

# LegislationWATCH

THE No.1 RESOURCE FOR WORKPLACE LAW AND HEALTH AND SAFETY

## Micromanagement

**A subtle but significant problem in many work environments**

See page 22

### Inside this issue...

**Working from home safely**



**6 reasons to track your assets**



**Preventing injuries around machinery**



**SAFETY  
MADE  
EASY**





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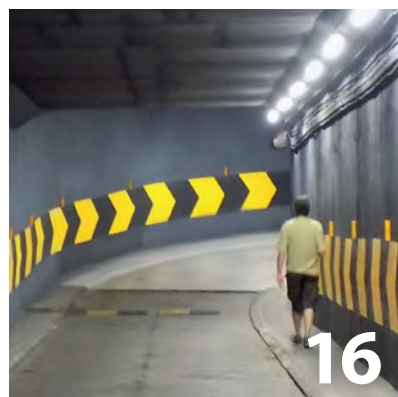
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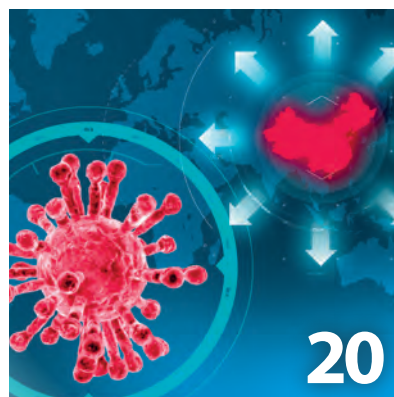
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## Note FROM THE EDITOR...



We hope you enjoy your latest edition of Legislation Watch magazine! Our aim is to simplify health and safety legislation so it feels a little less daunting.

All of our previous magazines are available to download online, along with hundreds of articles categorised by topic so it's easy for you to find the information you're looking for.

Simply visit [seton.co.uk/legislationwatch](https://seton.co.uk/legislationwatch)

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# Legal UPDATE



## Coronavirus Act 2020

The Coronavirus Act received Royal Assent on 25 March 2020 and is now in force after being fast-tracked through parliament in just four sitting days. The Act enables public bodies to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Brexit: health and safety during the transition period

The UK has now left the EU and a transition period is in place until 31 December 2020 while new arrangements are negotiated for a trade deal between the EU and UK. During this transition period, the HSE has emphasised that you should continue to manage risk in your business in a proportionate way. It is the employers' responsibility to protect the health and safety of people affected by

their work activities. The HSE's guidance *Health and safety made simple: the basics for your business* will help businesses to continue to comply with the law during this period.

## Veganism ruled a protected belief

A recent landmark legal case has confirmed ethical veganism qualifies as a philosophical belief for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010. Vegans are entitled to the same protection in the workplace as those who hold religious beliefs. The Vegan Society has released new guidance for employers to help businesses ensure their practices are in line with legal duties.

## New guidance on lone working for older and gig workers

The HSE has taken into account modern

working practices and has updated its official guidance on lone working. *Protecting lone workers: How to manage the risks of working alone* updates INDG73 which was last updated in 2012.

## Recap on April Changes

- Changes to the operation of IR35 regime took effect from 6 April 2020
- Employees' right to a statement of particulars on their first day took effect from 6 April 2020
- 'Swedish Derogation' contracts were abolished from 6 April 2020
- The reference period for calculating holiday pay increased from 12 weeks to 52 weeks on 6 April 2020
- Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay Act took effect from 6 April 2020.



# Assessing workplace stress

**Stress at work has become so commonplace that it is easy to take it for granted and assume that it is inevitable. It is not, and it can be harmful to employees, productivity and profits. Carrying out a stress risk assessment can help you address and reduce workplace stress, and improve both staff wellbeing and overall performance at your company.**

## The impact of workplace stress

According to statistics compiled by the Labour Force Survey, over 600,000 workers suffer from work-related stress, depression or anxiety, and around 12.8 million working days are lost annually to these issues. HSE defines stress as 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them'. It is important for employers to be able to recognise the signs of stress within their workplace. A thorough stress risk assessment could easily identify factors that can be addressed to reduce these figures in many workplaces.

## Employer responsibilities

Employers have various responsibilities when it comes to the health and safety of their staff. Keeping employees safe at work is regulated under the Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) 1974, which states that employers have a general duty to protect their employees' health at work. This

includes ensuring that workers are protected from workplace hazards, illnesses and injuries, including stress-related illnesses.

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, employers have a specific duty to carry out risk assessments, with the aim of 'identifying sensible measures to control the risks in your workplace'. In spite of clearly laid-out employer responsibilities, and the statistics around workplace stress, not all workplaces prioritise stress as a risk factor, and many have never carried out a stress risk assessment.

