

## **"WHEN THE INSPECTOR CALLS"**

The Inspectorate from HSE and/or Local Authorities can visit any premises at any time either on an ad hoc or appointment basis and both Agencies have the same purpose that is to evaluate how your Company complies with the - "Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974".

The Inspectors have statutory Powers of Authority invested in them that range from the right of entry, issuing Improvement Notices through to issuing Prohibition Notices. See details at the HSE website <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/hse41.pdf>

The HSE have now introduced a new lower level of authority, a "Health & Safety Awareness Officer" into their organisation. This new role has no enforcement powers see details from the HSE website <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/wcovl100.pdf> Included in their role will be to check that Statutory Documentation is up to date and being applied. Any deficiencies they find on their visit will be reported back and it is likely that an Inspector will then call!

### **Why do they visit?**

The Enforcement Agencies will visit your premises either as a routine visit, or in response to a complaint that a serious incident or injury has occurred.

In general they are interested in the activity and attitude of the management of the sites they visit, and their aim is to ensure that all aspects of health & safety legislation are being complied with. Their response to a routine inspection will be to encourage you to improve your site. This may involve them issuing an Improvement notice. However, if your site seriously contravenes the Act and you are putting people at serious risk, the Enforcement Agency will issue a Prohibition Notice, which may then result in a Prosecution.

Typically the following scenario takes place.

If the visit is pre arranged at least you have had an opportunity of preparing the site and to advising your employees.

*However if Health & Safety is not a priority in your establishment you may find that you will only do "too little - too late"*

### **If the visit is unplanned the Inspectors will ask for the person in charge of the premises**

*If the person(s) are away from the premises - be aware, make sure that in the absence of the Manager responsible for the premises, it is an offence not to have someone in charge at all times when the premises are occupied, in the event of an emergency. So ensure you have made such arrangements and that the employees are aware of them.*

### **To begin an inspection the most likely question to be asked is:**

How do you manage your Health & Safety?

*Not a trick question but a very open one that leaves plenty of room for the Inspector to explore, investigate and check your responses by carrying out an inspection on how well you comply with the Law.*

### **What are some of the Questions most likely to be asked by the Inspector?**

- Do you have a Health and Safety Policy?
- Do you have a Health and Safety System to support that Policy?
- Do you have a Management Organisation to implement the Health and Safety System?
- Do you have an action plan to implement and continuously assess the Health and Safety activity on the site?
- Do you audit on a regular basis your Health and Safety activities by measuring and

- reviewing the performance of each activity?
- Have you an up to date Risk Assessments, have your employees a clear understanding of the risks, the potential harm they can cause and have they been trained to an acceptable level of competence?
  - Do your employees understand how the management of Health and Safety operates on the site?
  - Do you regularly communicate with your employees on issues of Health and Safety?
  - Are visitors/contractors to the site made aware of the Health and Safety rules and procedures that impact on them?

**What happens when the Inspector conducts a full inspection?**

They will walk the site and cover for example:

- *Statutory Documentation*
- *Buildings*
- *Equipment*
- *Maintenance records*
- *House keeping*
- *Emergency exits*
- *Storage of material including COSHH*
- *Movement of vehicle inside and outside within the perimeter fencing.*
- *Separation of vehicles from pedestrians*

This is by no means an exhaustive list but just a “taster”!

They will record items requiring attention and finally will ask to speak to employees without the presence of a manager/supervisor.

Employees will be asked some of or all of the following questions:

- *Can they name of person in charge of the premises?*
- *Who is responsible for health & safety on the premises?*
- *Do they know their duties of care?*
- *Have they seen a copy of the company health and safety policy?*
- *What health and safety training have they received?*
- *What instructions have they been given regarding fire?*
- *Do they know who the first aider is?*
- *How do they call a first aider?*
- *What general risks are they exposed to?*
- *What PPE is issued to them and is it free of charge?*

It is therefore essential that your employees are actively involved in the process of Managing Health & Safety. It is also very important that up to date records are kept when employees have been advised/informed/trained and instructed in matters of health and safety so that you can prove that such events have taken place – employees sometimes don’t recall!

