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July 2024
Health & Safety
Newsletter

IOSH sets out 5 key calls to action:

The Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) has set out five key calls to action for the next UK Government.

IOSH is the leading global health and safety membership organisation that was founded to promote excellent Health and Safety standards across all workplaces.

IOSH says whichever party comes to power in the general election, should prioritise improving occupational health services to help cut the number of people being made ill by their work.

Whilst it is unclear which party will form the new government, it is vital that whoever does succeed, ensures the correct resources are in place to protect workers across the country.

The cost and scale of the problem were summarised by IOSH's head of policy and public affairs Ruth Wilkinson.

"We know that poor health and safety harms people, communities, businesses, our NHS and the economy. The most recent figures from the Health and Safety Executive showed that workplace injury and new cases of work-related ill-health, including the growing issue of mental health problems, cost Britain £20.7 billion. And more people being injured or made ill by work means more people seeking treatment, which adds additional pressure onto the NHS. This is a pressure that can be avoided by good workplace health and safety."

The 5 key calls to action that IOSH have called the government to act on, are:

1. Protect workers' rights to safe, healthy, decent work by endorsing and fully implementing health and safety-related international conventions and ensuring this covers all workers regardless of their employment status.

2. Strengthen and expand the UK's world-leading system that prevents harm at work through increasing Health and Safety Executive funding and investing in strong occupational health systems.

3. Support businesses to tackle new and emerging workplace hazards by being proactive on laws around new technologies and ensuring non-permanent workers have rights to good working conditions, a minimum wage, working time protection and access to collective bargaining.

4. Promote a diverse, inclusive, skilled and motivated workforce by mainstreaming diversity into health and safety legislation, national policies and strategies and equipping workers with health and safety awareness.

5. Build a more robust, sustainable economy through reviewing and where necessary updating laws and regulations relating to changing health and safety risks and putting people at the heart of the sustainability agenda.

These actions will aid in reducing the number of work-related accidents and cases of work-related ill health which in turn will reduce the number of people seeking NHS treatment and further support the economy.

Ruth Wilkinson
IOSH
Head of policy and public affairs

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Heat Stress – how to protect yourself

Although the Great British summer usually leaves something to be desired, we do enjoy spells of hot, sunny days.

Exposure to excessive heat can cause a range of health issues, and this can affect both outdoor workers and indoor workers equally.

What is heat stress?

Heat stress happens when the body's way of controlling its internal temperature starts to fail. Symptoms can include an inability to concentrate, muscle cramps, heat rash and severe thirst. It can lead to heat exhaustion and heat stroke, which is potentially fatal.

In addition, exposure to excessive heat can result in lethargy, poor decision-making, sweaty palms, fogged-up safety glasses and dizziness – all of which can increase the risk of injuries

Who is affected?

Heat stress can affect those working in hot temperatures outdoors such as construction workers, or even those working in hot environments indoors for example in a manufacturing facility.

How to reduce the risk?

Employers can reduce the risk to workers by:
- Monitoring local weather conditions and planning work in cooler parts of the day.
- Providing access to cool drinking water and providing regular breaks.
- Implementing mechanical means such as air conditioning where possible.
- Implementing a buddy system where workers look after each other.
- Specialised PPE.

You can reduce the risk to yourself by:
- Take time to acclimatise to your working environment.
- Work in the shade if possible.
- Wear loose-fitting light-coloured clothing.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Take regular breaks in shaded areas.
- Wear suncream when working outside and ensure it is regularly applied.
- Look out for your colleagues.

You must follow the control measures identified by your employer and take your time when working in hot environments.

If you begin to feel unwell or a colleague does, It is vital to ensure that you follow the emergency reporting procedures your employer has adopted to ensure that the right attention and treatment is given.