



Newsletter

'Your safety,
our concern'

August 2010 Issue

August, being the traditional holiday month, is a time to recharge and refresh, not just ourselves but our working practices too. Let's start with getting back to basics with H&S, and our article this month outlines 'successful management of health and safety' in five steps, as devised by the HSE.

Even the best laid holiday plans can go awry with sickness, so it's good to be forearmed if an employee returns from their holiday looking as though they still need a holiday. Our second article overleaf keeps you up to date with developments on retirement.

At qsuk, neither holidays nor retirement are on the cards in the near future, so **call us anytime in August for advice on H&S and HR - 0800 458 9421.**

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Successful management of health and safety

Do you recall the explosion at the Buncefield Oil Storage Depot in 2005? The fines of £9.5M have just recently been ordered, and as one of Britain's most costly industrial disasters, it has served as a painful reminder of how essential it is for companies to **manage** their health and safety. Accidents may still happen, but had the five companies involved competently *managed* their health and safety, their fines would have been substantially less.

Successful management of health and safety can be achieved in 5 steps:

Step 1: Set your Policy

This is the backbone of managing health and safety in your organisation. The complexity of your policy will depend on the size and nature of the organisation but must include all your activities, staff, premises, and others affected by your activities. It should include:-

- Policy Statement – outlines the Company's intention to manage health and safety, as well as any targets or goals.
- Organisation – states who is responsible for doing what, eg first aid, fire safety, risk assessments.
- Arrangements – states how it is controlled, monitored and reviewed.

Step 2: Organise your Staff

For you to effectively manage health and safety you must involve your staff and get them committed, in order to develop a 'positive health and safety culture'. The 'four 'Cs' of a positive health and safety culture are:-

- i. Competence – recruitment, training and advisory support.
- ii. Control – allocating responsibilities, securing commitment, instruction and supervision.
- iii. Co-operation – between individuals and groups.
- iv. Communication – spoken, written and visible.

Step 3: Plan and set Standards

Planning and setting of standards (goals and targets) is the cornerstone of ensuring that your health and safety really works. Standards must be measurable, achievable and realistic, and plans should be written and provide for:-

- Identification of hazards, assessing risks and implementation of control measures.
- Agreeing targets and complying with health and safety laws applicable to your Company.
- Design of task, processes, equipment, products and services that are safe.
- Setting of standards against which performance can be measured.



We're just a call or
e-mail away:

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cont'd overleaf

Successful *management of health and safety* cont'd

Step 4: Measure your performance

Without measuring the performance of health and safety in the organisation you will not know if you are successfully managing health and safety in the organisation. There are two main monitoring systems, proactive or reactive. The former and more desirable, will ensure that control measures are implemented and effective prior to things going wrong. It will require regular update meetings with staff, and checking housekeeping, maintenance, and inspection records. Reactive monitoring speaks for itself – it will be needed after an accident or near miss.

Step 5: Learn from experience – Audit and Review

In order to improve the management of health and safety and ensure that you are meeting the requirements of health and safety laws, you must constantly audit and review your activities. How often you do this will again depend on the size and complexity of the organisation but as a minimum, you must review the policy and action necessary each year.

qsuk can guide and support you through the five steps to ensure your health and safety is successful - just call us on 0800 458 9421.

Sick whilst on holiday dilemma

Employees' annual leave can unfortunately sometimes coincide with being unwell. If the employee asks to take the period of holiday during which they were sick at another time, **does the employer have to agree?**

Recent case law that involves this issue has left the answer unclear, so in theory the employer could choose whether or not to agree to the request. To minimise the risk of a legal claim however, it is wise to have a **clear policy in place**.

If, as the employer, you decide that employees should be allowed to reschedule annual leave that coincides with sickness absence, then the policy should cover matters such as:

- Notification requirements, ie when the employee should notify the employer that they are sick and how they should keep in touch during the period of ill health.
- Whether self certification is sufficient, or if instead, a medical certificate is required.
- Pay for sickness absence during annual leave.
- Whether 'refunded' annual leave can be carried over to the next holiday year.

Our advice is to review your policy now. Call us on 0800 458 9421.



Retirement age scrapped

Currently, employers can insist that staff retire at the age of 65, but new plans just proposed by the Government on 29th July, are changing that.

The Default Retirement Age (DRA) will be officially scrapped on 1st October 2011. From 6th April 2011, employers will not be able to issue any notifications for compulsory retirements using the DRA procedures. Between 6th April and 1st October, only employees who were notified before 6th April and whose retirement date is before 1st October can be compulsorily retired.

After October 2011, employers who wish to specify a retirement age, will have to be able to objectively justify that this is necessary.

Please call us on 0800 458 9421 for advice on retiring employees.