

September 2018

## In this edition:

- Worksafe in energy – Prospect’s new campaign
- Confirmed speakers at energy health and safety seminar
- TUC backs prospect on regulation
- New Prospect asbestos guide
- ‘No evidence’ MHFA improves management of mental health, says HSE
- Workplace inspection seminar for health and safety reps
- Mental health workbook
- MSD resources
- Exposure limits for 31 chemicals come into force

## Worksafe in energy – Prospect’s new campaign

Keep your eyes peeled for Worksafe, Prospect’s new health and safety campaign for the energy sector, which will be launching soon. A new webpage will direct you to key information on tackling the most pressing problems in the industry. We are also producing a series of eye-catching posters, like this one here, that you can print off and put up in your workplace.

## Confirmed speakers at energy health and safety seminar

Prospect is holding a health and safety seminar on 30 October 2018 on the topic of human and organisational factors, which is the theme of Powering Improvement in 2018.

Confirmed speakers include Ken Morton, an HSE inspector who carried out an investigation into the management of competency in the industry; Aaron Curtis, a Prospect H&S rep in the Air Traffic Control Officers’ branch, who is an expert in just culture; and Richard Gough, head of health, safety and environment at Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks.



The seminar, which will be held at New Prospect House in London, aims to raise reps' awareness of the principles of human and organisational factors – that systems, procedures, culture and leadership influence people's behaviour – and how they can be applied in the workplace.

To find out more about the event, [download the calling notice](#). You will need to log into the website as a member.

### **TUC backs prospect on regulation**

On Monday delegates at the Trades Union Congress in Manchester voted to back a motion from Prospect calling for a stronger focus on regulation and regulators in TUC industrial policy and campaigning on public services.

[Read more](#)

### **New Prospect asbestos guide**

Asbestos was banned nearly 20 years ago but it is still present in around 500,000 workplaces, putting millions of workers at risk of exposure each year. New Prospect guidance for members and reps explains building owners' obligations to manage asbestos and what health and safety reps can do to ensure their employers are meeting them.

[Read the guidance](#)

### **'No evidence' MHFA improves management of mental health, says HSE**

There is no evidence that mental health first aid training (MHFA) improves the management of mental health in workplaces, according to a review carried out by the Health and Safety Executive.

However, there is good evidence that MHFA training raises awareness of mental ill health conditions for those who have done the course.

The review, which was published in August, examined 29 studies published between January 2000 and July 2017.

The researchers noted that there were few well-designed studies, which may explain the paucity of evidence.

However, the results chime with preliminary findings from research carried out by the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health, the professional body for health and safety managers.

While MHFA helped create a culture where mental health could be discussed, it failed to address the work factors that cause mental ill health, according to *Health and Safety at Work* magazine.

The HSE report said that people who are MHFA trained have a better understanding of where to find information and professional support and are more confident helping individuals experiencing mental ill health or a crisis.

However, there is no evidence that introducing MHFA training in workplaces has resulted in sustained actions by those receiving the training or that it has improved employers' management of mental health.

The HSE also analysed whether UK-based MHFA training providers modify their courses to suit workplaces, concluding that there is only limited evidence that they do.

Researchers carrying out the rapid scoping review struggled to find published studies that evaluate the effectiveness of MHFA. The studies that have been conducted tended to be poor quality.

More employers have been training staff in MHFA in recent years. The course seeks to equip employees with the knowledge to respond to people experiencing a crisis or mental ill health. Trainees are taught how to recognise symptoms and risk factors in a range of conditions and signpost people to sources of help, information and additional professional support.

*Thriving at Work*, the independent review of workplace mental health released in October last year, called on the HSE to expand the advice it offers employers to cover all mental ill health in the work environment, not just work-related conditions.

[Read the HSE report](#)

### **Workplace inspection seminar for health and safety reps**

The TUC's health and safety expert, Hugh Robertson, is hosting a webinar on how workplace inspections should be carried out on 3 October. Tune in at 2.30pm for what will be an in-depth look at how to carry out an inspection, what the focus should be, whether your inspection procedures are working and how to improve them.

[Register for the webinar](#)

### **Mental health workbook**

TUC Education has released a new workbook to help union reps support members with mental health conditions. *Mental Health and the Workplace* will develop reps' understanding of common mental health problems, the law around mental health in the workplace and how to identify good practice in mental health policies.

[Download the workbook](#)

### **MSD resources**

The HSE and the TUC have published a new document signposting health and safety reps to information about musculoskeletal disorders in their workplaces.

With more than 500,000 people suffering from work-related MSDs, the resource draws together the HSE's publications and toolkits, including manual handling assessment charts, a risk assessment tool for pushing and pulling and a display screen equipment workstation checklist.

[Download the document](#)

### **Exposure limits for 31 chemicals come into force**

Exposure limits for 31 chemicals, some of which are commonly used in manufacturing, construction and agriculture, have been adopted into UK law following changes to a European directive.

The new workplace exposure limits (WELs), which came into force on 21 August, set legal thresholds for employees' exposure to certain agents including carbon monoxide, methylene chloride and acetic acid.

The new workplace limits are all either lower than, or match, the previous UK thresholds or create WELs for the first time.

Nevertheless, the HSE says that most of the WELs will not require employers to take extra steps, either because the chemicals are not used in the UK, or because the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations already require employers keep exposures as low as possible. It will frequently be possible to keep exposure well below the limit.

The HSE anticipates that it is likely that employers will have to take additional steps to manage exposure to:

- 2-ethylhexan-1-ol, used in lubricants and greases, coating products, hydraulic fluids and washing and cleaning products
- carbon monoxide, produced as a by-product, for instance from diesel engines
- manganese and inorganic manganese compounds, used in the production of metal alloys
- nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) – exposures may occur in the chemical industry, during gas welding, in agriculture (silos), in mining (explosives) and from engine exhaust
- nitrogen monoxide – exposure can arise from vehicle engine exhaust, during welding and cutting processes and following explosions
- sulphur Dioxide, used in pH regulators and water treatment products, paper chemicals and dyes, surface treatment products and pharmaceuticals

The amendment stems from changes to the European Commission's fourth directive on Indicative Occupational Exposure Limit Values. The new WELs have been added to an updated EH40, the HSE's reference document for the COSHH Regulations.

The changes were introduced following a public consultation; the majority of respondents, including the TUC, backed the proposals.

Skin notations have also been added to four substances to warn that they can penetrate intact skin and become absorbed into the body: 1,4-dichlorobenzene, glycerol trinitrate, methyl formate and tetrachloroethylene.

There will be a transitional period for three substances – nitrogen monoxide (NO), nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide – in the underground mining and tunnelling industries only.

[Read the updated guide EH40](#)