## Benefits of a stress risk assessment

A stress risk assessment can help you identify risk factors that may be harming your employees and impacting your company in various ways. By carrying out an assessment, and implementing steps to decrease risk factors at work, you may well be able to improve job satisfaction,

increase morale, boost productivity, and improve overall efficiency and profits. A further result will usually be a decrease in staff turnover, and therefore the (often significant) costs associated with recruitment and training.

## How to carry out a stress risk assessment

The HSE Stress Management Standards can be used to structure a stress risk assessment. This identifies six key risk factors that contribute to work-related stress. These are:

- Demands, such as workload and work patterns
- Control over work processes and the way that work is carried out
- Support received from managers, colleagues and human resources
- Roles, including staff understanding their role and conflicting roles
- Relationships within the workplace with colleagues and managers

• Change, including how it is managed and communicated  
In order to assess stress in your workplace, you will have to carry out an assessment that covers all these areas to gather evidence of risk factors. There are two main ways to do this.

Firstly, survey your staff using a well-designed questionnaire that covers the above stressors. Making the survey anonymous can encourage honesty, but make sure that the staff fully understand that their answers will be considered and that this is their chance to promote change and reduce their stress levels at work. This will give them an incentive to complete the survey and do so honestly. Secondly, you will need to look at data from other sources that could indicate workplace stress levels. This might include employee absence and turnover figures, reports from union representatives, previous complaints, referrals to

occupational health, and interviews with staff, including exit interviews and regular review, self-assessment or progress interviews.

Once you have gathered evidence, you will need to present findings to managers and staff, and start to implement changes. It can be highly useful to consult staff and ask for suggestions as to how they think that some of the risk factors identified can be addressed and reduced. Many organisations also appoint a Mental Health First Aider who can support and guide employees who are dealing with stress and other mental health challenges. Taking the time to design, implement and respond to a thorough stress risk assessment can be a step towards improving employee welfare, organisational culture and your bottom line. It is well worth the initial time and effort required in order to reap the long-term benefits.



# 6 REASONS TO Track your assets

Tracking your assets can have a number of benefits for almost any business. When you track your assets electronically, you know exactly what you own, where it is, and what it is costing you, as well as when it needs replacing, updating or servicing. That way, you can get a clear picture of how to maintain, improve, expand or streamline your asset portfolio.

## What is asset tracking?

Asset tracking is a process used to monitor your company's assets. It tends to involve a central system that stores details such as the location and owner of an asset, along with contract details and maintenance history. Asset tracking can be made easier with the use of barcode labels or asset tags, which are affixed to your physical assets and can be scanned electronically, providing details related to that asset.

## What assets should I track?

There are many physical assets that you should probably be tracking, some of which you might not automatically think of. Assets that you should track include technology products such as computers, printers, copiers and other IT equipment. It can also be helpful to track non-physical things such as software licences and subscriptions. You might also need to track employees' personal equipment, including uniforms, safety equipment, radios and mobile devices, keys, access cards and badges. Many companies will also need to track work equipment, machines, tools, office furniture, lighting, break room appliances, and many more items used as part of the day-to-day activities of the company.

## Benefits of asset tracking

There are numerous benefits to carefully tracking assets within your business. Here are just a few of them.

### 1. Monitoring physical assets

A major benefit of asset tracking is that it allows companies to monitor what assets they have, and where they are within the company. This, in turn, allows for a clear overview of the company's asset portfolio, allowing managers to identify needs, manage resources, and avoid

duplication of assets, across the organisation.

### 2. Inventory control

Automated asset tracking simplifies inventory control, saving a great deal of time and manpower. Scannable asset tags allow for assets to be electronically verified and matched to identification numbers already stored within the centralised system. This is much quicker and easier than taking inventory manually.

### 3. Maintenance management

Almost all companies will have some assets that require periodic maintenance, from office equipment to machinery, tools and safety equipment. As well as physical maintenance, things such as software licences need to be updated, and various office and workshop supplies need to be replenished. Asset management software can alert relevant personnel to upcoming maintenance needs, and allows for a quick and convenient overview of all regular maintenance tasks.

### 4. Preventing loss and theft

It is relatively common to lose or misplace small, movable assets, and they can also be vulnerable to theft. Even if there is a record system showing where an asset is meant to be, it often is not there, as the records have not been accurately maintained. This can lead to frustration, inconvenience and the unnecessary duplication of assets. Asset tracking can help document exactly where assets are at any given time.

### 5. Compliance

The right asset tracking system can help companies capture, store and report relevant data, in order to meet regulatory

requirements and show compliance. The system can help organisations stay compliant regarding issues such as maintenance, equipment testing, and replacing assets when needed for health and safety reasons. It can also streamline reporting, as the data needed to generate the necessary reports is already in the system.

### 6. Accountability and cost savings

One of the most important benefits of asset tracking for many organisations is the level of accountability it results in, and the consequent savings in both cost and time. Manual asset management is time-consuming, expensive and often highly inefficient, with many hours spent on things such as taking inventory, or monitoring maintenance schedules, often with a lot less accuracy than you can expect from asset tracking software. For many companies, it is therefore well worth the initial effort of setting up a reliable asset tracking system.

