



Wilkins Safety Group

Monday, 2nd June 2014

Inside this Issue

1. Top 5 Fire Management Tips to Protect your Business!
2. Stonyhurst College prosecuted after stonemason develops lung disease
3. Fines imposed for reckless ladder work

Welcome to our latest Update E-Newsletter

As ever, please feel free to share this with friends and colleagues. You will also find PDF versions of all our other newsletters on our website: www.wilkinssafety.co.uk with lots more useful information and a wealth of leaflets covering Health and Safety topics.



This week we are looking at **FIRE** and what you can do to protect your business

We also have, as usual, a couple of recent HSE cases for you to consider. These look at:

- A historic private school in Clitheroe has been fined £100,000 over health and safety failings after one of its stonemasons developed a potentially fatal lung disease..
- A foolhardy roofer has appeared in court after footing a double extension ladder on a transit van in order to access a third floor façade.

<<< >>>

Top 5 Fire Management Tips to Protect your Business!

Here we are in 2014 and the number of fires in the UK has fallen significantly, which is good news - yet fire still remains a life-threatening risk to many businesses and households. So this week we thought we pass on 5 top fire management tips to help you protect your business.



In 2011 and 2012, fire and rescue authorities attended to more than **272,000** fires of which more than **380** were fatal.

Luckily, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has put in place measures that are bound to cut down on preventable fires significantly. Regular fire risk assessment is one of the suggested methods.

Though it is highly advisable to use a qualified and accredited fire safety expert for your assessment, it is equally important that you have some basic fire management and assessment knowledge and here are some of the basic ones:

1. Identify Potential Ignition Sources

You need to identify all those materials that might cause and/or fuel a fire and the oxygen sources that will help it burn. A potential source would include a source of heat that could get hot enough and cause a fire. You need to look out for indications of near misses like charred electrical plugs, scorch marks on furniture, discoloured plugs among others. This is a simple way of spotting overlooked hazards.

While identifying the oxygen sources that will help the materials to burn faster, it is important for you to understand that air flow is majorly categorised into two sources that is the mechanical and the natural air flow. Natural air flow is the air that circulated through, doors and windows. On the other hand mechanical air flow depends on mechanical devices like air conditioners that have been put in place to help with air circulation. Many homes and businesses alike will have both systems working hand in hand and so it is important for you to understand every aspect about them so that you can easily shut them down in case of a fire.

2. Identify those at Risk

It is important for you to identify all the people who are at risk in case of a fire outbreak. You need to identify the number of people working in such sectors and also the number of people visiting such sites at any given time.

You also need to identify and have the exact figures of people with disabilities or those who might have a problem leaving the premises promptly in case of a fire. These will include physically challenged people, old people, or parents with children. It is also important for you to have a record of people who work alone such as security staff and cleaners.

3. Evaluate

You need to evaluate the probability of a fire starting. Examine the entire premise for any omissions, acts, or accidents that may cause a fire to start. This may need you to actually carry out a mock drill to test your safety preparedness. Once you have identified the risks, it is time for you to reduce or completely remove the causes of fire if practicable.

4. Record

After evaluation, it is now time for you to record findings including action taken to mitigate fires. Recording of findings is not only important but also a requirement by the Fire Safety Law.

5. Train

It is also important that your staff have basic fire fighting strategies and receive adequate fire safety training such as a Fire warden.

You need to carry out regular fire risk assessments and remember that if a near miss or a fire occurs, then that means that the existing assessment is not working and you need re-assessment from a qualified fire risk assessment expert.

[The Wilkins Safety Group](http://www.wilkinssafety.co.uk) is home to highly qualified and experienced fire assessment experts who will easily and immediately assess your premise for fire risks. Contact us today for immediate help on [01458 253682](tel:01458253682) or email: info@wilkinssafety.co.uk

<<< >>>

Stonyhurst College prosecuted after stonemason develops lung disease

A historic private school in Clitheroe has been fined £100,000 over health and safety failings after one of its stonemasons developed a potentially fatal lung disease.



The 55-year-old from West Derby, near Liverpool, who has asked not to be named, was employed by Stonyhurst College for almost 12 years where he was exposed to high levels of silica dust. He was diagnosed with silicosis in July 2011 – four months before being made redundant by the college.

Stonyhurst was prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) today (29 May) after an investigation found that he and other stonemasons may have been exposed to more than 80 times the daily limit for silica dust.

Preston Crown Court was told the college employed the stonemason as a member of staff in June 1999 as the 200-year-old college buildings needed extensive repairs for wind and weather-proofing.

A second stonemason was employed in April 2005 and a third in January 2009 to help with a major project to build a new four-storey, sixth-form building.

The 21-month project required more than 400 tonnes of sandstone and the stonemasons spent their time working intensively with powered hand tools cutting, shaping, chiselling and finishing the sandstone.

