



Health & Safety

MATTERS

Health & Safety Information for GMB Safety Reps

NEW HSE STRATEGY - "BE PART OF THE SOLUTION"

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have recently published their draft strategy "The Health and Safety of Great Britain: Be Part of the Solution". The strategy comes in the wake of the merger between the Health and Safety Commission and the HSE. HSE are now consulting on the draft, which gives GMB members and Safety Representatives an opportunity to feed into the way that the HSE will operate in the future.

What is the issue?

The HSE strategy sets the framework for HSE activities across all their areas of work. The strategy is regularly reviewed, to take into account the changes in HSE resources and financing, the health and safety performance over the past few years, and changes in the wider world of work.

In 2008-09, the HSE has a number of major issues to tackle. Staff numbers are falling, due to a budget cut at the rate of inflation each year, which has led to the closure of the London policy HQ. National performance has levelled out over the past few years as official work-related fatalities remain at around the 230-250 level and the industrial make-up of Great Britain has transformed because of the move from a manufacturing base to a services economy, with less heavy industry but more occupational health challenges as a result. The total human cost is 229 workplace deaths in 2007-08; 34 million working days lost due to ill-health, and an economic cost to the country of £4 billion.

Health and safety is also now being used more than ever as an excuse for not doing things, and shorthand for unnecessary bureaucracy. Challenging the perception of HSE as "The Fun Police" and showing the real value of workplace health and safety management will be critical if the number of fatalities and serious injuries is to be further reduced.

What are HSE proposing?

The new strategy identifies goals in the following eight key areas:

- *Investigations and securing justice* - ensuring that those who breach health and safety law are investigated, and where appropriate, enforcement action and prosecution is taken;
- *the need for strong leadership* - directors, managers and others taking responsibility, being accountable and focusing on key health and safety issues.

GMB SAFETY REPS

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Making Your Workplace Safer

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- *building competence* - ensuring that workers and managers are trained to understand, assess and manage the risks to health and safety for work;
 - *involving the workforce* - ensuring that workers are consulted on health and safety, and that Safety Reps and managers train together.
 - *creating healthier, safer workplaces* - Targeting key health issues, and working with others to improve occupational health provision.
 - *customising support for SMEs* - Making sure that small businesses can understand and comply with their legal duties.
 - *avoiding catastrophe* - ensuring that major hazard sites and industries are well-managed and the hazards tightly controlled; and
 - *taking a wider perspective* - working with Local Authorities, other Government departments and stakeholders to ensure that health and safety policy and activity is not made in isolation.

How does GMB view the new strategy?

GMB believes there is much in the new strategy to be welcomed. We are very pleased that enforcement has been placed as the number one priority, and that worker involvement is a key element of the strategy itself. However, the Government must ensure that the HSE gets the political and financial support it needs to take its strategy forward, in what are likely to be difficult times to come.

How can GMB members have their say?

The draft strategy is available to download from <http://www.hse.gov.uk/strategy>, which can also be used to respond online. Hard copies of the strategy document can be ordered from HSE Infoline on 0845 345 0055.

HSE are also holding a series of consultation meetings in January 2009, where the public can express their opinions on what the HSE should be doing and how they should operate in future. The workshops begin in Liverpool on 8th January 2009, followed by Newcastle (13th), Bristol (15th), Birmingham (20th), Cardiff (22nd), London (27th) and Glasgow (29th).

Attendance is *by invitation only* but to register interest, visit the [Regional Consultations](#) webpage, contact hsestrategyconsultation@glasgows.co.uk or call 01772 767717.

GMB recommends that members attend, to make the voice of the workers heard, as employers will undoubtedly seek to limit and water down the strategy. For more information contact tristan.chard@gmb.org.uk

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