We offer a variety of asset tracking solutions including tags and cloud-based asset management software. If you have questions about the process or equipment required, please do not hesitate to get in touch on 0800 585501.

## Seton recommends...



Style No. DRGF2



# WHY OFFICE ergonomics matter



The poor physical and mental health effects of working in an office setting are many and varied. From poor posture and eyesight problems to repetitive strain injury and stress-related illnesses, there are many ailments that plague the typical office worker. Can we reduce the negative impact of office work with good office ergonomics, and how exactly do we do that?

## Employer responsibilities

All employers have a duty to protect the health and safety of employees, regulated under the Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) 1974. This includes ensuring that workers are protected from workplace hazards, illnesses and injuries, and that a worker's duties do not lead to their physical or mental welfare being compromised.

In addition, the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 cover specific issues related to health risks posed by working on Display Screen Equipment (DSE), which includes computers, laptops, tablets, smartphones and any other device with a display screen. Workers using these devices must be given adequate training and regular breaks, and employers are also responsible for vision screening tests and corrective eyewear, if the eyewear is required as a result of DSE work.

## How is employee health impacted?

Health and safety at work is a serious issue, with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) estimating that 1.4 million UK workers are suffering from work-related ill health of some kind. Office workers suffer from a range of minor and major health problems related to issues such as sedentary work, long periods of time spent seated, display

screen use, keyboard use and general repetitive movements. The HSE has a specific section on office health and safety that addresses a range of factors and solutions. One solution that may help your employees is to consider office ergonomics.

## Ergonomic workstations

Paying attention to office ergonomics can go a long way when it comes to protecting the health of office workers. An ergonomic workstation is simply one that supports the safe and healthy positioning of the body while working. This will generally include the display screen being an arm's length away from the worker's face, the keyboard being positioned so that wrists are straight and hands are at or below elbow level, and a chair set at a height that allows the knees to be level with the hips when feet are flat on the floor, or on a foot rest.

It is possible to buy ergonomic office furniture, including ergonomic chairs that support workers' spinal curves, and foot rests to ensure that feet are always flat on the floor when seated. It is also possible to ensure that workstations are set up for optimal health by making minor adjustments to your employees' work areas.



CONTINUED... ►►



The Mayo Clinic highlights several adjustments that can be made to ensure that your office ergonomics are supporting employee health.

#### Lifestyle issues

The NHS has also called attention to how lifestyle issues can impact the health of office workers. Office work is generally fairly sedentary, and most office workers

sit for long periods each day. Guidance from an expert panel, commissioned by Public Health England, suggests that office workers should stand up for at least two hours a day and generally be more active.

Sitting for too long is linked not only to common minor health complaints but also to issues such as cardiovascular

disease and diabetes. Along with ergonomic chairs and other workstation adjustments, it is likely that many office workers could benefit from the option of standing desks in order to spend a little less time sitting each day.

#### Long-term impact – the work colleague of the future

The innovative office solutions provider Fellowes has created a life-size representation of what the office worker of the future might look like if we continue to ignore office ergonomics and work with badly designed workstations. Emma – Colleague of the Future is based on the results of a report developed with behavioural futurist William Higham and a panel of experts in ergonomics, occupational health and wellbeing at work. This hypothetical office worker of the future suffers a variety of ailments and issues linked to current office conditions in many workplaces. The ailments include:

- A permanently bent back
- Varicose veins
- A rotund stomach
- Dry, red eyes
- Swollen wrists and ankles
- Sallow skin
- Eczema
- Red forearms and upper legs
- Swollen sinuses and hairs on the ears and nose

These ailments are a result of a sedentary lifestyle, too much sitting, a lack of natural light, and poor indoor air quality, among other things. They may seem drastic, but the report they are based on included a survey that revealed that nine out of 10 British office workers are already suffering some level of poor health due to their work environment.

It is easy to brush off the minor ailments that most office workers suffer as being a natural consequence of a more sedentary, office-based economy. After all, traditional industries such as farming and coal mining were hardly danger-free. However, the dangers of long-term office work are potentially serious, and, most importantly, can probably be avoided. It's time for companies to pay attention to the importance of office ergonomics, and invest in creating office workstations that support employee health.



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Emma - work colleague of the future was created by Fellowes, the healthy workspace specialists: [www.fellowes.com/emma](http://www.fellowes.com/emma). ©Fellowes Ltd 2020.

# Ask **the** expert...

**Do you have a question related to Health & Safety or Workplace Law?**

Our experts are IOSH accredited and ready to answer your questions.

