The Health and Safety Authority’s (“HSA”) Annual Report for 2015 has recently been published. It highlights the continued work of the Authority to ensure all economic sectors adopt the highest safety standards in the workplace. The HSA conducted a broad programme of work across the areas of workplace health and safety regulation, chemicals regulation and national accreditation in 2015. In this note, we consider the HSA’s work programme across the construction sector for 2015 and its plans for 2016.

In 2015 the HSA carried out 9,500 inspections and investigations under health and safety legislation.

In the construction sector the number of inspections increased from previous years with 3,932 inspections carried out by the HSA. These inspections addressed health and safety management and working at heights. Verbal advice was given in respect of 1,584 site visits while written advice was given in respect of 1,468 site visits.

This increase reflects the recovery in the construction sector, the return of workers and the influx of new workers in this area. These inspections focussed on small construction projects.

The HSA made considerable progress in relation to their planned actions for the construction industry in 2015. This included:

+ updating of construction codes of practice including *The Code of Practice in Roofwork*, *the Code of Practice for Avoiding Danger from Underground Services* and *The Code of Practice for Contractors with Three or Less Employees Working on Roads*;

+ drafting of guidance on manual handling in construction and on occupational health in construction;
consulting with the Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI), and other state departments in relation to changing qualifications and training structures in the construction industry;

enhancing of the BeSMART tool, by developing and launching additional modules for the construction sector.

The Temporary Traffic Management of Roadworks Committee continued to develop operational guides on temporary traffic management at roadworks.

Throughout 2015, the HSA supported the Construction Safety Partnership and the Construction Advisory Committee, working with stakeholders to promote safety in the construction sector.

The HSA also carried out a two week inspection campaign, the focus being on occupational health issues on construction sites. During the campaign 597 site visits were made.

In the construction sector 3,320 workplace inspections and investigations were carried out under OSH legislation.

In relation to health and safety management compliance in construction;

- 77% of workplaces had a safety statement prepared and available at the workplace
- 93% of workplaces had a safety consultation process in place
- Only 3% of workplaces had reportable accidents in the previous 12 months.

On review of the items contained in the safety statement it was found that;

- 95% of these statements identified relevant hazards
- 93% of the statements contained relevant risk assessments
- 91% of these safety statements specified appropriate control measures
- 77% had control measures implemented
- 91% of the safety statements identified resources
- 94% allocated responsibilities.
HSA Goals for 2016

The main aim of the HSA in 2016 is to continue to ensure safety in the workplace. The Authority’s Strategy Statement for 2016 – 2018 specifically refers to its commitment to ensuring a safe work environment in the construction sector particularly since this sector is growing, with employment levels increasing by over 20,000 in the past 2 years. Areas such as nanotechnology and carcinogens will be a key focus as most re-emerging risks are linked to increased activity in the construction sector.

The HSA’s five priorities for 2016 include;

- Increasing the focus on work related health risks
- Maintaining and developing the advances achieved in the management of work related health risks
- Focusing on the risks to human safety and health arising from chemicals used at work and by the general public
- Providing an impartial, internationally recognised accreditation service
- Continuing to change and transform the way we work.

In 2015, the HSA progressed many of its planned actions for the construction sector. This sector will continue to be an area of focus for the HSA in 2016. The construction industry is growing and the HSA has recognised the importance of adopting the highest safety standards in order to safeguard the welfare of workers in this sector.

August 2016

For further information please contact:

Sarah Conroy
Partner
T: +353 (0) 1 536 9613
E: s.conroy@beale-law.com

Karen Elliott
Trainee Solicitor
T: +353 (0) 1 536 9610
E: k.elliott@beale-law.com