

REPORT

Drop in chemical supply-chain accident levels

The latest annual data on the health and safety performance of the UK chemical distribution sector shows a year-on-year fall in accident levels.

A new report, released by the Chemical Business Association (CBA), shows that in 2011, its member companies completed more than 800,000 separate journeys to distribute 2.9 million tonnes of chemicals to downstream users throughout the UK. Distributor companies reported 19 accidents in 2011, compared with 22 in 2010. Three accidents resulted in serious injury, and 16 were over-three-day reportable accidents.

The lost-time accident (LTA) rate for the UK distributors' sector fell from 0.29 in 2010 to 0.23 last year – the lowest rate ever reported by the CBA. Transport incidents increased marginally – from nine to ten – a level which equates to 3.4 transport incidents for every million tonnes of chemicals distributed, compared with 3.1 in 2010.

Commenting on the statistics, Andy Beck, chair of the Association's Responsible Care Committee, said: "The 2011 report shows a welcome return to a downward trend in accident levels. While there has been a marginal rise in transport incidents, they remain significantly below their level of four years ago."

For the full report, visit www.chemical.org.uk

MISCELLANEOUS

Diesel-engine exhaust can cause cancer

Fumes from diesel engines have been classified as carcinogenic, by experts from the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) found sufficient evidence that

exposure to diesel exhausts is associated with an increased risk of lung cancer. They also noted limited evidence that exposure could lead to an increased risk of bladder cancer.

The IARC had previously categorised diesel exhausts as 'probably carcinogenic to humans'. The updated classification follows the findings earlier this year of a US study of occupational exposure to such emissions in underground miners, which showed an increased risk of death from lung cancer in exposed workers.

The IARC also warns that people are not only exposed to motor-vehicle exhausts but also to



exhausts from other diesel engines, including those in diesel trains and ships, and from power generators.

Dr Christopher Portier, who led the assessment, said: "The scientific evidence was compelling and the Working Group's conclusion was

unanimous: diesel-engine exhaust causes lung cancer in humans.

"Given the additional health impacts from diesel particulates, exposure to this mixture of chemicals should be reduced worldwide."

Dr Christopher Wild, an IARC director, called for more action to protect populations from the risks of diesel fumes. He commented: "This emphasis is needed globally, including among the more vulnerable populations in developing countries, where new technology and protective measures may otherwise take many years to be adopted."

BOOK REVIEW

Managing Visitor Safety in the Countryside (2nd edition)

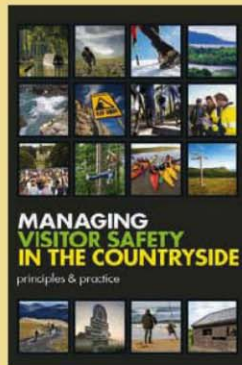
Published by: Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group – www.vscg.co.uk
ISBN: 978 0 9569844 0 1
Price: £15 + post and packaging via the VSCG pp90 (A4)

Reviewed by Nick Cornwell-Smith

This colourful, glossy, A4 book is a refreshing read for any hard-bitten health and safety professional, especially in these times when 'elf and safety' is getting knocked back all the time.

The theme of the book is clearly stated in the title, and, with its easy-to-read style, the contents fulfil that promise. It is a book for those that own or manage countryside property, land, or other amenities, which members of the public visit. This includes historical buildings, country parks and the wild countryside. It is not about occupational safety, but safety of visitors.

The publisher, the Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group, includes most of the large land-owners – such as British Waterways, English Heritage and Historic Scotland, RSPB, National Trust, Forestry Commission and Environment Agency – among its members. Between them



they have produced this well-balanced guidance document, which has received the HSE's endorsement.

Split into three main sections – 'Principles', 'Practice' and 'Supporting Information' – the guidance takes a refreshing view of managing risk. One of the key points throughout the document is the addition of "public and societal benefit" into the usual risk equation of cost against risk.

In part 1 – 'Principles' – the discussion looks at the balance between the responsibility of the land-owner and the visiting individual. Lavishly illustrated with colour photos, tables and matrices, the argument about balancing health and safety against the environment, learning opportunities, recreational opportunities, and restrictions on access are strongly put forward.

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The more undeveloped the countryside is, i.e. wild and rugged, the more personal responsibility the visitor must take for their own safety and safety of others. Visiting the wild highlands of Scotland, for example, will require correct clothing, proper planning, competency, leadership skills, etc. A family trip to Blenheim Palace, on the other hand, will rely more on the help and guidance of staff at the site.

In part 2 – 'Practice' – the text develops the theme of planning and organising, and risk assessment; anyone familiar with HSG65 will recognise this approach. Using a range of examples, the publisher takes the reader through this process in a pragmatic way.

The final part explains the various methods of providing information for the visitor, including what accident records need to be kept and reported, as well as the importance of emergency procedures. The final chapter includes a review of the relevant legislation and some key court cases.

Overall, this is a well-written document on what, at times, can be a contentious issue. Other organisations and authors can learn a lot from this user-friendly style. If you own, or manage countryside visitor attractions, then this is a must for you.