



# Safety Snapshots

David Associates Ltd  
(DAL)

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## The Evacuation—what can be learned.

Why conduct an evacuation drill? It is not just for fire, but for any emergency when buildings must be cleared quickly for safety reasons. These will include fire but also hazards such as contamination, flood, terrorism etc. Most organisations just carry out a basic fire drill and some may even consider how long it takes, but often it is just done on a pleasant afternoon because someone has a conscience



**“There are no visitors in today so it will go smoothly”**

**What a mistake !**

about not having done one for ages, and besides “there are no visitors in today so it will go smoothly”. That is the first mistake, reality says that disasters will strike on occasions when visitors will be in your premises, therefore are your marshalling procedures up to organising their evacuation and accounting for them. Are your site induction processes passing on sufficient information to your visitors and contractors such that they will recognise an evacuation and know where to go and who to report to. Failure to account for people will only result in placing emergency service personnel at risk in efforts to establish clear buildings when it may not be necessary. Practices at odd times, e.g. just before start or finish times is a true test of your procedures. Practices when the board are meeting will not only test your marshalling skills, but will identify to management their own part in the evacuation process by taking it seriously. Any board member who fails to comply should be sanctioned severely and any employee who says it is a waste of their time should be dismissed.

The building regulations are designed to have an influence on building reaction to fire and the target time is approximately 3 minutes before building structures may begin to fail, so evacuation within that period is desirable. The fire risk assessment will identify your greatest risk areas and these should be tested regularly and efforts made to determine risk reduction activities. So what can we learn? Are there any areas where the alarms cannot be heard, are there areas that are slower to clear than others, do visitors know where to go and who to report to. Is there someone designated to call the emergency services. Who organises your first aiders, what provisions have you got for multiple casualties? How are first aiders identified? What more can you do to evacuate quickly? Consult all of your staff, visitors and contractors for their opinions and thoughts on your evacuation process and try to ensure that everyone knows their role and plays their part. An evacuation plan is a major step in disaster recovery planning, because if they all get out safely, you will not need to replace them if disaster becomes reality.

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## Work Related Upper Limb Disorders (WRULD)

A WRULD is a muscular-skeletal disorder of tissue in the hands, wrists, arms or shoulders, and commonly caused by some aspect of work. Manual Handling, particularly when it is repetitive, is the main cause of WRULD although significant contributions come from Display Screen Equipment users, even Hand Arm Vibration has recently boosted reported figures. Whether this reporting is

due to increased awareness, positive attitudes towards reporting, both from employees or employers or whether there is a distinct increase in occasions of WRULD is difficult to say.

So what can be done to stem the tide? Assessment of risk and awareness training, particularly for manual handling are essential strategies. 38% of all reported injuries resulting in over

3 days lost work relate to manual handling, so any industry can benefit from training its employees on the dangers and best practices involved. Manual handling affects everyone, whether it is the secretary moving folders or the workman lifting kerbstones. Each one will encounter hazards, they may be different but awareness and training in safe handling techniques will save thousands of pounds in lost time.

### Safety Shorts

New rules on Working at Height are impacting very slowly into business. A head in the sand approach on the ‘use of ladders’ has served to slow down compliance with the regulations. Risk assessment and better controls are not being introduced positively, perhaps due to the cost of equipment or the inability of management to see benefits from alternative methods of work. There is normally a safer alternative to ladders, it just needs finding....

## Lone Working—is it really a risk?



**“The feeling of vulnerability is an indicator to the risks we face when working alone”**

Many employees have worked alone at some time during their career and the feelings of isolation will be familiar to most of us.

The feeling of vulnerability is an indicator to the types of risk that we face when working alone. Fears of accident, ill health, violence from trespassers or other members of the public are all fears that may be realised. The risks to the business are proportionate. Loss of a valued member of staff, poor publicity, lost time and production, loss of confidence from employees will all impact upon the company.

Controls to remove the fears and the inherent risks are sim-

ple to implement and cost very little. Security key code locks are easy to fit to access doors, a panic alarm wired direct to another area of the building that is permanently occupied, a telephone check in or ‘buddy’ system or even someone monitoring a PC logon status can all contribute to the well-being of a lone worker. Understanding the likely risks is essential and the company must undertake an assessment of those risks and acquaint everyone with the outcomes and the controls necessary. It is insufficient to put a telephone buddy system in place and not provide alternatives in the event of someone being unavailable, and particularly when these arrange-

ments are for ‘out of hours’ working, employers must incentivise the arrangements to ensure that they work efficiently.