At all times you need to have records of all aspects of managing Health and Safety to:

- To provide evidence of your actions
- To provide records for statutory documentation
- To have such records available and easily accessible for use by management and company employees to view
- To meet the Inspectors requirements

<b>What are the Inspectors main areas of investigation and what are their concerns?</b>	
<b>INJURY/INCIDENT</b>	<b>MAIN AREAS OF CONCERN</b>
<b>FIRE</b>	<p>Poor handling of petrol, which was involved in 70% of fires, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draining of fuel tanks and lines without fuel retrievers</li> <li>• Draining over vehicle inspection pits</li> <li>• Hand lamps frequently providing source of ignition, and</li> <li>• The saturation of overalls in petrol</li> </ul> <p>Burns are often very severe and sometimes fatal</p>
<b>VEHICLE MOVEMENTS</b>	<p>Vehicles parked un-braked or without chocks Crushing accidents frequent when driver unable to see people in workshops</p>
<b>FALLS</b>	<p>Into uncovered and/or badly marked pits From storage racking, ladders, HGVs and trailer units under repair Outside contractors falling whilst working on premises</p>
<b>BEING STRUCK</b>	<p>Eye injuries from the use of hand tools Vehicles falling from the badly adjusted or secured support arms of 2-post hoists</p>
<b>MACHINERY</b>	<p>Trapping between vee belts and pulleys when working on running engines Entanglement on drives and prop shafts when working beneath vehicles Feet trapped underneath unprotected descending platforms / hoists</p>
<b>EXPOSURE TO HARMFUL SUBSTANCES</b>	<p>Isocyanate-containing paints are often involved in causing asthma and other breathing problems Acid splashes from battery explosions Cleaning and degreasing solvents: when carrying out repairs, employees exposed to various cleaning agents through improper use, inadequate protection and lack of information and training</p>

<b>EXPLOSIONS</b>	<p>Battery explosions from build-up of hydrogen and ignition by sparks from metallic contact with terminals. Gloves and eye protection rarely worn.</p> <p>Removal of petrol from vehicles without a proprietary 'petrol retriever'.</p>
<b>COLLAPSE OF PLANT AND EQUIPMENT</b>	<p>Wrong pins used to support axle stand extensions</p> <p>Bottle and trolley jacks poorly maintained, overloaded or incorrectly positioned under vehicles</p> <p>Wrong or badly used props for HGV bodies and trailers</p> <p>Vehicles supported on jacks alone</p> <p>Chocks not used with axle stands</p> <p>Vehicle hoists, particularly screw-type, collapsing because of poor maintenance</p>
<b>ELECTRICITY</b>	<p>Poorly maintained electrical equipment</p> <p>240V equipment being used where 110V or 50V is more appropriate</p> <p>Many premises using 240 volts inspection lamps where low voltage would be safer – for example when working under vehicles</p>
<b>LIFTING AND CARRYING</b>	<p>Lifting of large items in restricted space without help, human or mechanical</p>
<b>TRIPPING AND SLIPS</b>	<p>Predominant factor in trip incidents is housekeeping – oil/water on floors, build-up of debris and scrap metal</p>
<b>VEHICLES OVERTURNING</b>	<p>Vehicles overturning while being lifted on inspection hoists</p>
<b>PEOPLE WALKING INTO THINGS</b>	<p>Incidents involved individuals banging heads and hands whilst working on vehicles</p>
<b>LEAKS</b>	<p>Typical incidents involve the escape of fuel – petrol, diesel oil from tanks and fuel-lines</p>
<b>BURSTS</b>	<p>Tyres – incidents involving unsafe systems of work for routine removal and refitting: mechanics not using tyre cages when provided</p>
<p>In addition to the above list within the HSE Motor Vehicle Repair (MVR) sector hyperlink <a href="http://www.hse.gov.uk/mvr/index.htm">http://www.hse.gov.uk/mvr/index.htm</a> those areas currently being monitored of specific interest are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working at Height</li> <li>• Workplace Transport</li> <li>• Isocyanates</li> </ul>	