



OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY & RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Legionnaires Disease Risks in textiles & clothing businesses

Following some well-publicised outbreaks involving fatalities, Health & Safety Executive (HSE), along with other law enforcing authorities, are continuing extensive enforcement checks on legionella risks.

Reviews of legionella illness (initially flu-like symptoms) outbreaks in the UK have identified cooling towers and evaporative condensers as responsible for the majority of cases. However, any water system, with the right environmental conditions, can promote legionella bacteria growth.

A legionella risk assessment is required if any of the factors below exist:

A reasonably foreseeable legionella risk exists if a water system:

- has a water temperature between 20 – 45 °C
- holds stagnant water e.g. deadlegs, such as pipes to a machine that is no longer, or infrequently used
- creates and/or spreads breathable droplets, e.g. aerosols from cooling towers, sprays or water outlets
- stores and/or re-circulates water likely to contain a source of food for the organism, e.g. presence of sludge, scale or the fouling normally found in open systems

The most common sources of legionella in man-made water systems include:

- Cooling towers and evaporative condenser systems (often used in textile processing)
- Hot and cold water systems

Legionella is also possible in and spread from:

- Humidifiers
- Air washers (and any untreated standing/ stagnant water in plant and pipe dead-legs)
- Emergency / infrequently used showers & eye wash plant

Legionella audit checklists & DVD can be downloaded from:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/ck02.pdf>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/legionella/index.htm>

Contact us if you would like assistance or guidance on assessing risks.

First aid, treatment & accident reporting

Recent changes to First Aid at Work regulations have opened the field to provide first aid training. As a minimum, a low-risk workplace such as a small office should have a first-aid box and a person appointed to take charge of first-aid arrangements, such as calling the emergency services if necessary. Employers must provide information about first-aid arrangements to their employees.

Workplaces with more significant risks are likely to need trained first aiders. Simple Guidance on first aid requirements can be downloaded from: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid/faqs.htm#first-aiders>

Where intermediate treatment is required NHS "Walk-in Centres" are designed to deal with smaller but significant injuries much faster than overworked A&E and save you waiting time. You should find them efficient alternatives. Learn more your nearest centre on:



<http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/AboutNHSservices/Emergencyandurgentcareservices/Pages/Walk-incentresSummary.aspx>

Mandatory reporting of ill health, accident and dangerous incidents is covered by regulations known as RIDDOR. There have been many changes to these regulations recently aimed at simplification. In particular the following are now notifiable to HSE:

- 7 day disablement absence (excluding first day but including weekends)
- Work-related occupational disease e.g. RSI, asthma, occupational cancer, dermatitis
- 27 types of dangerous occurrences relevant to most workplaces
e.g. failures of lifting machines, pressure vessels, power & pipe lines, scaffolding and breathing apparatus, as well as explosions and accidental release of any substance that could cause injury

Industrial diseases where medically confirmed and 'Major injuries' and Dangerous Occurrences require immediate notification.

In event of any serious safety related incident you are advised to consult the RIDDOR guidance and reporting website at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/>

Safe use of Acetylene

New Acetylene Safety (England and Wales and Scotland) Regulations 2014

Acetylene is an extremely flammable gas and can form explosive atmospheres in the presence of air or oxygen.

A risk assessment must be undertaken by employers under DSEAR (Dangerous Substances & Explosive Atmospheres Regulations) when acetylene is liable to be present in workplaces and suitable controls put in place.

Acetylene gas is commonly used for welding in mechanics shops and poses additional hazards to other flammable gases, as it is also reactive. Under certain conditions, even in absence of any air or oxygen, it can decompose explosively. The Regulations include requirements for a flame arrestor .

It is recommended that acetylene gas is only used by those specially trained using suitably designed equipment. The HSE guidance - Working safely with acetylene INDG327 gives more detailed guidance.

New Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015

There are significant changes to the Regulations that will need to be addressed by the various duty-holders. The scope of the Regulations remains broad and will encompass many building and larger engineering projects within textile companies. For more please click [here](#).

Safety of spray guns in textile / garment industry

There is currently an Industry Alert.

A worker was injured checking jackets for quality, prior to dispatch. A solvent-based cleaning fluid in an electric spray bottle gun was used to spot clean stains. The worker sprayed fluid directly on the material and felt pain in their hand. Apparently the force of the gun pushed cleaning fluid through the garment and under the skin. The injury became very inflamed and infected and the worker was admitted to hospital for surgery. The surgeon had to open up the length of the finger to remove the fluid and poison, leaving extensive scarring and loss of movement.

The cleaning fluid was apparently supplied with a safety data sheet and would normally be fairly harmless. The company had a COSHH assessment that indicated surgical type gloves were recommended (but not obligatory)



and they were supplied. The use of gloves was suggested by the hazard of contact with the chemical over a period of time rather than a risk of injection injury.

The fluid was not used often and it would appear that the worker did not wear gloves in this case. Workers were trained in the use of the gun and were trained to spray the cleaning fluid onto a rag and then use the rag to clean, rather than spraying the garment direct.

This incident highlights the hazards of high-powered spray guns and similar equipment, which should *not* be used unless safely controlled by design and safe systems of work. Safety Data sheets should be obtained and assessed for all chemicals.

Recently Publicised Fines & Prosecutions of Textile Companies

Marquee & Fabric Companies fined after machinery accidents

A marquee manufacturer was fined when a finger was severed on an unguarded drill.

A fabric company has been fined after a teenage apprentice suffered severe injuries when his left arm was dragged around a machine roller. The 18-year-old was removing a crease from a roll of silk when his finger became caught, pulling him in up to his armpit. These companies failed to take effective measures to prevent access to dangerous moving parts.

Bedding firm fined for multiple safety failings

A bedding manufacturer has been fined £50,000 after inspections found machines unsafe to use. Health and Safety Executive (HSE) had to return to the company after finding missing and inadequate guarding.

Dyeing and Weaving Company fined for serious chemical safety failings

A worker suffered chronic breathing difficulties and was left disabled following his exposure to chemicals. A company health surveillance programme for both noise and chemicals had been stopped despite the risks. The small company was fined £20,000 and ordered to pay £10,000 towards costs. Suitable assessment and enclosure, ventilation, instruction and training is required for handling of dyes and chemicals. Failure of the company to provide surveillance regarding high noise exposures was also cited.

HSE Newsletter and further general guidance:

The new H&S Poster must now be displayed at each site or every employee provided with a copy of approved leaflet available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/lawposter.htm>

HSE Newsletter is now available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/newsletter.htm>