**What statutory inspections are required by law for our plant and equipment?**

**One of our workers has had an accident, is it reportable under RIDDOR?**

**What do we need to cover when we deliver H&S training?**

## How to 'Ask the expert'

1. Go to [www.seton.co.uk/legislationwatch](http://www.seton.co.uk/legislationwatch)
2. Click on the red 'Ask the expert' tab at top of page
3. Enter your question on the form
4. We will respond via email within 48 hours!



# Working from home safely

As much of the UK workforce starts working from home due to coronavirus, employers need to take measures to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of their employees. Here are a few of the issues to look at.

## Legal responsibilities

An employer's duty of care to their employees doesn't end when they are working from home. All health and safety legislation still applies and employers have a responsibility to carry out a risk assessment to ensure that their employees' home working conditions are suitable. Depending on circumstances, this could include the lighting, ventilation, temperature, and equipment being used.

## Devices and equipment

It's important that employers make it clear what equipment will be provided, who is permitted to access it, whether equipment needs to be insured and who will arrange and pay for this. The employer is responsible for the equipment and devices supplied to homeworkers, but the homeworker has responsibilities to ensure that the equipment is used appropriately during the work-from-home period.

## Security issues

According to the 2018 Mobile Security Report, over half of CIOs in the US suspected their remote workers had experienced security hacks in the last year. It is vital that procedures are put in place to ensure online security and data protection. These include two-factor authentication for logging in to company systems, and secure cloud-based software for storing data and documents.

## Workstation set ups

Home workstations should be set up to comply with Display Screen Equipment (DSE) regulations, which can be found on the Health and Safety Executive website. It is the employer's responsibility to ensure that home workstations are set up in a way that protects the health and safety of employees.

## Managing employees and monitoring work

Technology means it's easier than ever to manage a remote workforce, but there will certainly be adjustments to make. Clear deadlines and whole team communication will become more important than ever. Many companies will find that centralised, cloud-based software solutions are an excellent option. Projects can be managed online, from one dashboard, and everyone with access to the software will be updated as tasks are completed.

## Communication

Online communication options make it easy to stay in touch with colleagues and continue to collaborate. It's important that everyone knows the protocol and what is expected of them. Software such as Skype and Zoom can be useful for one-on-one or group meetings. Online workspaces such as Slack and Trello can be used to make

communication easier and allow teams to collaborate.

## Flexible working

Amid the coronavirus crisis, working hours may need to be more flexible than usual. Homeworkers are likely to be not just working from home, but working from home with their children, or supporting vulnerable family members in various ways. While set working hours can be helpful for everyone involved, employers will need to build in some flexibility to allow workers to meet both work and personal commitments in these unusual times.

## Employee wellbeing

Employee wellbeing is still the responsibility of the employer, and now more than ever, people will be feeling anxious and isolated. The ability to just pop in and talk to a manager or HR professional has been removed. So it's vital that all employees know who to contact if they experience wellbeing or mental health issues while they are working from home.

Employees often report that they do not take natural breaks at home which can be a concern, especially when using DSE – setting alarms or calendar reminders to ensure regular breaks are taken can be highly beneficial. It can also be helpful for workers to set ground rules when other family members are home to minimise distractions and ensure a positive work-life balance.

## Creating a work from home policy

A clear, well-designed work from home policy can ensure that employees work from home effectively and productively. This policy should be available to all employees, and should lay out aspects such as employer expectations, work processes, preferred communication channels, working hours and flexibility.

## Will this cause a permanent shift towards homeworking?

There are, generally speaking, many advantages to working from home. It tends to result in reduced costs, as workplace overheads go down, increased productivity for many workers, a lower staff turnover and a better work/life balance. Working from home in these challenging times, however, is also likely to result in employees feeling more isolated and experiencing challenges to mental health and wellbeing.

There is speculation that this enforced work-from-home period could result in a permanent shift towards working from home in the future. While it's likely that there will always be a need for traditional workplaces, this is certainly a time to reflect on how you can improve efficiency and support flexibility, by incorporating remote work options into your company's future.



# Preventing injuries around machinery



Working with machinery means that accident prevention should always be a top priority. The Health and Safety Executive reports that over 580,000 workers sustain non-fatal injuries at work annually. There are many causes for these injuries, but some of them are due to machinery being misused or used without adequate safety precautions.

## Employer responsibilities

Employers have a responsibility to keep their workers safe and guard against injuries and accidents when employees use machinery at work. Details are laid out in the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER) 1998.

## Types of hazards

There are several hazards to be aware of when working with machinery. A worker can trap a body part in a machine, or get their clothing, hair or jewellery caught. Workers can also be crushed by machinery or moving parts, hit by loose machine parts, or injure themselves on parts of the machine, such as sharp edges or hot surfaces.

## A hazard-free environment

In areas where there is a danger of injury because of the machinery being used, it is vital to carry out a proper risk assessment and deal with any hazards that are identified. If possible, hazards should be removed completely. If hazards are inevitable due to the type of machinery being used, then the risk of injury should be reduced as much as possible, by whatever means necessary.

