

# Electricity Industry National Health and Safety Advisory Committee (HESAC) Update

June 2022



## Introduction

Throughout the Pandemic, the National Health and Safety Advisory Committee (HESAC) has met at least monthly to share best practice and coordinate national responses to COVID-19. We have also sought to make progress on other health and safety issues both through the HESAC and through its Powering Improvement sub-group as the industry has some demanding work to complete to enable us to move to a zero-injury sector.

The National HESAC last met on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2022 to discuss both COVID & non-Covid issues. This briefing summarises the key issues discussed at that second meeting.

# Key Issues Discussed

## COVID 19

- The latest COVID – 19 discussions were held during the meeting of the National HESAC 26<sup>th</sup> May 2022. Topics discussed included - How companies are moving to a more business as usual approach to managing COVID-19 with a move from pandemic to an endemic, which means that the disease is still around but that it's at a level that is not causing significant disruption in our daily lives and tasks across the sector; ensuring adequate levels of staff resourcing, ensuring suitable support to all staff in relation to COVID-19; ensuring learning from the pandemic is captured and good practice is sustained.

Continued support is encouraged by both companies and trade unions for joint health and safety inspections (TU rep involvement) and the continued encouragement of applying pragmatic caution when reducing controls in place to manage COVID-19 transmission. Companies continue to cautiously reduce the number of covid controls and measures in place whilst maintain certain measures that support new working such as hybrid style office working and meetings.

## Powering Improvement

- Corporate memory of the safety response to past incidents is an important issue as new recruits join the sector. The ENA welcomes feedback that can be fed in

to the [PI corporate memory section](#) of its website to support further sharing of industry knowledge and learning points from historic safety incidents.

- Safety and Health Data and case study information is being collated and the high level statistics will be placed into the 2021 PI SHE Review on Occupational Health which will also document progress against the PI aims and will showcase a series of company case studies in support of the objectives.
- Powering Improvement launches its 2022/2023 Delivery Plan for the theme of 'Promoting Positive Health and Safety Culture'. The Powering Improvement Steering Group (PISG) and a new Culture Subgroup will be responsible for delivering the outputs within it.

## Occupational Health

- Building on the good progress on safety, Companies and Trade Unions are committed to addressing the health issues that generate the vast majority of sickness absence. The three priority issues are:  
Mental health; Musculoskeletal disorders; and Management of fatigue.
- Energy UK with support from ENA held an Occupational Health Webinar in November: notes and presentations from the webinar were circulated to members of HESAC.

- A Healthy Workplaces Framework has been devised by ENAs Occupational Health Committee which documents the priorities and timeline of commitments over the coming years.
- A data survey questionnaire has been circulated to collate companies' current health reporting capabilities so that a collective industry template can be developed for future internal reporting. A benchmarking exercise is currently taking place to gather data to be showcased for 2020 and 2021 in the upcoming Powering Improvement SHE Review. This will also feature industry safety data.

## Cannabis Farms and first responders

- Following a question relating to Cannabis farms and first responders it was explained that supplier operatives are usually first in attendance, Network operator operatives often follow with requests to disconnect supply, usually carried out away from site, outside the property or remotely. This work is very rarely done alone (i.e. not lone working) with a risk assessment in place to ensure necessary support is identified and planned for in advance. Broadly companies have policies and procedures in place to manage these situations as and when they take place.

# Key Issues Discussed (Cont)

## Accident reports

- Powering Improvement Bulletins are now shared at National HESAC with a view to be discussed and disseminated via local company HESACs.
- Whilst each incident should be judged on its merits, common themes relate to PPE, risk assessment and task familiarity



### Driving – Wheel Loss Incident All liveryed vehicle drivers and Transport/Fleet teams

**OVERVIEW** – A company Ford Transit van was travelling at approx. 50mph on the carriageway when the off-side rear wheel became dislodged. The wheel bounced across the central reservation and hit the side of a van travelling in the opposite direction. Fortunately no one was injured. Four of the five wheel studs had sheared off. The one remaining stud did not have a nut attached, indicating the nut had previously fallen off. The vehicle was not fitted with wheel nut indicators. The vehicle had travelled 30 miles that morning. The incident is subject to an ongoing very serious investigation.



