ACDM February Newsletter

Working in Confined Spaces - What you need to know

The definition of a confined space is any place, including any chamber, tank, vat, silo, pit, trench, pipe, sewer, flue, well or other similar space in which, by virtue of its enclosed nature, there arises a reasonably foreseeable specified risk. A specified risk means a risk of —

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(a) serious injury to any person at work arising from a fire or explosion;

(b) (i) the loss of consciousness of any person at work arising from an increase in body temperature; (ii) the loss of consciousness or asphyxiation of any person at work arising from gas, fume, vapour or the lack of oxygen; (c) the drowning of any person at work arising from an increase in the level of liquid; or

(d) the asphyxiation of any person at work arising from a free flowing solid or the inability to reach a respirable environment due to entrapment by a free flowing solid;

No person at work shall enter a confined space to carry out work for any purpose unless it is not reasonably practicable to achieve that purpose without such entry. Work in confined spaces should be a last resort to a task.

A safe system of work MUST be in place for workers in confined spaces and MUST be followed to the letter. There must also be an emergency plan in place for all forms of emergency including fire and loss of conciseness of the worker.

Training for working in entering a confined space will be purely at the employer's discretion, although training must be sufficient with respect to the present risks. It will depend on the previous experience of the worker and the length of time since the worker last carried out a similar task as well as the associated risks with the space in question. This should be evaluated for every task to take place in a confined space.

Regulations, guidance and approved code of practice - https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l101.htm

Consequences of Improper Control of Asbestos

Three separate stories have been published on the HSE website about prosecutions involving the mismanagement of asbestos. The 2012 Asbestos Regulations state the proper controls that need to be in place when dealing with asbestos and the HSE have lots of information regarding the topic freely available on their website for anyone who may be confused or wish to clarify what they should do.

The first story linked is the Newnham College which was fined £12,000 and had to pay costs of £4,450,28. They were found to have had no asbestos survey carried out after asbestos insulation debris had been found. One employee, who contaminated his gloves and clothing with loose asbestos, was found to have no asbestos awareness training. An asbestos survey is required on all projects that will disturb the building fabric or buildings built before the year 2000.

In the second story linked the client, Michael Cutmore, was fined £7,500 and sentenced to 120 hours of unpaid work and the building contractors, B and S BM limited, were fined £22,000 and ordered to pay costs of £5,000. During the inspection by the HSE they were found to be in possession of an asbestos survey that identified licensable work in order to remove it. This was ignored and the building was found to have been refurbished and partly demolished, spreading ACMs across the building and neighbouring properties. It is important that everyone is aware of the contents of any and all asbestos surveys. If any asbestos is found to be licensable an asbestos contractor will have to be brought in with no exceptions for the project to go ahead as planned.

The Third and final story linked below an employer is sentenced to prison time for failing to implement safe working practices. The firm was hired to demolish a former pig shed which contained asbestos cement sheets. Despite the

company having a plan of work in place which they had sent to the client which included safe working practices for removal of asbestos cement sheets these were ignored. This led to asbestos being broken up in large quantities and spread right across the site with further risk of spreading due to how exposed the asbestos was. The employer was sentenced to 12 weeks imprisonment, was suspended for 1 year and ordered to pay costs of £1,000.

Asbestos is a Highly toxic material and the consequences of exposure take years to reveal themselves by which time it is too late to reverse the effects. This is why it is so important that asbestos is managed correctly and should be removed in the correct procedures by competent contractors to limit as much as possible further exposure to the public.

https://press.hse.gov.uk/2020/01/15/college-fined-for-asbestos-failings/ https://press.hse.gov.uk/2020/01/16/client-and-construction-company-sentenced-after-failing-tocontrol-the-removal-of-asbestos/ https://press.hse.gov.uk/2020/01/31/employer-sentenced-for-failing-to-implement-safe-workingpractices-for-the-removal-asbestos/

Hot Works causes 4 out of 5 Construction Site Fires

It has been widely known the dangers of hot works in construction for a while and recent figures show that roughly 4 out 0f 5 fires are caused by uncontrolled hot works in Scotland. 180 fires were reported last year with 143 of these being found to be a result of hot works. These fires led to 21 casualties and likely millions of pounds in damages although this is just an assumption. These figures show why hot works should be so strictly controlled within the construction industry as they pose a very large risk to contractor health and have huge financial costs for all companies involved.



http://www.constructionmanagermagazine.com/news/construction-firms-warned-hot-works-fire-risk/

'Worlds First' Autonomous Services Excavation Robot

Underground services can be the bane of a good contractor as many sites do not come with exact locations of services so require expensive and time-consuming investigations to determine the exact location and nature of

buried services which will require either avoiding or removal.

UCL Robotics, partnered with SGN have developed what could be a world first autonomous machine that can scan a site for buried services and remove them without the need for any manual work. The project was named the Robotic Roadworks and Excavations System (RRES). The system combines an industrial robot with an allelectric drive system, below ground scanning sensors, artificial intelligence, machine vision, and new vacuum excavation methods.



This project has extreme benefits to companies such as SGN who operate up to 76,000km of underground services that need to be maintained. Traditionally this would be done by manual excavation and replacement which can all be replaced with one autonomous machine.