## Reducing risk of injury

There are few ways to make work machinery as safe as possible. All

workplace equipment should be fitted with safety guards when possible and safety signs should be displayed. Work equipment with safety design and controls should be used wherever possible. This may include emergency stop controls, lockout/tagout equipment to prevent machinery being accidentally turned on, and 'fail-safe' systems that stop the machine when a fault is detected. It is also vital that employers provide machinery that is suitable for purpose and complies with all safety regulations and standards.

## Creating a safer work environment

There are several further steps that employers can take to ensure that those operating machinery are kept as safe as possible. Providing adequate training for all machine operators is vital, as is providing supervision to ensure that procedures are followed. Part of this training should cover the importance of using personal protective equipment (PPE) such as safety helmets, work gloves and eye protection. It is also vital that every organisation follows a strict schedule regarding the inspection and maintenance of all work equipment, including safety guards and other safety devices attached to machinery.

## Seton recommends...



Style No. MD016A5ARP

## Dos and Don'ts for employers when employees work with machinery...

### Do:

- Fit safety guards and other safety devices where necessary
- Ensure that everyone is well-trained and adequately supervised
- Provide the right kind of PPE, and safety signage to remind workers to use it

### Don't:

- Cut costs by buying machinery that is unsuitable or lacks safety features
- Get behind on maintenance and inspection schedules
- Allow untrained staff or those not wearing the correct PPE to operate machinery

Injuries at work are not uncommon, but having the correct accident prevention strategies in place can make them much less likely and reduce their severity.



# Dangers IN THE CAR PARK

If your business maintains a car park for the use of staff or customers, it may not be an area that's top of your mind when it comes to health and safety issues. Maybe it should be, however. There are several potential risks surrounding your car park, including accidents involving both vehicles and pedestrians. Here are some common car park hazards that you may want to try to prevent or eliminate.

## Vehicle collisions

Bumps and prangs are common in car parks, and can sometimes be due to poor layout or organisation. To help prevent collisions, you need clear road markings and signage to guide traffic through your car park, preferably one-way traffic routes, as well as clearly marked and well-maintained parking spaces that are large enough to accommodate larger vehicles. You will also want to ensure that you keep delivery areas and loading bays clear, and consider separate areas for vehicles that don't require much space, such as motorcycles, scooters and small cars.

## Pedestrian safety

By definition, car parks are areas with a lot of foot traffic, as drivers and passengers need to cross the car park to get to their vehicles. To avoid accidents, ensure that you have clear, marked routes through the

car park for pedestrians. Place disabled parking and any parent and child parking as close to your visitors' end destination as possible to ensure minimal time spent in the car park for these groups. You will need adequate lighting to increase visibility of signage and trip hazards for pedestrians, and this will also increase the visibility of pedestrians for drivers.

## Potholes

Potholes present a risk of damage to vehicles, and are particularly hazardous to cyclists, motorcyclists and users of mobility scooters. They can also be a serious trip hazard for pedestrians. Monitor your car park and ensure that potholes are taken care of as soon as possible. Mark them clearly with cones or hazard tape until they can be dealt with using an instant pothole repair product.

## Poor signage

Well-planned and maintained car parking signage can go a long way to preventing accidents in your parking area. The right signs can indicate traffic direction, speed restrictions, no entry areas, exits and entrances, loading and delivery bays, and various potential hazards. Think through your needs carefully and make sure that all signs are well-placed, relevant and necessary. Too many signs, or irrelevant signs, can just confuse people. It is also vital to check signs regularly as they can become dirty, damaged or broken.

## Environmental risks

Various environmental risks can impact the safety of your car park throughout the year. Monitor weather conditions and their effect on health and safety in your parking area. In the colder months, you

should have trained staff, or a contractor, available to de-ice surfaces, clear snow, and grit both the car park and surrounding walkways. It is also essential to monitor fallen leaves, which can not only cause a slip hazard when wet but also clog drainage systems and cause flooding. Overhanging trees and shrubs can also cause damage to cars and pedestrians. See if these can either be removed or closely monitored to prevent potential danger to car park users.

## Poor lighting

Poor lighting in car parks is a common reason for vehicle accidents and pedestrian injuries, and can also make your parking area vulnerable to crime. Provide adequate lighting at night, in poor visibility conditions and, of course, in any indoor car park. Ensure that signs and potential hazards are clearly illuminated and don't forget to check regularly that your lighting is working properly.

## Theft

Theft from car parks is fairly common, which is unsurprising when you consider that thousands of pounds worth of property is sitting in them each day, both in the form of the vehicles themselves and any valuable contents in those vehicles. Car park security should therefore be a high priority, and it is worth considering precautions, including CCTV and barriers. If your car park does not have security systems in place, remember to clearly display a sign warning users of this and reminding drivers to lock cars and take valuables with them.

Making your car park a safer place is simple enough, and well worth the effort to prevent accidents and protect your staff and customers.

