

Hu-Tech Newsletter no. 19: September 2005

Welcome to our September newsletter; we've enclosed some information about a forthcoming TUC inspection campaign, and a couple of articles about designing workplaces to suit the users. We've also highlighted some recent work we've completed in the air traffic control industry. There's also news of a new ergonomics course we are running called Tackling *MSDs in the office*, and we've provided the course dates for 2006 for the popular Ergonomics Essentials and IOSH DSE workstation assessors' courses.

Hu-Tech achieves ISO 9001 accreditation

Hu-Tech is delighted to announce that the company has successfully achieved ISO 9001 accreditation with immediate effect. The attainment of the ISO standard was undertaken as part of Hu-Tech's continuing programme of quality and customer relations improvements. It was regarded as a central component in achieving our goal of being recognised as the UK's premiere Ergonomics Consultancy.

TUC Health and Safety Reps: National Inspection Day

Wednesday 26th October (during European Health and Safety Week) has been designated by the TUC as "National Inspection Day" when all safety representatives are asked to inspect their workplace. The TUC has produced a simple guide to inspections that includes forms, adapted from the HSE recommended forms, and a checklist. These cover the whole range of workplace risks including Manual Handling and DSE use. The form can be downloaded at http://www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/tuc-10433-f0.cfm

Too Tall to Control?

An air traffic controller is claiming sexual discrimination against National Air Traffic Services after being refused a job due to his height. The controller, who is 6ft 10inches, passed the initial interview, but later had the job offer refuted as it was believed by the management team that his legs would not fit underneath the fixed height desks installed in the control room. The controller now works for an alternative company in Luxembourg where he has been supplied with a height adjustable desk.

The case demonstrates the need to accommodate, where reasonably practicable, the individual differences between employees. An alternative workstation with a height adjustment mechanism and appropriate seat would have been a reasonable adjustment to make in this particular situation. Getting the ergonomics right i.e. designing the workplace for the user, would have prevented this action being taken against NATS

Time for Change: DDA test case

Debenhams has become the first company to be sued since the extensions to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) came into force in October 2004. This is for failing to make adequate adjustments to overcome physical barriers for disabled users.

A wheelchair user consistently struggled to access the men's clothing department which was up several steps. Debenhams had not made any provisions for wheelchair users to access this area, and instead the customer had to ask for clothes to be brought down to him which proved to be embarrassing.

Under Part III of the DDA, service providers should alter, adapt or remove physical barriers that make it unreasonably difficult for disabled people to access the service. Each case should be considered on its own merit in terms of reasonably practicable, but a large retailer such as Debenhams would find it difficult to justify, from a cost perspective, their reasons for not altering, adapting or removing physical barriers e.g. by installing a ramp or suitable lift, to help accommodate their disabled customers' requirements.

It is essential for all service providers to review whether their premises are compliant with the DDA and what changes can be done to improve the access to goods and facilities.

Back in 'control'

Airport control rooms are used to manage security and ensure that passenger through-flow is smooth and efficient. Hu-Tech were recently asked to carry out an audit of an airport control room to establish the suitability of its design and layout and of the equipment and procedures used. The information gathered from the audit was used to produce a specification and drawings for a revised control room layout and equipment rationalisation. The scope not only considered the health and safety of the controllers, but emphasis was placed on the performance of operations as mismatches between the systems and equipment used could have far reaching consequences for the safety of the passengers using the airport. It was therefore considered essential that the design and layout of the control room were optimised to ensure that operators could work in a safe, efficient and controlled manner.

The suitability of the hardware and equipment layout was considered from an ergonomics perspective, which included prioritising the relative importance of the systems and equipment within the control room. This helped to produce a design layout that not only adhered to sound ergonomics principles but also promoted an efficient and safe operational environment. The specification drawn up by Hu-Tech included a scale drawing for use in the refurbishment of the control room which is scheduled to occur over the next three months; we look forward to evaluating the implemented design. For further information on this please contact: taran@hu-tech.co.uk

Hu-Tech: Beyond the UK

We have recently been successful in winning some work in the Middle East. As a result, 3 of our consultants will be spending time in 2 Middle Eastern countries during September. One assignment involves preparing and delivering a manual handling train-the-trainer programme, and the other will provide human factors advice in the oil and gas industry.

New ergonomics course: Tackling MSDs in the Office

Hu-Tech are jointly running a new one day workshop with Rehab Works (physiotherapy and rehabilitation providers), to assist health professionals with understanding, assessing and managing those with MSDs in the office environment. The workshop will assume delegates have a working knowledge of the DSE Regulations, and will go beyond these, with the morning sessions covering how to assess ergonomic risks for those who have MSDs, and how to reduce those risks. It will include case studies and a practical session. In the afternoon session the issues relating to the successful rehabilitation and management of those with MSDs (particularly ULDs and low back pain) and working with occupational health providers will be discussed and illustrated with practical examples. This will be based on the findings of the latest research. The course is being run on **Thurs 24th November 2005 (Peterborough)**, £200 +VAT.

A parallel course, **Tackling MSDs in Industry** will be run on **Weds 26th April 2006 (Peterborough)**, £200 +VAT. This will look at assessing risks and managing those with MSDs in non-office based environments.

Ergonomics Essentials and IOSH DSE Workstation Assessors courses: Dates for 2006

We have a few places left on the 5 day Ergonomics Essentials course running on **3-7th October 2005 in Northampton** (£890). The dates for 2006 are **6-10th March (Edinburgh)** and **25-29th September (Northampton)** (£925).

The very popular 2 day IOSH DSE Workstation Assessors course is almost full for **26-27th October 2005 (London)**. The dates for 2006 are: **1st/2nd February (London)**, **9th/10th May (Edinburgh)**, **5th/6th September (London)**, **14th/15th November (London)** (£490).

For further details about any of these courses please contact Linda Peacock: Linda@hu-tech.co.uk or Tel: 01604 233 428.