Companies to consider the call for Ford Transit vehicles with registration plates 12 to 64 to go to a transport approved garage to have the wheel nuts torque tested.

Companies to consider the issue of basic messaging via local HESACs.

- All drivers are reminded that it is essential to include vehicle checks are undertaken including the consideration of both visual and "finger" light checks on wheel nuts. If a nut is torqued correctly, it will not be possible to move the nut by finger testing. Wheel nut indicators should be checked as a minimum.
- Drivers are reminded to regularly check the gross and axle weight of their vehicle to ensure they are not overloaded.
- If you believe the vehicle is not safe to drive, contact your line manager or Transport/Fleet Services for further advice and guidance.
- If you are unsure of any of the above bullet points you should contact your line manager or fleet/transport services team to discuss.

***\*This is also a timely reminder of the importance of carrying out your routine vehicle checks.\****

## PI SHE Bulletins (dbl click to expand)



### Preservation of Products and Assets

Details: An external audit recently undertaken, saw the authors highlight a non-conformance for the condition of some of the pallets that were being used to store items such as Ring Main Units, Switchgear and Pole Mounted Transformers. The pallets were considered to be in poor condition due to their age and wearability and increased the risk of the items falling over or being unable to be lifted without fear of them falling apart.

The findings identified an expectation of product and does not meet quality requirements to protect the integrity of the equipment by inhibiting internal degradation and/or protecting them from external damage.

To raise awareness of the issue and ensure consistency across the sector, a new method of operation and reporting pallets damaged will be developed (to be considered). The document explains a visual representation of pallets deemed acceptable and not acceptable. This will be the standard for equipment to be stored in preparation for its use.

#### Points to Consider

Companies to consider raising awareness of the issue highlighted within their own company HESACs to provide proactive responses with local depot and regions to ensure any smaller products or assets in poor condition can be placed on an isolated storage yard.

Consider safe storage to ensure the assets/items can be easily accessed but also are kept away from things that can potentially negatively impact or degrade them.



Photo: Powering



### Driving – Know Your Weight Limits All HGV Drivers and Liveryed Drivers

#### Detail: Weight Restricted Bridges

Many bridges on the UK roads are weak and protected by structural weight limits to ensure no damage is caused to them. A weight restriction on a bridge refers to a mandatory limit meaning that any vehicle whose gross vehicle weight (GVW) exceeds the maximum gross weight (mgw) indicated for that bridge, must not be driven over it.

Using the plate weight means that an entering body only needs to check a vehicle's plate against the sign rather than checking the vehicle at a weigh bridge. As the limits are based on plated vehicle weights, if your vehicle's GVW is ABOVE the limit, the vehicle is banned from that composition.

What action is required?

***Companies to consider raising awareness via local HESACs to all Drivers.***  
***\*Ensure you know the plated weight of any vehicle you drive.\****

Weights Explained:

- It is the driver's responsibility to check the vehicle VIN (Vehicle Identification Number) plate for the maximum capabilities of each vehicle.
- Recommendations** when to weigh:
  - All vehicles should be weighed when fully loaded in their operating conditions including any passengers normally carried and a full tank of fuel tank at least once every 2 months.
  - On board of any change or renewal of vehicle.
  - Any change in type of load to be carried or hauled.
  - Any time the operator feels it necessary to be sure that they are not operating an over loaded vehicle or combination.

- The manufacturer's plate can usually be found in the following places:
  - Large van: it is usually found in the drivers or passengers' door well.
  - Small van: if not found as above can be located under the bonnet.
  - Large van: 3.5 tonne gross vehicle weight can be located in the door well.