Training for all people involved in lone working is essential and must include the lifeline arrangements as well as the workers themselves.

Consider also those workers who work independent of others, e.g. service engineers, home workers. It is legal to allow people to work alone, but the law requires employers to control the risks to their employees. Milton Keynes Council are launching a care programme in early 2006, which will be reported when it is operational.

## Personal Protective Equipment

**“PPE is the last physical line of defence against hazards and their potential to cause you harm”**

All of us now ask about airbags in cars, is there one for the passenger and sometimes we shy away from purchasing the car that does not conform to our safety standards, yet when asked to wear a hard hat or a pair of gloves to protect our health at work, we complain and try to find ways to buck the system. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is the last line of defence against hazards and their potential to cause you harm. Most people can see the benefit of wearing the obvious

protectors, e.g. hats for protecting against falling materials, The less popular forms of PPE are gloves when handling substances, masks when dealing with fumes. ‘It’s only a little bit and I am only using a drop of the stuff’ sound popular excuses for not wearing PPE. But time and constant exposures can build up a sensitisation to many substances, such that small exposures may lead to massive reactions causing untold physical harm. PPE is expensive to employers, they are not going to provide it unless it

is essential for them to do so to keep you safe. You should therefore ask your employer to explain the exposures and the risks (they will have assessed them) and then comply with the requirement to wear what is provided. It is your responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act to co-operate with your employer and to use things provided for your safety.

So if the ‘bumpcap’ fits, wear it, else run the risk of disciplinary action from your employer, which will be justified.



Astrid Höfte—Disabled athlete

**Small adaptations can mean a full life for anyone**

## Disability—an update

Not every disabled person finds themselves in a wheelchair, in fact there are many thousands of people who you would not know were disabled just by looking at them. The blind, the deaf, the mute, the person with acute learning difficulties will look no different from a person who does not suffer from these difficulties.

The law requires that business shall not discriminate against anyone with a disability and

they must have access to all of the services offered by a company. Similarly they are entitled to equal opportunity in employment either in getting the job or in promotion once employed. Companies must look to who is the best person first and if that person has a disability only then must the company look at what adaptations are necessary to accommodate that person in that role. Providing those adaptations are reasonable then the company are

obliged to make those adjustments. If the adjustments are unreasonable, then the company can legitimately reconsider their decision, but there are usually solutions if people are prepared to look seriously for them. The best source of information about necessary adjustments is the person themselves.

Too often we make judgements about someone’s capability without asking them. Disability is a complication not a barrier.



## Road Risk—are you managing it?

“Do you have a driving licence?” has, for many years, been the approach to managing road travel but has never been adequate. Companies are now being urged to manage their road travel risks more effectively. The debate continues about whether work related road accidents should be reported under RIDDOR and considered exactly the same as any other accident in the workplace. The comment that road risk comes under the Road Traffic Act and is therefore different just doesn't hold water, just as fire risk comes under the Fire Precautions Act, it is considered to be a health and safety issue, road risk is exactly the same.

Companies must make a risk assessment, which sounds really com-

plicated when one considers the vast range of potential risks on the road and how does one assess every possible situation. The answer is simple, you can't, but you can assess the contribution that your company makes to road safety and have procedures in place to protect your employees and anyone who may be affected by your actions. Topics to consider include :

The vehicles — are they suitable, maintained, tested, checked, adequately insured (often a contentious issue where employees use their own vehicles for company business)

Route planning and time al-

lowed including rest breaks. Passengers in vehicles, are they authorised and what risks do they represent. The driver, are they fit to drive, are they trained & licensed? The goods carried, how and where they are loaded and secured. What arrangements are in place to deal with emergencies, i.e. breakdowns & accidents. Security is also an issue as it affects the vehicle, goods and the people involved in the journey.

In summary, consider your arrangements for every contingency that you can influence and you will have achieved reasonable compliance and make a contribution to road safety.



**Companies are now being urged to manage their road travel risks more effectively.**

## Training issues—awareness training

The Health and Safety at Work Act requires that employers provide adequate training, but what does this mean?

