

EDITOR'S COMMENT

The Protected Disclosures Act 2014, better known as the 'Whistleblowers Act', is Ireland's first overarching piece of legislation to cover employees who make 'protected disclosures' about wrongdoing in the public, private and non-profit sectors. It covers all employees, contractors, agency workers, and members of An Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces.

Prior to the introduction of the Act, protection for whistleblowers was contained in numerous pieces of legislation targeted only at specific issues such as child abuse and health and safety matters. The new legislation will provide a more general protection for workers who make 'protected disclosures' under the Act.

Furthermore, the scope of the wrongdoing covered is much wider than just financial misdemeanours. It includes all illegality including health and safety breaches and failure to meet laws on minimum wages and other working conditions.

This issue of 'Health & Safety Times' gets reaction to the new legislation from trade unions and employers alike. SIPTU says it will augment the provisions of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, while IMPACT notes it will protect workers against victimisation or discrimination, including unfair dismissal. Meanwhile, ICTU is currently drawing up a model whistleblowing policy for enterprises.

However, whilst welcoming the new legislation in principle, employers' group IBEC has major concerns in relation to the levels of compensation available to whistleblowers.

There's no doubt this long-awaited legislation whistleblowers is likely to have far-reaching consequences for both employers and employees, but at least it's now a level-playing field for all concerned.

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5 NEWS UPDATE

The seventh 'Health & Safety Ireland Conference & Exhibition' will again bring decision-makers from various disciplines and communities together to the RDS on 4-5 March 2015.



13 EURO NEWS

A new web platform on safety and health at work – OSHwiki – which now connects experts globally, was launched at the XX World Congress on Safety and Health at Work in Frankfurt.



19 NISO NEWS

The Health and Safety Authority will join NISO to co-host a conference on 2-3 October, to celebrate 25 years since the establishment of the Authority in 1989.



21 IOSH NEWS

The novel and unique 'Bring Your Boss' theme at this year's IOSH Ireland annual conference outlined how employers and line managers can work together to reduce risk in the workplace.



26 SPECIAL REPORT

The Protected Disclosures Act 2014 has the potential to have far-reaching consequences for businesses and organisations throughout the state, with particular implications for those working within the health and safety sector.



30 CHEMICAL REGULATION

The new Classification, Labelling and Packaging (CLP) regulations for substances and mixtures, due to be enforced by 1 June 2015, will have far-reaching consequences for all those who supply and use hazardous chemicals.



32 SAFE PASS PROGRAMME

Since the Safe Pass programme was set up in 2000, this safety initiative, which makes it a legal requirement that all workers on construction sites are trained, qualified and certified in construction health and safety procedures, has been the subject of mixed appraisal.



35 CONSTRUCTION SAFETY

A new health and safety campaign aims to increase 'Safety at Heights' on construction sites around the country to curb the high number of fatalities due to falls from height over last five years.



37 CORRIB GAS PROJECT

Over the past five years, the construction industry has had 41* fatalities. So, what does Shell do to keep workers safe on the Corrib Gas Project – one of Ireland's biggest building sites?

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41 WORKPLACE LEGISLATION

A company's health and safety duties extend beyond its own employees to third parties and sub-contractors, but just how far do these duties go? Appropriate protective and preventive measures will ensure the health and safety of those affected by your work activities.



43 MERCURY ENGINEERING

Mercury Engineering has developed and implemented an integrated continuous improvement strategy with exceptional senior management support, which has been distributed through each layer of this multidisciplinary engineering contractor in a clear and concise manner.



45 WALSH MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

Walsh Mechanical Engineering (part of the Walsh Group) is putting together new initiatives for this year's NISO/NISG Occupational Safety Awards, following its West Regional Award in 2013.



47 HEALTH SCREENING

The Construction Workers Health Trust's on-site health screening continues to provide all workers with a thorough medical examination, which includes tests for blood pressure, cholesterol, BMI, lung function and diabetes.



48 PUBLIC LIABILITY ACCIDENTS

Over 1,700 public liability awards were made in 2013; slips, trips and falls were by far the main cause of public liability accidents, with compensation totaling €44 million awarded.



49 FARM SAFETY

The high death toll of 19 farming fatalities so far this year, which serves to highlight the importance of implementing sustained changes in safety behaviour in the agriculture sector, was top of the agenda at the national farm safety conference in Kilkenny.



53 UK NEWS

The Trades Union Congress is concerned that the government is seeking to undermine the universal coverage and its simplicity of the Health and Safety at Work Act (which this year celebrates its 40th anniversary) by removing most self-employed workers from its protection.



58 INTERNATIONAL NEWS

The World Health Organisation is calling for an end to the targeting of health workers in conflicts and humanitarian crises, which represent a breach of the fundamental right to health.



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