### HAND TOOL and POWER TOOL Safety

Detail: Frequently we see an industry colleague suffering countless injuries as a result of using hand tools or hand held power tools. These injuries often require medical treatment and sometimes result in the away from work. We also see daily, still, the use of tools which are poorly maintained or unapproved tools and equipment are being used to carry out daily tasks introducing unnecessary risks to our colleagues.

Recent examples include:

- Injury to finger occurred while using a circular saw
- Injury to thumb using a cutting knife to strip cable
- Injury to thumb when finger on die was pressed.
- An operator used an unapproved metal back tools to remove the plastic duct from a cable, which resulted in a fall over when the duct pivoted the tool's cable.

Companies to consider the dissemination of the following messaging via local HESACs.

Our approved safety gloves are the last line of defence, professionals must still be taken over and above this when wearing the required hand protection. Our approved gloves offer varying levels of cut protection and reduce the likelihood of damage to the skin. However, working in truly out-of-proportion force, driven either by motion or weight, almost anything is penetrable.

When using any form of hand tool you should:

- Select the right tool for the job. If in doubt speak to your line manager/supervisor.
- Ensure any tool when you have been suitably trained.
- When using an approved tool make sure you always cut away from yourself.
- Always use eye protection and the correct approved gloves for the task, and wear protection when necessary.
- Be sure guards and safety switches operate on hand held power tools.
- Whenever appropriate, ensure that the materials you are working on are secured (i.e. vice, secured by other means).
- Use the correct technique when using a hand tool. Consider hand and body posture to prevent any injury should the hand tool unexpectedly move. (Consider keeping your hands and body out of the Line of Fire). This will help prevent injuries that could not be your fault.

***\*If you are wearing which tool is approved for a task or you do not have fully qualified tools please check with your line manager/supervisor immediately. When performing any task involving the use of tools or equipment, your attitude and professional skills are always paramount.***

Only wear hand tools for removing small items if your company allows this. Familiarise yourself with any procedures in place that you currently use a metal back tools, identify the approved tools for the task and ensure that they are suitable for you. Regularly inspect hand tools or your toolbox with the appropriate approval tools.

NEVER use an unapproved tool at work. It is your responsibility as well to ensure you use the correct company approved tools for the tasks you undertake at work.

# ENA Progress Update

- **Fatigue Management Task Force** - Electricity Member companies have produced a high level position paper on occupational fatigue management to guide and support local initiatives. The paper forms the basis for most companies approaches to managing occupational fatigue. The Task Force continues to meet to explore other avenues of collective value such as risk assessment and health campaigns.
- The **High Voltage Live Line Working Group** are reviewing safety in two key areas of live working. First, the review of ENA TS26-01 (Use of Insulated Operating Rods on Electrical Systems), has added a new annex providing guidance on the routine in service testing of live line rods and hollow or foam filled operating rods. Second, They are also undertaking a field trial of new approved electrical insulating gloves approved for Live Working in the UK and looking at issues of supply relating to insulating sleeves for live working. .
- **The Model Distribution Safety Rules** has been reviewed and a 2022 edition will be available in July.
- **A Healthy Workplaces Framework** has been devised by ENAs Occupational Health Committee which documents the priorities and timeline of commitments over the coming years.
- **A data survey questionnaire** has been circulated to collate companies' current health reporting capabilities so that a collective industry template can be developed for future internal reporting. A benchmarking exercise is currently taking place to gather data to be showcased for 2020 and 2021 in the upcoming Powering Improvement SHE Review. This will also feature industry safety data.
- **Electro-Magnetic Fields Strategy Committee** - Data from the existing industry Cohort Study is being used in a project to investigate any links between EMF exposure and motor neurone disease (MND). Centralised Personnel Information System (CPIS) data is being utilised as this records job histories of employees from 1972 onwards (>2000 staff). The project has been conducted by the University of Birmingham previously until recently where this responsibility has migrated into a project now led by the University of Warwick.
- The **ENA Training and Competency Committee** considered the findings and looked at how best to deliver the necessary refresher training initiatives suggested in the 2019 HSL report and develop industry best practice guidance. This includes development of a SAP profile on the expectations of authorised staff, and a review of operational refresher training arrangements. Learnings from this process either confirmed or have been incorporated within the companies' established training programmes.
- ENA are also looking at the work of the various UK telecom providers (TPs) and their required skills and competence to work on or associated with DNO LV poles. This work may lead to the introduction of a national accreditation scheme for TPs.
- The **Streetworks UK Working Group** and Expert Practitioner Group, is developing proposals for the utility sector on the assessment, testing and movement of excavated spoil as required by EA. The current exemption (RPS211) has been extended to the end of June 2022 in light of future planned work between industry and EA. A second Phase 2 testing programme for the identified hazardous waste streams is underway to determine the type and extent of hazardous waste material. All affected DNOs and GDNs have signed up to support this work and detailed guidance on the sampling programme has been issued by SWUK. Industry will need to present and deliver a revised industry Protocol and introduce appropriate systems and training by April 2023 at the latest.

