment will help to identify hazards and poor practices before they cause a problem (examples include removing trailing cables and leads, combustible rubbish left in inappropriate places, blocked fire escapes, damaged electrical equipment e.g. the workplace kettle and so on). And how well does your workplace cater for those with disabilities? Some simple adjustments can assist disabled people considerably and there are nearly 11,000 islanders with long-



term disability which affect their daily lives and so people with disabilities are likely to have regular contact with you and your workplace, some may even work with you.

Why not talk to major island businesses like Ronez, R G Falla, Guernsey Electricity and various States departments about the successes they have achieved over the past few years - involvement with GOSHA allows you to do this.

What about the effects on reputation?

The loss of a good reputation can put a business out of business! It is one of the big issues for any boardroom. Failing to implement good health and safety practices will harm the reputation of any business, particularly if those failings result in injury to employees or others, a court appearance for those responsible and a fine for the business, all of which will receive wide (and adverse) publicity.

Conversely, good practices can enhance the reputation of a business. In 2007, Guernsey Electricity received the prestigious International Safety Award from the British Safety Council in recognition of reducing staff absence due to accidents at work by more than 98% since 1991. Quite an achievement and we heard how this was achieved at a GOSHA meeting.

Are there any other benefits for businesses? Reputation, efficiency and profitability are benefits which have already been highlighted.

Others include:

- respect for visitors and users of our premises (particularly those with disabilities where many businesses are hard if not impossible to access and where escape for a person with a disability in the event of an emergency would be a great concern - a little thought and reorganization could remedy the concern.
- a happy, secure and pleasant working environment
- pride and confidence in the business
- employee retention and attractiveness of the business to new/potential recruits (few want to work for an employer which doesn't care and many are attracted to employers which have a reputation for good corporate social responsibility such as employee welfare and environmental well-being)

Risk Assessment

The Jersey Occupational Safety & Health Association has warned employers to take note of the need for risk assessments.

In their latest newsletter they point out that in May the States added an Amendment to the Health and Safety (Jersey) Law requiring employers to conduct risk assessments, In this way the States made it clear that they expect employers to plan ahead and manage risks appropriately.

In future after any serious accident the questions asked will be 'Should the employer have known what might happen?' and 'Was enough done to prevent it happening?'

Health & Safety Special Report

To protect themselves companies will be using risk assessment as an essential technique to prove that they identified all hazards and suitable actions were taken to bring any significant risks to an acceptable level.

The type and level of assessment will depend on the scale of the risk-no one is expecting a 30 page document for filling a shelf or, for that matter just two lines to cover a major demolition project-but all risk assessments follow the same five basic steps:

1. Identify the hazards
2. Identify those at risk
3. Assess the risks
4. Communicate the finding, include any controls
5. Review the assessment as needed

The risks are many

The latest figures show that Jersey's Health Et Safety Inspectorate carried out 71 investigations into work-related incidents and dealt with 175 complaints last year. Inspectors also issued 20 Prohibition Notices and seven Improvement Notices and two companies working on the Royal Yacht Hotel were fined a total of £75,000 plus £5,000 in costs.

Of all the many potential hazards in Channel Islands workplaces, asbestos is one of the best known and most deadly but some contractors are still not taking sufficient care.

According to the latest annual report from the Inspectorate, every week three plumbers, 20 tradesman, six electricians and six joiners are among those who die from asbestos-related diseases in the UK.

That's one of the reasons why last year the States passed the Health and Safety (Asbestos licensing) (Jersey) Regulations, 2008, which restricts work with the more dangerous types of asbestos material, such as asbestos pipe insulation and asbestos insulation board where large amounts of fibres could be released. Two companies were prosecuted in 2008 for work involving asbestos, with the Royal Court imposing fines and costs totaling £25,500.

But there are plenty of other threats to health and safety in local workplaces. Incidents dealt with in Jersey last year were as

diverse as a firefighter falling down an open manhole in a training area, to a 15 year old boy badly Injured by a power scythe.

Even working in the finance industry is not without its hazards. An archivist working for a local bank sustained multiple injuries when he fell 2.2 meters from the edge of a racking system and had to be flown to the UK for medical treatment. The archive store was undergoing a major refurbishment at the time, but a simple guard rail could have prevented the accident.

Then there was the man who used a hedge trimmer from the top of a triple extension ladder. A member of the public alerted the Health et Safety Inspectorate and they issued an immediate Prohibition Notice.

The prosecution of two further companies, Deerglen (Jersey) Ltd. And Heitkamp GmbH, took place as a result of repeated infractions of health and safety legislation. These were found to involve the risk of serious injury, both to workers on the Royal Yacht Hotel site and members of the public. Inspectors issue several Prohibition Notices because of working practices on the site but the companies ignored them, and they were reported to the Attorney General. Fines of £75,000 were imposed even though no accidents actually took place.

The inspectorate pointed out that the time they had to spend on the case, meant there was less time available to spend on preventing problems elsewhere.

The inspectorate will not walk away from challenging situations, but will continue to pursue whatever action is necessary to ensure that "poor performers" are taken to task for their failings,' the annual report warns.

In total the number of working days lost as CI result of claims for work related accidents or ill health in Jersey in 2008 was 22,451.

Of the 436 reported accidents in Guernsey in 2007, 224 of them involved manual handling or lifting objects.



Occupations at risk

Virtually every job in the islands carries some risk. but the major occupation health areas identified by the Jersey Occupational Safety & Health Association are:

- Work Related Upper limb Disorders (a type of musculoskeletal disorder caused by repeated or excessive effort)
- Office workers
- Warehouse staff
- Retail
- Agriculture
- Stress (the adverse reaction to excessive pressure or demands)
- Health workers
- Noise induced hearing loss
- Construction workers
- Nightclub staff
- Utilities
- Industrial dermatitis (skin) problems from exposure to dust, fumes or liquid)
- Hairdressers
- Cleaners
- Mechanics
- Vibration (damage to the body, especially the hand and arm)
- Agriculture
- Commercial fishermen
- Occupational asthma (inhaling substances setting off asthma attacks)
- Bakers
- Quarry workers
- Hairdressers
- Biological infection (agents that cause infections or allergies)
- Abattoir
- Sewerage workers (leptospirosis)
- Office workers (legionella)
- Tattooists (blood borne viruses)
- Health professionals
- Skin cancer (unprotected exposure to sun)
- Farmers
- Heat and cold (fatigue or problems with circulation)
- Butcher's
- Retail
- Fishmongers

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