BEST PRACTICE

LOCATION:	**Concrete products plant**	**ARTICLE YEAR**	**2013**
ACTIVITY:	**Worker Involvement**	**COMPANY:**	**Hanson**
SUB ACTIVITY:	**N/A**	**COMPANY LOCATION:**	**Formpave, Coleford**
BEST PRACTICE No:	**BP850**	**COMPANY TEL:**	**01594 838676**
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:	**United Kingdom**		

TITLE

Safe working environment for employee with disabilities and health-related issues

ARTICLE

Introduction

As part of its 2020 target towards zero lost time injuries, Hanson UK is utilising a 'Zero Harm' approach to working safety.

As well as promoting the type of behaviour that leads to the total elimination of accidents, the company is also investing in resources to improve safety performance.

The development of a bespoke alarm system at our block paving manufacturing plant in Coleford, to support the needs of an employee with severe disabilities and health-related issues, is an example of this approach. It also reflects the strategy of empowering business lines to take ownership of safety issues supported by, the company's professional health and safety advisors.

Identifying the issue

A long standing deaf- employee, who also has severe speech difficulties, had to undergo emergency surgery for a perforated bowel which resulted in an ileostomy being fitted to his chest for the collection of bowel waste.

The employee was an experienced operator who worked nights and whose duties required him to drive a fork lift truck.

On his return to work it was clear that he would now only be able to participate in a limited number of tasks. In particular, the required use of harnesses would interfere with his ileostomy, thereby restricting the ability to work in confined spaces and at height. Likewise, heavy lifting was also now not possible for him, because of the ileostomy.

In addition, there were further concerns that the employee's hearing and speech disabilities meant that he may not be able to raise the alarm if he was in difficulty and that he would be unable to hear the fire alarm if and when it sounded – which put him directly at risk on both counts especially in a lone working situation.

In order to ensure that the employee's welfare and safety were protected and that the company was following its best practise approach a root, and branch review of the situation was proposed by the site operations manager.

Recommendations/Actions

After a preliminary review by Hanson's internal Human Resources team and the H&S department its senior H&S advisor carried out an evaluation of the employee while working a normal night shift.

In addition, the employee subsequently underwent an independent occupational assessment in October 2011, completed by the Industrial Diagnostics Company (IDC).

This confirmed the points outlined above and that the restrictions are likely to be required for the foreseeable future.

Evidence

Since this time the following has been carried out at the plant;

RIG Systems, a specialist safety training, access and rescue company, carried out an on-site review of confined spaces with a view to accessing any need to reclassify. This resulted in two areas being reclassified to restricted access.

New harnesses & rescue equipment purchased comprising of a specialised rescue harness for the disabled employee.

Risk assessments reviewed to include the reclassification to restricted access, use of a designated snatch-rescue harness, 'man down' alarm, need for a sentry, appropriate rescue equipment, etc. This now allows the employee to participate in general cleaning duties in areas which were previously identified as confined spaces, therefore giving a greater contribution to the shift.

Specialist provider contacted for a demonstration of a 'man down' alarm and fire alarm for the deaf. Both have been trialled and proved successful and, as a result, have now been purchased. The 'man down' alarm is linked into a monitor which is situated within a control cabin and activates if the employee is not upright for more than 10 seconds

Fire alarm for the deaf has also been added to both the weekly fire alarm test and to periodic inspection by fire protection engineers, O'Heap.

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The employee now has a pager which is linked into site's fire alarm, which vibrates and displays a message if and when fire alarm is activated. The introduction of the pager allows us to increase communication for emergency situations, thereby significantly reducing risk.

Additional CCTV has been installed across the site including warehouse and maintenance areas.

All CCTV is now visible from a display screen in the control cabin.

Additional fire alarm with visual beacon has been installed in the warehouse.

Completion of a full lone working Risk assessment.

Visual / audible beacons have been installed on all fork lift trucks.

Additional convex mirrors installed to aid visibility.

Competency assessments completed in November 2012.

Summary, structured into Task, Problem, Solution & Result

Task: To ensure steps are taken to eliminate the risk of accidents.

Problem: To adapt safety support provision and internal H&S procedures to accommodate the needs of a disabled employee with further health-related issues which were impacting on his ability to perform his duties safely.

Solution: To use independent specialists to carry out an occupational assessment to advise on changes required to assure employee's on-going safety

Result: Implementation of the use of an extensive range of additional safety alarms and improved safety procedures.

ARTICLE IMAGES