## Seton recommends...



Style No. KF-PR



Style No. TRF0217HP



Style No. TRAF728

Further information can be found at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/workplacetransport/parking.htm>.



It has recently been confirmed that from 2020 onwards, the government will make first aid training compulsory in English schools. First aid will be taught as part of the health education curriculum in all government-funded schools, and will be delivered at an age-appropriate level in both primary and secondary schools.

The University of Warwick states that fewer than one in 10 cardiac arrest victims in the UK survive outside of a hospital setting, but survival rates are highest among patients who receive bystander CPR and public access defibrillation. However, knowledge of CPR, defibrillator use, and other first aid principles is fairly limited, with the British Heart Foundation reporting that nearly a third of UK adults would not attempt CPR as they would not feel confident in their ability to carry it out correctly.

It is hoped that teaching first aid in schools will give children the chance to learn life-saving skills, and help create a society that is well-versed in the best practices to follow in common medical emergencies. Schools will introduce skills appropriate for the age of the children including dealing with common injuries, how to make an emergency call, CPR and defibrillator use.

The Red Cross has already begun releasing lesson plans suitable for use with children from seven to 16, covering

things such as burns and scalds, bleeding and shock, treating bites and stings, and what to do if someone is choking or having an asthma attack.

With a pilot scheme already running in 1,600 English schools, teachers are getting ready for the full roll-out of the new programme from September 2020. For now, teaching first aid in schools will only be compulsory in England, but the Red Cross is calling for it to be extended to other parts of the UK as soon as possible.

# Compulsory first aid in schools

Seton recommends...



Style No. 303BEB100



Style No. FAD2050



Style No. FAD2013



# INFECTION control in the workplace

Infection control in the workplace is a vital aspect of health and safety planning that can get overlooked. Often, our main focus is on preventing accidents and injuries in the workplace. It can take a major news event, such as the recent outbreak of the coronavirus, to remind us how easily these serious and occasionally deadly infections can be spread.

The coronavirus is not the only health scare that we have had in recent times, of course. SARS, Ebola and other major outbreaks worldwide are always a concern. Many other minor infections may not be fatal, but they can quickly spread through a workplace environment, jeopardising the health of your employees and customers, so it is vital to ensure that infection control is prioritised in your workplace.

#### What do I need to know about infection control?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has provided guidelines on how to contain and limit the spread of infections in the workplace. It advises that while there are extra precautions to be taken in certain workplaces (such as laboratories and healthcare facilities), all workplaces should be aware of the importance of infection control at work. The HSE has produced a report called 'Infection at work: Controlling the Risks', which can be accessed at its website.



As is the case with the coronavirus, many infections are spread through both direct and indirect contact. This means that touching the same equipment and surfaces as an infected person can spread the virus. Many viruses are, of course, also airborne, meaning that following good etiquette regarding coughing and sneezing is essential to prevent others from being infected.

#### How can I support infection control at work?

The main thing to be aware of is that anyone can be infectious. Some illnesses and viruses are contagious

before any symptoms are present, and these are the ones that tend to spread far and wide, as those that harbour the illness are completely unaware that they are infectious.

As a preventative measure, it is essential that infection control and hygiene procedures are in place in the workplace. One of the first steps you can take is to enforce the recommended 2 metre social distancing rule between colleagues. You may need to make some adjustments to your workplace layout to accommodate this. Hand hygiene is perhaps most important. All employees should be encouraged to wash their hands thoroughly and regularly with soap and water.

Hand-sanitising gel can also be helpful, and it may be advisable to set up hand sanitisation points around the workplace.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is another potential hazard. It's particularly vital that people within your workplace do not share items such as protective masks or earplugs, and any PPE should be either disposable or properly and regularly cleaned to prevent the spread of infection.

It is also vital to:

- Dispose of all clinical waste carefully
  - Keep surfaces and equipment clean
  - Clean and disinfect work areas regularly
  - Not cough and sneeze into sleeves or hands
  - Avoid touching the face if possible, as this transfers germs onto hands
- Follow these simple guidelines, and you should be able to control, or at least limit, the spread of infections in the workplace.



# The damaging effects of micromanagement

**Micromanagement is undoubtedly a subtle but significant problem in many work environments, with almost 60% of workers reporting that they have experienced micromanagement at work.**

Micromanagers exert excessive levels of influence over workers, and effectively reduce their ability to organise their own time, tasks and priorities. It may not appear that micromanagement is violating any rules or regulations, but in fact employers all have a responsibility to protect their employees' welfare, and the many negative aspects of micromanagement can cause this to suffer. Here are a few of the potentially devastating effects that micromanagement could be having in your workplace.

## Decreased productivity

Research suggests that most office workers are fully productive for less than three of the eight or more hours they typically spend at work each day. The reasons for this lack of focused productivity are varied, but micromanagement is often one of the culprits. Constant surveillance and corrections slow down work flow, and being unsure that a manager will accept an autonomous decision makes employees less likely to go ahead without seeking approval, even on minor issues.

