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HSE Publish Workplace Fatal Injuries Statics Report 2017/18 - Showing an Increase in Workplace Fatalities:

To: All Branches

Dear Colleagues,

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has released its annual figures for work-related fatal injuries for 2017/18, as well as the number of people known to have died from the asbestos-related cancer, Mesothelioma, in 2016.

The provisional annual data for work-related fatal injuries revealed that 144 workers were fatally injured between April 2017 and March 2018 (a rate of 0.45 per 100,000 workers). This represents an increase of nine fatalities from 2016/17. The increase in the number of workers fatally injured is clearly a source of concern and the figures serve as a reminder of why health and safety is so important and why the HSE must not become complacent and must step up efforts to prevent all forms of injury, death and ill health at work.

The new HSE figures show how fatal injuries are spread across the different industrial sectors:

- 38 fatal injuries to construction workers were recorded, accounting for the largest share of any industry. The annual average rate over the last five years in construction is around four times as high as the all industry rate.
- 29 fatal injuries to agricultural workers were recorded. This sector continues to account for a large share of the annual fatality count. It has the highest rate of fatal injury of all the main industry sectors, around 18 times as high as the all industry rate.
- 12 fatal injuries to waste and recycling workers were recorded. Despite being a relatively small sector in terms of employment, the annual average fatal injury rate over the last five years is around 16 times as high as the all industry rate.
- 15 fatal injuries were recorded in both the manufacturing and the transport and storage sectors. Both industries have an annual average rate of fatal injury around 1.5 – 2 times the rate across all industries over the last five years.

The three most common causes of fatal injuries continue to be due to:

- Workers falling from height (35)
- Workers being struck by a moving vehicle (26)
- Workers being struck by a moving object (23)

These account for 60 per cent of fatal injuries in 2017/18.

The new figures also highlight the risks to older workers; 40 per cent of fatal injuries in 2017/18 were to workers aged 60 or over, even though such workers made up only around 10 per cent of the workforce.

In addition, there were also 100 members of the public fatally injured in incidents connected to work in 2017/18 with just over half of these fatalities occurring on railways.

Mesothelioma, contracted through past exposure to asbestos and one of the few work-related diseases where deaths can be counted directly, killed 2,595 in Great Britain in 2016. The current figures are largely a consequence of occupational asbestos exposures that occurred before 1980. Annual Mesothelioma deaths are expected to remain broadly at current levels for the rest of the decade before beginning to decline.

A fuller assessment of work related ill-health and injuries, drawing on the HSE's full range of data sources, will be provided as part of the annual Health and Safety Statistics release on 31 October 2018.

Workers deaths recorded by the HSE over the last 10 years show:-

- 2017/18 - 144
- 2016/17 - 137
- 2015/16 - 147
- 2014/15 - 142
- 2013/14 - 136
- 2012/13 - 150
- 2011/12 - 173
- 2010/11 - 175
- 2009/10 - 152
- 2008/09 - 180

A deeper analysis of statistics by the '**Hazards Campaign**' report that a more accurate and inclusive set of figures would show:-

- 144 Workers Killed - reported to HSE via RIDDOR
- 50 Workers killed at sea and in the air
- 600 Workers killed in road traffic accidents whilst working
- 300 Members of the public killed by work activities
- 103 deaths caused by work related cancers
- 18,000 Work related Heart Disease deaths
- 20,000 Work related respiratory illness deaths
- 6,000 Other work related disease deaths

Government Health & Safety Cuts and Political Turmoil

Heavy cuts to Government funding of the HSE has undoubtedly, in the Trade Unions view, made workplaces less safe and influenced the rise in deaths at work reported for the year. The increase in workplace deaths may be the first sign of the effect of years of budget cuts and reductions in inspections, Enforcement Notices issued and prosecutions, filtering through. The Government cuts to health and safety funding will gradually, increasingly impact on workers. The latest increase in reported workplace deaths reported by the HSE undermines the complacent and ever-repeated statement rolled out 'parrot-fashion' by Government Ministers and HSE 'top brass' that "The UK has the best safety record in the world and one that is the envy of the world." The reductions in the HSE's and Local Authorities' ability to inspect workplaces is now being widely brought into question. In every aspect of life, you get what you

pay for and the UK Government is paying less money and therefore there's less attention being paid to workplace safety year on year.

The current political turmoil is an added challenge to protecting workers today in the UK. The Government is in a state of "Brexit Paralysis" and is bogged down by in-fighting and lack of cohesion and direction as the country is like a rudderless ship, adrift in a sea of confusion with no way of knowing where it will land up. It's essential that the Trade Unions remain focused on protecting health and safety and join forces with other organisations to achieve our vision of work that doesn't kill, injure or harm anyone but instead enhances their health and wellbeing.

The fatal accident statistics indicate that things are on the slide and against that backdrop, the indication from central Government is that more funding cuts are on the way in the next spending and budget review. We need to continue to campaign in line with CWU and TUC policy, even more vigorously, to make workplaces more healthy and safe. That's the least we should do as a memorial to the workers made ill, injured and killed at work every year.

Attachment:

- HSE Workplace Fatal Injuries Annual Statistics Report

Yours sincerely



Dave Joyce
National Health, Safety & Environment Officer