You need to be trained to do your job, i.e. what buttons to press on a machine, how to use the photocopier etc but what other training is necessary?

The employer must provide a safe place of work, safe access and egress and suitable emergency arrangements, so it becomes obvious that you must receive training on emergency procedures. But there are many

other aspects to the business that you may come across that do not form part of your normal work activities but can have a serious impact on you whilst at work.

Induction training is a useful tool to highlight the risk areas within a business to new employees.

Consultation on arrangements for health and safety will highlight other areas of business where there is a serious risk.

But how does industry refresh the training to ensure that em-

ployees understand the whole risk issues. The answer is safety awareness training courses. Designed to cover a wide range of issues in the workplace they are often accredited courses e.g. CIEH Foundation Certificate in Health and Safety, but tailored courses for your needs are also valuable.

By providing everyone with this basic knowledge you give your staff the tools necessary to make their own decisions on health and safety which creates a safer and happier working environment.

**Induction training is a useful tool to highlight the risk areas within a business**



**Does the use of DSE occur daily ?**

## DSE users—how do you make the decision

The regulations involving Display Screen Equipment require that companies determine who are users of DSE which can be a complicated decision to make as the criteria is somewhat vague, but reference to the HSE guidance on the law helps considerably. Positive answers to four questions will help you decide.

Q1 Does the person use DSE continuously for an hour or more?

Q2 Does the use of DSE occur daily?

Q3 Does the person need to transfer information quickly to or from the DSE?

Q4 Is there no alternative to the use of DSE and the attentions and concentration necessary to use it?

All yes answers will mean the persons must be defined as a 'user' and other parts of the regulation must now be applied

to them. In general it is often easier to define all employees as users if they interact with DSE at work because a holistic approach to solutions is often easier rather than working on individuals.

Home workers must also be assessed as they are equally covered under the legislation and home visits will be necessary to make suitable assessments under these regulations. 'Work with display screen equipment' available from: [www.hsebooks.com](http://www.hsebooks.com)



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## Forklift truck training

*David Associates provide comprehensive training courses on Reach and Counterbalance forklift trucks. The training, testing and certification is done to RTITB standards and includes:*

*Instruction on the safety aspects of using lift trucks*

*Lift truck inspection practice and theory*

*Practical skills training based upon your previous knowledge and experience.*

*The test examines each knowledge area, and candidates are required to pass all three stages.*

*Course duration depends upon previous knowledge; from a one day refresher to 5 day novice courses, all designed to be compliant with the legislation concerned with the use of lift trucks.*

*All training is conducted on your premises, using your own trucks.*

*For more details contact DAL for prices and availability. email: [ft@david-associates.com](mailto:ft@david-associates.com)*



## Forklift truck — risk assessment

'Assessment on the use of forklift trucks must look at several elements:

The task: what is required from the truck, and why is it necessary to have one?

The type of truck required to do the job. Consider the size necessary, its lift capability and the specification of any attachments, e.g. extended forks or bale clamps.

Truck maintenance is essential and routines must be in place for daily inspections, regular maintenance and statutory inspections.

Refuelling or recharging facilities are essential and must be suitably sited with due consideration for their associated hazards. Good ventilation is essential for battery charging areas due to explosion potential from build

ups of hydrogen gas. Spillages can occur from diesel trucks and storage of PLG cylinders must be carefully considered together with the manual handling hazards involved. Suitable PPE for top ups etc must be provided.

Selection and training of truck operators and monitoring of competence is essential to ensure that they are safe. All operators must be appointed in writing and procedures must be in place to ensure that trucks are not used by unauthorised persons.

The working environment must consider aspects of space, vision and any additional hazards caused by the use of trucks in the area, e.g. storage of hazardous substances in areas where trucks operate.

Traffic routes must be identified

with adequate and suitable signage in [place to warn everyone of the presence of operating FLT's.

Pedestrian and lift trucks don't mix and it is essential to assess the segregation necessary to protect pedestrians and to remove them from the truck operating areas.

Management and supervision are essential business elements, but supervisors must understand the hazards of the operations that they manage, so consider their training requirements in the context of what they are being asked to manage.

This list is not exhaustive and there may be other considerations in your workplace. Go and look, talk to the operators and others who work in adjoining areas to determine any additional criteria for assessment.



**Pedestrians and lift trucks don't mix**