

Factsheets & Resources : The size of the problem

Young workers

Did you know that thousands of young people have accidents at work every year and that some of them are fatal?

- The Health and Safety Executive (HSE), tell us that 21 young people (under the age of 25) died and a further 3,844 were seriously injured at work during 1998/99.
- In the same period - 1998/99, 46 young people under the age of 16, including trainees, were injured at work, 14 of them suffered major injuries.
- The Trades Union Council (TUC) tell us that ten young workers are seriously injured at work every week because they are not aware of their basic health and safety rights as an employee and have not been given adequate training by their employers.

The wider picture

Every year in the UK we face the challenge of reducing:

- about 350 fatalities (deaths) to workers and members of the public due to reportable accidents at work;
- some 10,000 early deaths due to past exposure to hazardous agents such as asbestos;
- nearly 29 million working days are lost due to accidents and ill-health.

10 more facts

- There are still 1.6 million workplace injuries every year as well as 2.2 million cases of ill-health caused or made worse by work.
- It is estimated that 1.2 million people are suffering from musculoskeletal disorders (such as back pain and repetitive strain injuries) caused by their work.
- 70 per cent of workplace accidents could be prevented if employers put proper safety control measures in place.
- Car and van drivers who cover 25,000 miles a year as part of their job have the same risk of being killed as coal miners.
- There are estimated to be between 50,000 and 100,000 cases of occupational dermatitis (skin disorders) every year.
- Around 6,000 workplace burn injuries are reported every year.

- Around 1.3 million workers are regularly exposed to noise levels which puts them at risk of damage to hearing.
- The rate of fatal and major injuries in firms employing fewer than 50 employees is over twice the rate of that in firms employing more than 1000 people!
- Up to 400,000 people are believed to be suffering from asthma caused by their work.
- There are an estimated 1,000 new cases of occupational asthma a year.
- There are around 2000 cases of accidents involving chemicals at work reported every year.

And did you know that:

- Only 40 per cent of major workplace accidents are reported.
- The maximum penalties for breaching health and safety legislation are unlimited fines and up to two years in prison.