

Hu-Tech Newsletter no. 18: May 2005

Welcome to our May newsletter; in it we point you to some free internet resources which you may find useful, particularly a couple from HSE. We would also like to invite those who are involved in the management of people with MSDs to participate in a short on-line questionnaire; this will contribute to a study we are conducting for HSE. We also bring you a reminder of our Ergonomics Essentials and IOSH DSE workstation assessors' courses.

HSE launches the Health & Safety Performance Indicator for SMEs

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recently launched a new web-based tool to assist small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) assess how well they are managing their own health and safety performance. The Health and Safety Performance Indicator is also intended to help companies tell their insurers how well they are managing health and safety so they can more accurately calculate insurance premiums based on individual performance. HSE's aim is that the tool will help companies know how well they are performing, and allows companies to compare their performance with other similar companies. The Indicator asks questions under 10 categories of risk, including repetitive movements, and manual handling. Although the questions cannot be specific to different businesses, they will help companies identify how well they are addressing health and safety risks. The Indicator also points to further sources of guidance to help manage health and safety. The Indicator is free to use and confidential. No personal data is shared with any other users. Find it at: www.hsapi.info-exchange.com

HSE study into Rehabilitation and Active Case Management for MSDs

If you have any experience of rehabilitation programmes for those with musculoskeletal discomfort, we would love to hear from you! In this study we are undertaking for HSE we would like to speak with companies about the costs and benefits of these programmes, to try to identify the most effective models for managing those with MSDs. If you help manage staff with MSDs and would like to share your experience, you are invited to take part in an on-line survey. It should take about 10 minutes to complete, and is available at www.hu-tech.co.uk/question-rehab.html. We will present a summary of the findings in the newsletter later in the year. Your help is greatly appreciated!

Reducing MSD risks in the construction industry – study completed for HSE

You may remember that we were undertaking a study for HSE to identify practical ways in which the risks of musculoskeletal disorders in the construction trades of bricklaying and plastering could be reduced. The study was completed earlier this year, and the case studies that demonstrate practical ways to reduce risks of MSDs are due to be published on the HSE's website shortly. We'll let you know the web address when it is up and running. If you would like a flavour of the findings, a paper on the study was presented at the Ergonomics Society conference in April, and is available at: http://www.hu-tech.co.uk/publications_index.html

Andy Nicholson also presented a paper at the Ergonomics Society conference: 'Turning Banking on its head – the Ergonomic Challenges, outlining the issues faced in redesigning a banking hall. See our publications page for more details: http://www.hu-tech.co.uk/publications_index.html.

HSE summer campaign: Backs! 2005

The HSE is running a major national initiative this summer focussed on reducing the incidence of back pain at work. Currently one in five of those who suffer work-related ill health has back pain – which is bad both for those who suffer, and for business. The overall aim of the **Backs! 2005** initiative is to promote the use of lifting and handling aids as a means of reducing the incidence of back injuries at work.

The main phase of the Backs! 2005 campaign will involve a nationally co-ordinated publicity, education and inspection programme over a 4 week period in June/July. The programme is being developed by

HSE in partnership with Local Authorities and other stakeholders and will help encourage innovative solutions to MSD issues.

As part of the campaign HSE Inspectors and Local Authority Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) will be visiting workplaces and gathering detailed information on MSDs and incidence of back pain in the workplace, from both employers and employees. If you would like any assistance in tackling MSDs or manual handling issues, please contact us.

Further information about the campaign is at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/backs/index.htm>. This site also has a number of guidance documents and risk assessment tools that can be used in addressing these issues.

Congratulations to Nationwide Building Society!

The Occupational Health, Safety and Well-Being Programme at Nationwide Building Society has been awarded the prestigious Employee Benefit award for the Most Pro-Active use of Group Risk and Rehabilitation Benefits. This award recognises the forward-looking nature of Nationwide's approach to managing those with MSDs, which was described by the judges as 'comprehensive, integrated, thorough and pro-active'. Their programme includes Hu-Tech's involvement in workstation assessments for individuals who experience discomfort, and appropriate workplace or job adaptations for them. We have also had input to the design of generic counters and workstations to reduce the risk of discomfort.

Hu-Tech has been working closely with Nationwide for a number of years, and this relationship has led to a significant understanding and implementation of ergonomics within various key parts of Nationwide's business. This was nicely illustrated recently when their IT department were able to request of their equipment suppliers that the keyboard be provided with a detachable number pad. This obviously allows it to be removed when not in use (meaning the mouse can be brought closer to the body for right handers), or positioned to the left for use with the left hand. This increased flexibility with the equipment should reduce the risk of upper limb discomfort caused by awkward postures. The suppliers have been able to meet that need at no additional cost. A great outcome for all involved!

Ergonomics Training

Andy Nicholson was pleased to be asked to undertake a series of 2 day training courses in Occupational Ergonomics in Kuala Lumpur and Dubai over the next couple of weeks. Delegates will mainly be from the manufacturing, oil and aluminium industries.

Our public training courses are still proving popular. Once again, we were delighted that all delegates on the 5 day **Ergonomics Essentials (including DSE and Manual Handling)** course in March who sat the exam passed, and one obtained a credit! Congratulations to the delegates. They also reported finding the course interesting and very useful for their work. We are running the course again in Northampton on 3rd – 7th October 2005. The course provides a good grounding for health and safety professionals who want to know more about how to reduce ergonomics risks in their workplace.

We are also running the **IOSH 'Assessing risks for computer users'** course again on **1st – 2nd June and 26th – 27th October in London**. The course will enable delegates to become competent in undertaking DSE risk assessments as required by the DSE Regulations, and includes a presentation by Bill Fine of **AbilityNet** into computer adaptations for those with limitations. We are also pleased to be running this course several times in-house for a large Trade Union.

Further details and a booking form for both these courses are available on our website (follow the link to training). Alternatively, please contact margaret@hu-tech.co.uk (0131 718 4232).

If you would like any further information on any of these news items, please contact us on:

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