The HSE investigation found Stonyhurst failed to take any measures to monitor or reduce the exposure of workers to silica dust, despite sandstone containing between 70% and 90% of crystalline silica.

The court heard that the college failed to recognise the risks and no equipment was used to remove, capture or suppress the dust that was created by the use of the stonemasons' tools.

Two of the stonemasons worked regularly in the college workshop, which had no windows and no way of extracting the sandstone dust despite an extraction system being fitted in the neighbouring joinery workshop in 2004.

Even after the college was notified that one of the stonemasons had developed silicosis in July 2011, it failed to take any action to monitor exposure levels until its two remaining stonemasons were made redundant in November 2011.

The stonemason with silicosis has suffered serious and irreversible health effects as a result of his exposure. He has a reduced lung function, suffers from breathlessness and can no longer continue with his profession.

Stonyhurst was fined £100,000 and ordered to pay £31,547.78 in prosecution costs after pleading guilty to a breach of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 by failing to ensure the health and safety of its employees.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE Inspector Mike Mullen said:

“Stonyhurst directly employed stonemasons over a 12-year period but it failed to take any action to ensure its employees weren't exposed to high levels of silica dust.

“During the construction of the sixth-form building, the work of the stonemasons intensified. We estimate that they were regularly exposed to silica dust at a level which was in excess of 80 times greater than the workplace exposure limit.

“There was no attempt by the college to assess and manage its workers’ exposure despite having their attention drawn to the risks by its own health and safety consultant in 2008.

“A worker who was previously very active now struggles to play outside with his grandchildren, and will suffer breathing difficulties for the rest of his life.

“Silicosis is irreversible and can be a fatal disease. It leads to an increased chance of suffering from lung cancer, tuberculosis, kidney disease and arthritis, and it’s therefore vital the risk from silica dust is taken seriously.”

Information on how to work safely with silica dust and prevent silicosis is available from [The Wilkins Safety Group](http://www.wilkinssafety.co.uk) on 01458 253682 or email: info@wilkinssafety.co.uk

<<< >>>

Fines imposed for reckless ladder work

A foolhardy roofer has appeared in court after footing a double extension ladder on a transit van in order to access a third floor façade.



George Nicholls, 25, blatantly risked harming himself and others as he used the ladder to paint a shop frontage on St Marys Road in Southampton on 14 March 2013.

His reckless exploits were captured on camera by a council environmental health officer following a tip-off from a concerned member of the public.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigated and (23 May) prosecuted Mr Nicholls for safety failings alongside the company that paid him to undertake the work.

Southampton Magistrates’ Court heard Mr Nicholls, trading as Laser Roofing London and South East Roofing Limited, had been sub-contracted by Norfolk-based Maintenance 24-7 Ltd for the paint job because the company did not possess the correct equipment or expertise.

Ladders were specified as the chosen method of work, but after the finding the façade was higher than the ladder he had with him, the roofer opted to improvise.

He placed it on the roof of his van and worked from it fully-extended some eight metres above the ground with a labourer providing the footing.

The court was told this system was fraught with risk. Not only could Mr Nicholls or his labourer have fallen, but there was no form of segregation to prevent vehicles or pedestrians from passing under or near the work area. So they could have been struck by falling equipment or materials.

HSE established that the van in question was also parked over a bus stop on a busy road with double yellow lines – indicating a further lack of regard or awareness.

Magistrates heard a pavement licence should have been obtained to create a properly segregated safe-working area, and that scaffolding or a mobile elevated work platform would have provided a safer option for accessing the façade.

Maintenance 24-7 Ltd, of King Street, King's Lynn, admitted a breach of Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and a further breach of the Work at Height Regulations 2005. The company was fined £10,000 with £784 in costs.

George Nicholls, of Hogs Pudding Lane, Newdigate, Surrey, was fined a total of £4,000 and ordered to pay £666 in costs after pleading guilty to breaching Sections 2(1) and (3(1) of the same Act.

After the hearing, HSE Inspector Frank Flannery commented:

“The photographic evidence speaks for itself in terms of the risks created. Anyone can see the system of work is plain wrong, so why a supposedly competent roofer chose to work in this way is anyone’s guess.

“George Nicholls blatantly and recklessly risked harming himself and others, and he did so on behalf of Maintenance 24-7 Ltd, who had clear duties of their own to ensure the work at height was properly planned, managed and executed in a safe manner.

“The standards of both parties fell far below those required, and I would like to thank the concerned member of the public who initially brought the matter to the council’s attention.”

For further information about working safely at height visit www.wilkinssafety.co.uk

<<< >>>

Those of you, who also follow our [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages, will have seen that we photographed a thatcher doing something similar only a few weeks ago!

<<< >>>



If you have any queries on any health and safety matter, please contact Jon Wilkins on [01458 253682](tel:01458253682) or by email on jon@wilkinssafety.co.uk



Your Business is
Safer in Our Hands