UCL robotics have released some impressive demo videos but do state that they are only at the mid-way point and still have a lot of work to do before the system is fully operational. The team is confident they will have a fully working model for commercial use ready in 2021.

http://www.constructionmanagermagazine.com/news/video-world-first-services-excavation-robotaction/ https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=097rC5WlJqA&feature=emb_logo

Should You Stay Off with A Cold?

Whether you should stay off work if you have a cold is an age-old question that everyone seems to have a different answer for and is the cause of many debates in the office. Everyone seems to have an opinion on the matter ranging from "if you aren't bed ridden you should be in work" to "you should stay home so to don't infect the office". But which is 'correct' or is there even a correct answer to this question.

There are so many factors involved here which makes it such a difficult question to answer. The size of your company and the type of work you do can play an important factor. For example, if you work with young children, pregnant women or the elderly then you should probably consider taking time off so that you don't infect the people you are caring for. Or, if you work for a small company you should consider taking the day off has small companies with few members of staff can't afford to have several people ill at the same time.

Another major factor is that colds affect everyone differently. Just because you may only be feeling 80% from the cold you may infect someone with a weaker immune system that could be hit a lot harder by, such as people with cystic fibrosis or people who have recently gone through chemotherapy although this may be a rare occurrence for the majority of work places.

Attitudes have also shifted over the years and the pressure in the workplace can be very extreme for some people. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) reported that the typical employee's number of sick days dropped to 5.9 in 2019- the lowest in the 19-year history of its annual survey of UK HR professionals. However, also reported is that 83% of HR professionals have observed someone working while ill and 63% have witnessed colleagues working while on annual leave. This comes down to the amount of work load that individuals have with many doing the workload of a person and a half. This means people are less likely to take time off as their already busy colleagues would have to cover for them and become even more stressed. This pressure can be amplified on self employed people and sole traders as they are not afforded the luxury of salaries with statutory sick pay and the attitude is to just get on with it.

Hayley Johnson, an employment lawyer at Slater and Gordon said, "Ultimately employees don't have to be bedbound to be unfit for work, GPs are quite happy to sign people off with what many people would regard as a lowlevel virus. Employers can sack people who they think are lying," she said, giving a hypothetical example of "somebody who calls in sick but then posts photographs of themselves [on social media] having afternoon tea with prosecco!"

The best approach to his situation is to consult your employer on the matter and find a system that works for both of you. Depending on the type of work you do it could be very simple to organise a day working from home to give yourself time to recover. You should also consider who you are likely to infect if you do decide to go to work under the weather as your choice could lead to large numbers of employees being ill.

Full story - https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-50813796

One Man's Rubbish Is Another Man's Treasure

5 Scottish councils (East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire) have joined together with waste management company Viridor to divert 190,000 tonnes of black bag waste from landfills each year and instead turn it into usable energy that can produce enough energy for 70,000 homes. In 2018 Scotland produced 1.03 million tonnes of waste that ended up in landfills according to the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA). That means that almost 20% of Scotland's waste that would otherwise be buried underground, is instead going to produce clean energy, this is a massive saving for the environment.

In order to make the project low carbon the waste is to be treated at Viridor's facility in Bargeddie in North Lanarkshire which will turn it into fuel that will generate roughly 258GWh of electricity. This is a massive step forward for helping Scotland as it aims to be a world leader in the battle against climate change.

For me however one question still remains, what is done with the leftover ash as this has not been mentioned in press releases as far as I am aware. Singapore has a similar scheme where all of their waste is treated and then

incinerated. Singapore however have created an ingenious scheme at the Semaku landfill. The landfill island has a capacity of roughly 60 million cubic meters which is enough to store the countries waste until 2045 with expectations that this deadline can be pushed back with waste reduction schemes. What makes this scheme ingenious is that it stores the waste in a completely safe way that actually helps promote biodiversity. The waste ash is stored in a large lagoon surrounded by impermeable membranes, a rock bund and silt screens. The



careful planning here means that corals and marine life are not affected and in fact still thrive in the surrounding waters.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-51120236 https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/469650/2018-household-waste-commentary.pdf https://www.gaiadiscovery.com/latest-places/pulau-semakau-where-garbage-creates-its-own-ecosystem

Updates to the Workplace Exposure Limits

The HSE have made updates to the acceptable workplace exposure limits. This involves either introduction or the alteration of limits of 13 hazardous substances. The following substances have been introduced or updated:

- Hardwood dusts (including mixed dusts)
- Chromium (VI) compounds
- Refractory ceramic fibres
- Respirable crystalline silica
- Vinyl chloride monomer
- Ethylene oxide
- 1,2-Epoxypropane
- Acrylamide
- 2-Nitropropane
- O-Toluidine
- 1,3-Butadiene
- Hydrazine
- Bromoethylene



Any work involving these substances will now be subject to stricter control measures to ensure the health of the employees carrying out the work.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/eh40.pdf

Mace to hit net Zero Carbon in 2020

Mark Reynolds, group CEO of MACE has announced that they will achieve net zero carbon emissions by the end of the year. This follows on from the company signing onto the RE100 commitment in 2017. The RE100 is a global commitment by organisations to use 100% renewable energies.

MACE has already been heavily focused on reducing their carbon footprint for the past 8 years under their "steps without footprint" strategy and are looking to accelerate their investment into green technologies in order to achieve the goal of net-zero. This accomplishment will set a very high standard for other large companies in the UK and around the world as the world moves towards a greener future.

https://www.constructionmanagermagazine.com/news/mace-hit-net-zero-carbon-target-year/



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