## Increased staff turnover

Many employees cite micromanagement as an issue that causes them to leave their job, and the most capable employees are, unsurprisingly, the most likely to find the issue unbearable. What's more, staff turnover can make the issue worse over time, as managers feel the need to monitor new and less experienced staff more closely.

## Low morale

A survey from AccountTemps claims that 68% of staff who said that they had been micromanaged also said that it had had a negative impact on their morale. This is unsurprising as high morale is often linked to a sense of autonomy and

respect as well as having your ideas recognised and appreciated by others. Micromanaged staff tend to feel that their manager neither respects nor appreciates them.

## Lack of trust

There are few workplace practices that make employees feel a lack of trust quite as much as micromanagement. It tends to give employees the impression that managers don't trust them to make decisions, even on basic things such as which task to tackle next. This lack of trust can become mutual over time, as it is difficult to trust in someone who does not show trust in you.

Micromanagement can consequently lead to a distrustful, and therefore disloyal, attitude throughout the workplace.

## Less teamwork

Micromanagement can discourage teamwork, as employees end up working directly with the micromanager, and certainly do not feel like they have the autonomy to discuss their work or throw

ideas around with other colleagues. This can have a devastating impact not only on employee satisfaction but also on creativity and collaboration, both of which can potentially lead to better performance and higher profits.

## Health problems

While it is hard to link micromanagement and health problems directly, any worker who experiences unnecessary micromanagement will tell you that it can be a stressful way to operate. A lack of autonomy has been linked to mental health issues, and there is evidence that autonomy and longevity are closely linked. Even chronically ill people may live longer when they have a sense of autonomy. It is reasonable to suggest, then, that micromanagement in the workplace is bad for employees' long-term health.

## Reduced innovation

Innovation is often the result of employee empowerment and engagement, the encouragement of creative thinking, and free collaboration with colleagues. All these things are stifled by micromanagement, leaving little room for employees to innovate. Micromanagers tend to make it clear that they do not want employees stepping out of their tightly defined roles or coming up with changes, improvements and new ideas.

## Job security is often questioned

Operating under the critical and untrusting eye of a micromanaging boss, many employees feel that their job is at stake on a daily basis. This can breed disloyalty and a lack of commitment, and is also a factor in the increased staff turnover that we mentioned, as workers constantly keep an eye out for a better or more secure position.

## Personal relationships suffer

The stress and frustration that come with being micromanaged can often spill over into other areas of life, causing damage to personal relationships, in and out of the work environment. This can, in turn, cause further stress at work, creating a downward spiral in terms of emotional wellbeing and work performance.

The effects of micromanagement can indeed be devastating, having a negative impact on employee welfare, productivity, efficiency, and even a company's bottom line. It is well worth watching out for, and eliminating wherever possible, for the benefit of everyone involved.



# Q&As



**Q** A new employee has informed me that they have a severe nut allergy. What can I do to reduce the risk to this employee or do I need to make the whole site nut-free?

**A** The steps taken to manage the risk of allergens in the workplace should be proportionate to the level of risk posed to the employee which depends on the severity of their allergy. It may be possible that the level of risk can be controlled effectively by ensuring all employees are educated around allergens and informing them that a colleague has a specific allergy (if they are willing for this to be disclosed). You can also introduce other measures such as foods containing nuts are not to be stored or eaten in communal areas – the Anaphylaxis Campaign have some great advice on this at [anaphylaxis.org.uk](http://anaphylaxis.org.uk). If the allergy risk is so high then it may be appropriate to ban nuts on site, however this can be difficult to fully achieve depending on the nature of the workplace and if people who visit the site, so consideration will be needed in terms of how this can be as effective as possible.

# Q&As

**Q** The company I work for are moving premises soon and i've heard that there will only be gender-neutral toilets. I really don't feel comfortable with this, where do I stand?

**A** Many organisations have introduced gender-neutral facilities in workplaces over recent years, which has caused some debate both for and against. Gender-neutral toilets are legal, however there is a requirement under The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 in that 'sanitary conveniences shall not be suitable unless separate rooms containing conveniences are provided for men and women except where and so far as each convenience is in a separate room the door of which is capable of being secured from inside'. If your employer complies with this, in that each gender-neutral toilet is enclosed in a self-contained locking room, then they will meet their legal duty, however, if this is not the case then they will be breaching their legal duty to provide appropriate sanitary facilities.





# News ROUND UP

# April 2020



## Scout Association put young lives at risk

The Assistant Coroner for North Wales and Central has reported safety breaches by the Scout Association that put the lives of young people at risk. This came after 16-year-old Ben Leonard died in 2018 after falling from the Great Orme in Llandudno while on a trip with the Association. A second inquest is expected to take place on 13 July.



