



# ORR occupational health programme update

October 2015

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## Summary

This quarterly brief updates you on progress with some of the work under ORR's Occupational Health programme 2014-19, to inform discussions on health with ORR inspectors. We have identified key messages for rail duty holders and would welcome feedback.

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### This issue focuses on:

- Stress – New case study and what are you doing for National Stress Awareness Day?
- Is Occupational Health just a NICE to have or business critical? Sometimes the figures do the talking
- Training- Raising the competence of managers and supervisors
- Dust – Do you know the score – New guidance site available

## 1 Stress– New case study and what are you doing for national stress awareness day?

National Stress Awareness Day (NSAD) is on the 4<sup>th</sup> November this year. Now in its 17<sup>th</sup> year, NSAD is organised by the International Stress Management Association (ISMAUK), and aims to raise awareness of the effects of psychological distress in the workplace and the many coping strategies and sources of help available to address it. This year's primary theme being promoted by the ISMA is "Employee Wellbeing as a Worthwhile Investment in Your Business".

To support individuals and organisations on National Stress Awareness Day, ISMAUK provides a number of [downloadable support materials](#) as well as a number of ideas that businesses can use to promote and highlight the day. If you haven't already got a plan for the day, this offers a great way of highlighting the issues of stress and making stress part of your occupational health agenda.

Stress is an area that causes a substantial amount of illness in our sector and prolonged absences. To help organisations manage this issue we have published [a position paper on stress](#) as well as case studies to highlight good work that is happening across the industry. We recently published a [case study involving Alstom](#) which nicely illustrates the effect that small changes in practice can have on your employee's health and your business' performance. We are always keen to hear your feedback on case studies or if you feel you have a case study you would like to share with us, please get in touch (Email: [occupational.health@orr.gov.uk](mailto:occupational.health@orr.gov.uk))

## **2. Is occupational health just a NICE to have or business critical? Sometimes the figures do the talking.**

The [National Institute for Health and Care Excellence \(NICE\)](#) has published a new guideline on workplace policy and the management practices to improve the health and wellbeing of employees.

One of the key features is that they have provided a 'ready reckoner' to help businesses visualise the economic impacts of different types of occupational health interventions with respect to both the health of employees, and the financial impact on the firm. Clearly, this tool could be a valuable to those in human resources, health and safety, occupational health, and line management who wish to 'sell' not only the legal and ethical virtues of managing occupational health in a proactive manner but also economically. The tool relies on economic evidence demonstrating the impact of occupational health workplace policy and management practices on the financial performance of firms. This echoes work currently being undertaken by RSSB who are developing a financial benefit tool for health interventions.

Several case studies are included on NICE's website as are guidance notes to explain the model. We at the ORR would be interested in hearing from anybody who uses this tool (by emailing: [occupational.health@orr.gov.uk](mailto:occupational.health@orr.gov.uk)) and the results they get. The management practices and policies highlighted by NICE echo the findings of ORR's recent occupational health railway industry report '[Better health is happening](#)'. Within this report one of the key findings was that the [RM3 \(Railway Management Maturity Model\)](#) scores for occupational health management remain significantly and consistently below those seen for managing safety. We want to see rail companies make more use of RM3 for health and identify key

areas for improvement, particularly in relation to monitoring and review of compliance with legal duties on health. Claire Dickinson is due to discuss RM3 health appraisals and how to assess health risk using RM3, if this is of interest to your company please get in touch.

### **3. Training – Raising the competence of managers and supervisors**

September saw the first pilot Level 3 course of ‘Management of Health and Wellbeing in the Railway’ run by the CITB and hosted by TPE at their excellent facilities in Huddersfield. The course is aimed at general managers and supervisors who have responsibility for the health and wellbeing of those in the rail industry and has been developed with ORR’s support. The course was attended by a number of TOCs, Network Rail and the ORR and was a great way of sharing best practice and ensuring compliance by giving real life scenarios and solutions for line managers. Overall the course was a success; keep watching this space for further updates as the course syllabus further refines, testing it as a 2-day course in our next pilot in February. Get in touch if your company would be interested as we continue to develop it for accreditation with NEBOSH. Our recent Better Health is Happening Report confirmed that building the competence of managers and supervisors in health risk management is essential if the industry is to move towards consistent legal compliance.

The British Heart Foundation are currently running health at work champions courses that aim to:

- Gives information about our workplace health resources and how to use them
- Provide tips on how to make your workplace health programme a success
- Gives an opportunity to network with other workplace health champions.

For information on this course visit the [British Heart Foundation website](#) .

### **4. Dust – Do you need know the score? New guidance site available**

The HSE launched its ‘[Dust Hub](#)’ section of its website back in August. The dust hub brings together much of the valuable guidance and links already on the HSE website, to help organisations navigate through the various issues they need to consider. The hub is a timely reminder of the focus that is being placed by the ORR and other health and safety regulators on this health hazard because of the potentially serious risks posed.

Within the railway many operations will cause the production of dust and depending on a number of factors this can cause ill health effects. The control of exposure to silica dust, in particular, is a priority area for ORR. Silica is a natural substance found in most rocks, sand and clay and in products such as bricks and of course ballast. These materials create

dust when they are cut, sanded, carved, disturbed etc. Silica dust is a particular issue in work with ballast on the railway. The fine dust produced when working with ballast is called respirable crystalline silica (RCS) and importantly is too fine to see with normal lighting. The ORR expects all those working on the rail network to be managing dusts (including silica dust) and the launch of the 'dust hub' provides yet another useful tool to do this.

## Key messages:

- If you are generating dust and are unsure of where to start there is plenty of guidance [available](#).
- If you produce dust you need to be assessing the risks, through a COSHH assessment. What dust is produced? Who is exposed? For how long? How much? What are your controls?
- There is plenty of guidance on the technical information you need to comply with such as monitoring of dust levels.
- Always remember the hierarchy of control when dealing with any substance that falls under COSHH. Can you eliminate the use? If not, can you substitute for something less harmful? If not, are there engineering controls you can use, such as local exhaust ventilation? The bottom of the hierarchy will be Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) or Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This needs to be justified in any COSHH assessment
- If you using RPE, are you using the correct type? Are your employees trained to use it? Are they face fit tested and by an accredited face –fitter?
- Do your employees need health surveillance? If so what type? By who? How often?
- Managing the occupational health risks caused by dust needs to be planned and thought out, there is plenty of guidance to help with this.

Use of the name, the Office of Rail and Road, reflects the new highways monitor functions conferred on ORR by the Infrastructure Act 2015. Until this name change is confirmed by legislation, the Office of Rail Regulation will continue to be used in all documents, decisions and matters having legal effects or consequences.



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