Kent Health & Safety Group

**3 November 2011**

**Larkfield Village Halls**

#### Minutes

# Attendance List

Russell Mees AEM Ltd

C Shepherd KCC

Ian West WKHA (visitor)

Paul Durkin Retired

Richard Pavey Retired

Barry Evans Thurrock Council

Gary Hewitt Gravesham Borough Council

Doug Chenery Retired

Eddie Adrian Retired

Mark Curry UPM Tilhill

Colin Norgate Just 4 Safety

Philip Fairhurst Park Leisure

Richard Travers Berkeley Group

Carol Cassin KCC

John McNeil AMKW

Mark Ogden Thames Laboratories

Chris Pike UPM Tilhill

### Apologies for absence

Dave Tyler, Doug Baguley, Greg Buckley and Peter Skinner MEP

## **Welcome to members and visitors**

The Chair welcomed members to the November meeting of the Kent Health and Safety.

**Asbestos Management**

The Chair introduced John Richards from Thames Laboratories and commented that asbestos is very topical at the moment.

John began his presentation by explaining that he had been involved with the asbestos sector for 27 years during which time he had seen various changes in the regulations. He sits on various asbestos related boards.

During his presentation he made the following points:

* He said that asbestos fibres are very small, not visible to the naked eye, have no smell, no taste and do not irritate.
* Everyone is aware of the risks of asbestos, but what makes it different to other building materials?
* In 2006, 111 people died of asbestos related illness.
* The number claiming disability benefit dropped to 690.

A short film was shown of workers in India wearing no protective equipment whilst working with asbestos. India imports asbestos from Canada and turns it into a wide variety of products. The conditions shown in the film could easily have been in China or Russia.

Asbestos sufferers include:

* Asbestos manufacturers;
* Insulators;
* Construction workers;
* Asbestos applicators;
* Dockers.

Between 1981 and 2005, there were 684 mesothelioma deaths in Kent.

The 2006 statistics show that deaths predominantly from asbestos lung cancers and mesothelioma were made up of 3 plumbers, 20 tradesmen, 6 electricians and 6 joiners.

Mesothelioma is caused by exposure to lower levels of asbestos attacking the lining of the lung. Deaths generally occur as a result of both occupational exposure and non-occupational exposure. In 2009, 2629 deaths were recorded. The suggested peak for deaths is likely to be in 2016 for males.

There are no recorded figures for lung cancer, but it is assumed that for every mesothelioma death, there is one lung cancer death.

Why are deaths increasing while asbestosis deaths decline?

* In the UK there are over 10 million buildings believed to contain asbestos;
* Much of this is over 30 years old and its condition is deteriorating;
* A generation have entered construction with no idea what the material looks like.

Who is at risk?

* Plumbers, tradesmen, electricians, surveyors.

What have they all in common?

* They work in buildings disturbing materials that could contain asbestos.

30 years ago, 2 fibres/cc was deemed acceptable exposure. Today 0.1 fibres/cc is acceptable. This equates to 100,000 fibres per cubic metre.

It has been suggested by the Health Council of Netherlands that this should be reduced to 0.001 f/ml for building background level for asbestos.

Non-occupational mesothelioma has been identified in housewives, teachers, doctors and bankers. The youngest victim is a 28 year old lady. The source of her mesothelioma has not been found.

Duty to manage is one of the key weapons the HSE has developed to ensure the management of asbestos. Regulation 4DTM is one of the most expensive regulations in history. In Kent only 40% of businesses visited were compliant with the regulation. The HSE have suggested that only 16% of retail premises are compliant. Research by other groups suggest that only 30% of educational establishments are compliant.

What changes are needed?

* Improved compliance with DTM. RICS and others are pointing out the differences in mechanisms for EPC/DEC and asking why the model of enforcement is not followed for asbestos.
* Greater asbestos awareness. Today’s students on plumbing and electrical courses are not being given awareness training.

The revision to the control of asbestos regulations 2006 is out for consultation at the moment. The deadline is 4 November. The revision has come about because the EU has decided that the HSE had not implemented the regulations correctly.

The question was asked as to whether if there was a fire in an asbestos roof, it would become non asbestos material. John replied that this was not the case.

Common sense is needed by workmen; they should test first to see if there is asbestos. When contractors were clearing up the Arndale Building after the IRA bomb, they were not at all prepared for asbestos.

John was asked who would be the duty holders in the many offices which are leased. He replied that it depended on the lease, but went on to say that if you were planning a long-term stay and had asbestos in the building, you should seriously think about having it removed. Before signing a lease, you should make sure that asbestos is included in the contract.

The Chair thanked John for his presentation.

**General Business**

* **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

* **Correspondence**

The Secretary reported that he had put the usual selection on the table at the back of the room; this included information on a free fire seminar in London, information from Posturite and from Chemwatch and information on a welfare and benefits system seminar.

The Chair had also received information from Roy Smith of Denios who offered a presentation to the group on DSEAR regulations.

* **Website**

The Secretary said that any information that members want displayed on the Group’s website should be sent in to him. Members were reminded to check the website in the event of wintery weather.

* **HSE update**

Mike Walters had sent information regarding new pesticides regulations which came into force on 24 September – Plant Protection Products Regulations 2011. HSE guidance on enforcement for Inspectors can be found at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/foi/internalops/sectors/ag_food/011103.htm>

Paul Durkin reported that consultation for the event safety guide closes on 11 November.

* **Update from other organisations**

**RoSPA** documents issue 15 and 16 were available at the back of the room.

The next **IOSH** meeting will be held on 8 November, the subject being Fire Safety. IOSH meetings are now held in the Clive Emerson Building at Kent Showground.

* **Help! / Learning experiences**

Chris Pike asked members for their views as to whether somebody stung by a wasp whilst at work and then off work for more than 3 days should be counted as ill-health or RIDDOR. It was generally considered as ill-health.

Barry Evans reported that Thurrock Council had been selected for the HSE’s waste strategy. They had had day one of the inspection which covered the procurement process. He advised that the HSE will be looking at previous documentation. The will let the Group know about day 2 of the inspection.

Mark Curry explained that earlier in the year he had seen a gas tank with no protective fencing outside a pub. He had contacted the HSE about it. When he went back recently he found that it now had compliant fencing.

* **Accidents and dangerous occurrences**

Chris Pike reported on an incident that had occurred when working on a remote hillside on the coast of Scotland. A helicopter and rope was being used to get fencing up the hillside. They ran out of 14 mm rope and used 12 mm instead, however on the second load the rope broke and large amounts of fencing material fell to the ground. Fortunately no-one was hurt.

**Any other business**

Group members were reminded that it had been agreed to dedicate a meeting of the Group to Stuart Markey. As the December meeting last year was the first meeting without him, it was agreed that it will be the December meeting that is dedicated to him.

The Secretary advised members that the closing date for entries to the Alan Butler award is 30 November.

Members were offered a Safety Groups UK card which will give them a 15% discount at ARCO. Cards will be given out to new members.

**Next meeting**

The next meeting will take place on 1 December 2011 when Colin Smith of Central Weighing will give a talk on Vehicle Overloading.