

April 2019

Welcome to the April edition of the energy health and safety bulletin, which is issued to all Prospect health and safety representatives in the sector.

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Reps on path to stress prevention at health and safety conference

The Path to Prevention was the title of our seventh health and safety conference held on 3 April. The theme was stress, but particularly how stress should be prevented, rather than simply treated.

Attendees heard from expert speakers about evidence-based approaches to tackling stress, new research, why social support is vital in workplaces and successful approaches taken by Prospect branches.

Prospect general secretary Mike Clancy gave the opening address, making a strong case for regulation and enforcement. [Read more about what he said.](#)

He was followed by organisational psychologist Dr Joanna Wilde, who highlighted research showing that inadequate social support and integration are the biggest health risks for adults of working age.

She examined three case studies which showed how she addressed organisational injustice, discrimination and changes which disrupted social support. [Read more about her talk.](#)

Speakers' slides are now available to download from the [health and safety conference webpage](#). You'll need to log in to access them.

We have also uploaded the resources from the delegate pack: [a toolkit](#) to help reps evaluate their employer's stress risk assessment is and [a framework](#) for structuring reps' approach to addressing stress in personal casework.

Distribution network operators: February and March DINs and SOPs

Ten dangerous incidents (DINs), suspensions of operational practice (SOPs) and national equipment defect reports (NEDeRS) were reported by DNO businesses to the Energy Networks Association

trade body in February and March. This briefing examines the incidents and their causes, which included three incidents that point to issues with maintenance.

[Download the briefing](#)

New members' guide to lone working released

We have comprehensively revised our members' guide to lone working. It provides advice for anyone who travels alone, carries out fieldwork or works at outside premises, and spells out how employers should manage the arrangement.

[Download the guide](#)

Prospect supports occupational air pollution campaign

Health and safety charity the British Safety Council has launched a new campaign to raise awareness about the risk that air pollution poses to outdoor workers.

Prospect is supporting the campaign, called [Time to Breathe](#), which calls on employers, policymakers and regulators to start taking seriously the health risks of ambient air pollution.

[Research](#) published in August 2018 by the government's [Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants](#) estimated that 36,000 people die prematurely each year because of air pollution.

While there is growing recognition that air pollution is a public health emergency, outdoor workers have been largely overlooked.

The main pollutants of concern are particulates, nitrogen dioxide and ground level ozone, which are largely caused by, or a consequence of, the combustion of fossil fuels

Time to Breathe is also offering a free app called [Canairy](#), built in partnership with King's College London's Environmental Research Group.

It uses the world-leading data from London's Air Quality Network (LAQN) to model workers' exposure to air pollution. It only works in the capital.

Canairy provides tips to workers about reducing their exposure to air pollution. The data it generates will help employers, in partnership with employees, make more informed decisions about scheduling work to avoid unhealthy levels of exposure.

Exposure to the various pollutants is pegged against limit values created by the World Health Organisation (WHO), which has undertaken a significant amount of research on the health impacts of air pollution.

The British Safety Council has produced [general guidance for employers](#), which contains advice on how to limit workers' exposure to pollutants. A guide for health and safety reps is in the pipeline.

Shiftwork increases risk of heart disease

People who work shifts are more likely to develop heart disease, with each year spent on this working pattern increasing the risk by one per cent, according to a new study.

Shiftworkers are on average 13% more likely to develop coronary heart disease (CHD) than those who work typical hours, researchers found.

The study, [published in the journal *Occupational Medicine*](#), is the largest to examine the relationship between shiftwork and CHD – the narrowing of coronary arteries.

Researchers examined 21 studies covering 320,002 people, almost 20,000 of whom had CHD. The studies covered various shiftwork arrangements, including rotating shifts, consistent nightwork and non-standard daytime hours.

They found there was a 0.9% increase in the risk of developing CHD – also known as ischaemic heart disease – with every year spent in this working pattern.

The academics from Huazhong University of Science and Technology said there were three reasons why shiftwork may increase the risk of CHD:

- Shiftwork can disrupt circadian rhythms, which may affect the normal functioning of the heart.
- Shiftwork can increase stress, which can disturb the normal functioning of the body's metabolic and hormonal systems. This in turn can lead to obesity, hypertension, high cholesterol and dysfunction of the endothelial – a thin membrane which lines blood and heart vessels.
- Other research has shown that unhealthy lifestyles such as smoking, poor diet and lack of physical exercise are more common among shift workers.

The number of people working shifts in the UK appears to be increasing. [TUC analysis](#) from October 2017 found that number of people regularly working nights increased by 260,000 in the preceding five years – a 9% rise.

Survey finds poor management is a growing cause of stress

Nearly two-fifths of employers have seen an increase in stress-related absence over the past year, and only 8% have seen it fall, according to a new report.

HR managers' body, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, surveyed 1,078 HR professionals, who blamed heavy workloads and poor management for stress-related absence.

Two-thirds of respondents to [the annual survey](#) said excessive workload was the main cause of stress-related absence, and more blamed poor management for stress than in previous years.

Poor management is now the second biggest contributing factor, cited by 43% of respondents, compared with 32% the year before.

A third of businesses reporting that stress-related absence had increased over the past year had not taken any steps to address it, the survey found.

Worryingly, fewer employers are trying to identify sources of stress in their workplaces – the first step in the process of tackling it at source and preventing it from occurring.

More than four-fifths (83%) of respondents had observed "presenteeism" (going to work when ill) in their organisation and a quarter (25%) said the problem had got worse since the previous year.

Nearly two-thirds (63%) had observed "leaveism", where staff use their holiday entitlement to complete work. Despite this, more than half (55%) of respondents said their organisation hasn't taken any steps to address the issue.