## What3words

Police have urged the public to download a smartphone app that has already saved several lives. What3words is a geocoding system for pinpointing an exact location. The app developers divided the world into 57 trillion, 3m by 3m squares and each square is assigned a unique, three-word address. The app has already been adopted by 35 English and Welsh emergency services.



## Luxury spa chain fined

A prosecution has been launched against Champneys on 19 charges relating to food safety, information, nutrition and consumer protection laws. The luxury spa chain failed to inform guests it had a food hygiene rating of two and also claimed their apple crumble could reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer. The case was adjourned after the county council and Champneys agreed on how the charges would be dealt with.

## Carlsberg to be sentenced

Carlsberg has pleaded guilty to breaching two health and safety laws following the death of a factory worker who inhaled deadly ammonia during a toxic leak in 2016. The employee was sent to carry out repairs to a compressor when gas escaped from a valve and exploded in his face. They will be sentenced at a later date.



## Outdoor workers exposed to 15% more pollution

As part of the British Safety Councils 'Time to Breathe' campaign, an app has been developed to provide individuals with a read out of the air pollution they are exposed to at work. The first data release shows that outdoor workers are at more risk of pollution exposure than the average Londoner. The WHO says that air pollution is now the world's largest single environmental health risk.



## Amazon safety incidents

The GMB Trade Union has requested a Parliamentary inquiry into Amazon's working conditions after 600 serious injuries or near misses have been reported in the past three years. Amazon released a statement in response to the allegations stating they have 43% fewer injuries on average than other transportation and warehousing companies in the UK.

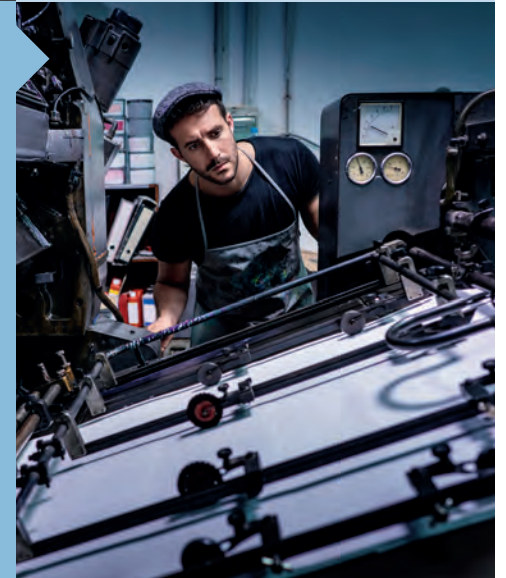


## 40% think employing homeless people is illegal

A recent survey carried out by YouGov and commissioned by BITC, found that two in five employers believe it is illegal to employ someone who is homeless. The poll also found that 17% (one in five) were concerned it would have a negative impact on their employees. Campaigners say there is still a huge stigma around employing some of the most disadvantaged in society.

## Banknote printer fined

De La Rue, the company that prints the UK's banknotes, has admitted breaching section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act. The company was fined £300,000 after a worker got his head trapped in a paper press machine and had to endure a nine-hour facial reconstruction operation following the incident. The company failed to provide a safe system of work for removing broken paper from the machine.



## Fire enforcement notice for Victoria Coach Station

'A catalogue of major fire risks' was found at London's Victoria Coach Station after concerns were raised by fire experts. Holes in walls, broken sprinklers and unclear fire escape signage were among the many safety failings. Described as a "walking disaster area" for the 14 million passengers, a fire enforcement notice was issued.



## Employers named and shamed

Following a government review of the current scheme, businesses that fail to pay their workers the National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage will continue to be publicly named and shamed. The threshold for naming employers has increased from £100 to £500, giving businesses a chance to correct their mistakes without being named. These businesses will still have to pay back workers and can face up to 200% of the arrears in fines.





## Knowledge Centre: Help & Advice

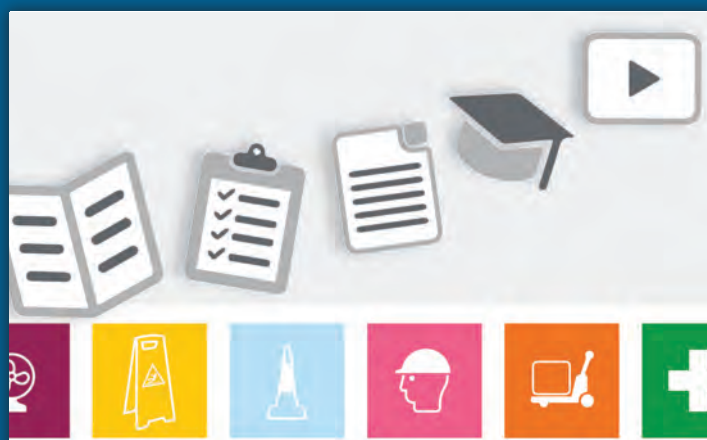
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