# Trade Union Update

- The trade unions value the important work undertaken by the national HESAC, especially through the Powering Improvement initiative. With the evolution of COVID controls, there is a need to complete work in our priority areas if we are to continue progress towards zero accidents. The experience of Covid has shown that a partnership based on some simple goals can improve the quality of decisions, improve delivery and increase engagement. The challenge for 2022 is to maintain this approach and apply to other areas of safety.

## **Safety Culture**

- As we adjust to post COVID working practices, there is need to work in areas that we have identified as increasing staff commitment and engagement as we strive to eliminate accidents across the sector. Compliance alone will not deliver this target so we need to assess which cultural traits need enhancement to create a just safety culture.
- Given that the industry recruits, trains, manages and authorises its operational staff, it is important that we get some clarity on we develop a culture that avoids blaming individuals for systemic faults and that we feed into the following areas; Leadership; Staff competence & Learning from experience.

## **Fatigue Management**

- Fatigue management remains a significant challenge for the sector as the Winter storms demonstrated that extended working and standby have been a crucial

part of our response to customer expectations over restoration of supply.

- Whilst there is a need to identify maximum working periods and minimum rest breaks, success in fatigue management requires us to move beyond simple compliance with the working time regulations to address the underlying causes of fatigue and develop effective toolkits for individuals to measure their own fatigue and for managers and SAPs to assess the fatigue of staff they put to work. Therefore TUs will continue to work with companies to develop risk assessments that enable supervisors and SAPs to identify and respond to fatigue even when the individual has an incentive to continue working.

## **Occupational health**

- Mental ill health (Stress) remains the major cause of ill-health absence in the sector. Building on the various initiatives to maintain staff wellbeing during COVID, the unions are committed to developing effective mechanisms for identifying and reducing the cause of stress. In addition, value and support initiatives to increase awareness of factors that contribute to stress and the practical steps that can be taken to reduce stress. With the significant number of mental health first aiders in the sector, there is some value in assessing which initiatives have had the most impact on absence due to mental health.

- Particularly in light of the challenges of a return to hybrid work for many non-operational staff, there is some scope to share best practice as we did through the COVID group and to share steps that have been taken to improve staff week-being.
- MSDs: Musculoskeletal disorders remain a substantial challenge for the sector and sharing action to eliminate hazards and identify adjustments to working practices before individuals are absent from work remains important.
- Asbestos: With reduced activity on smart meters during the pandemic, the levels of safety concerns raised about asbestos have reduced. However it would helpful to analyse and share best practice on the responses to asbestos as disturbing asbestos remains a significant health hazard across the sector.

## **Conclusion**

We hope that this is a useful overview of the issues considered by national HESAC and welcome feedback from local Committees, both on the detail of local initiatives and on any additional items that you believe we should address.

For further information on the items within this briefing, a full set of minutes of the meeting held 26<sup>th</sup> May 2022 can be found on the Powering Improvement website - [www.poweringimprovement.org/national-hesac/](http://www.poweringimprovement.org/national-hesac/)

We welcome feedback on these points.

## **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of National HESAC is scheduled 29<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

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