Health and Safety Authority Annual Report 2016 – Key Points

The Health and Safety Authority (“HSA”) recently published its Annual Report for 2016. It is the first Annual Report under the Authority’s strategy for 2016 to 2018. The HSA is responsible for ensuring adherence with health and safety legislation across a diverse range of sectors including agriculture, chemicals and construction.

In its Strategy Statement for 2016 – 2018, the HSA acknowledged the direct correlation between workplace accidents and activity levels in the construction sector. The HSA envisages that greater surveillance and intervention would be required given the recovery of the Irish economy.

HSA Inspections & Investigations (Construction Sector)

In 2016, the HSA carried out 4,180 inspections and investigations with 107 improvement notices and 214 prohibition notices issuing. Verbal advice was given in 2,157 of the inspections/investigations that took place and 1,551 written advices were delivered.

A total of 3,664 inspections were carried out by the Authority under the occupational safety and health legislation, an increase of 10% from last year. This is partly a reflection of the influx of returning and new workers.

HSA work programme

The HSA made great stride in relation to their planned actions for the construction sector in 2016. One of the Authority’s aims was to raise awareness of the importance of health and safety amongst self-employed and small contractors.
The majority of inspections undertaken by the HSA in 2016 were on contractors with 9 employees or less (71%), with the self-employed accounting for 9% of inspections undertaken by the HSA. The HSA effectively used social media to raise awareness of the importance of health and safety amongst the self-employed and small contractors in the construction industry. The BeSMART tool was further developed and provided extra support to self-employed and small contractors.

Other plans actioned by the HSA in 2016 included:

- Working with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI), SOLAS and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in reviewing the national qualifications and training structures;
- Raising awareness of mental health and well-being issues through supporting the CIF Pieta House Mind Our Workers campaign;
- Organising the third-level Safety in Construction project competition, aimed at increasing third levels students’ knowledge of health and safety in construction;
- Increasing the construction inspection programme particularly regard to known high-risk activities; and
- Running two campaigns in 2016; one in June focused on occupational health issues. 539 inspections were carried out during this campaign. The September campaign had a total of 338 inspections with the focus being on working at a height. The Authority used social media to promote safe work practices, reaching 100,000 with each campaign.

The HSA also co-ordinated the amalgamation of the Construction Safety Partnership and the Construction Advisory Committee into a new group the Construction Safety Partnership Advisory Committee (CSPAC).

In relation to health and safety management compliance in construction;

- 72% of workplaces had a safety statement prepared and available at the workplace
- 90% of workplaces had a safety consultation process in place
63% had a system in place for reviewing health and safety performance.

On review of safety statement compliance in the construction sector:

- 95% of safety statements met the criteria for relevant safety risk assessments
- 93% of safety statements contained relevant health risk assessments
- 91% of safety statements specified appropriate control measures for safety risks identified
- 77% of safety statements specified appropriate control measures for health risks identified
- 94% allocated responsibilities to relevant managers

The BeSMART tool saw 8,000 new users from the construction sector in 2016. The HSA also implemented its strategic objective on workplace health, focusing on stress and bullying in the workplace. The Authority conducted a health based campaign on respirable silica, sun protection and manual handling in the construction sector.

Conclusion

The HSA has made great progress in ensuring the highest standard of health and safety is followed in the construction sector. The HSA has increased its focus on this sector given the upturn in the economy and the increasing employment levels. The HSA achieved a broad spectrum of work in 2016. It used social media to reach a wider audience in many of its health and safety campaigns as discussed above.

2017 will see the HSA continue to implement its goals under its 2016 - 2018 strategy, increasing the focus on work related health risks by continuing to carry out inspections and investigations and ensuring the highest standards of health and safety practices are implemented.

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