

## Environmental and Waste Management Group



### February 2020 Newsletter

#### **LEGISLATION, REGULATORS, GUIDANCE & CONSULTATIONS**

##### **Dust and bioaerosol exposure at municipal waste handling sites**

Health & Safety Executive (HSE) has published its 2019 research report [RR1151 - Dust and bioaerosol exposure at municipal waste handling sites](#). Improvements in health and safety performance in the waste sector is a priority for HSE. Government targets for reducing the amount of waste that goes to landfill have led to an increase in processing of municipal waste to reclaim recyclable material and produce biomass fuel for energy. The collection, separation and composting of municipal waste generates organic dust and bioaerosols which may cause occupational health problems if worker exposure is not effectively controlled.

This report describes research to better understand the health risks to workers during bulk handling of organic waste at waste transfer stations, mechanical and biological treatment plants and energy from waste power station. To highlight what control standards are achievable, only companies recognised as employing good health risk management practices were recruited for this study. Data and information was obtained during 13 site visits.

The research identified that whilst worker exposures generally were relatively low, three activities did pose a risk of higher exposure to dust, endotoxin, fungi and bacteria:

- (i) cleaning and maintenance,
- (ii) sorting and refining after bio-drying: and
- (iii) hand sorting recovered dry cell batteries.

Advances in plant and process design have helped to minimise the number of workers exposed and to improve exposure control. However, further improvements can be made, particularly in the design of engineering controls to prevent spillages and subsequent exposure, and in methods to minimise exposure during cleaning and maintenance activities.

##### **Review of airborne antimicrobial resistance**

The Environmental Agency (EA) has published a brief report of the findings of a short project that explored the current state of knowledge on airborne antimicrobial resistance. (Read more: [gov.uk](#))

## **Updated Landfill Guidance**

The end of January saw the publication on gov.uk of various guidance updates on landfilling e.g. environmental setting, designing and building and inert landfilling. (Read more: [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk))

### **How to restore your landfill site to meet permit conditions.**

The environment Agency has published a guide for landfill site operators, or their contractors, who are restoring a landfill site. Landfill restoration is not part of the landfill (disposal) activity. Landfill restoration is the placement of an even layer of material on top of the landfill to return the land to beneficial use. At landfills for hazardous or non-hazardous waste this is on top of any cap protection soil layer that is part of the engineered containment system. (Read more: [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk))

## **INCIDENTS AND PROSECUTIONS**

### **Waste management company fined after worker suffers leg amputation**

A London based waste management company in London has been fined £140,000 after an agency worker suffered lower leg amputation after being struck by a moving excavator in 2017; the worker, who had been observing a tipping activity in the blind spot of the excavator, had his leg crushed by the machine which had reversed to accommodate another vehicle tipping off waste in an adjacent part of the site.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector John Spence said: “This incident was entirely preventable and has caused a permanent and life-changing injury to a young agency worker. The company failed to implement an adequate system of monitoring of agency workers on site who were therefore, in effect, left to manage themselves without necessary oversight from the company. Any company that uses agency workers are required to extend the same duty of care to them as their own direct employee.” (Read more: [hse.gov.uk](https://www.hse.gov.uk))

### **HSE reacts to sentencing of a man for threatening inspector**

A senior inspector at Britain’s workplace regulator has stressed that the organisation will not tolerate violence, aggression or abuse of its staff after a man was sentenced for a public order offence. A HSE inspector was conducting an inspection of a waste and recycling site in Teesside in August 2019 when they were verbally abused and physically threatened. (Read more: [hse.gov.uk](https://www.hse.gov.uk))

### **Waste management and packing company fined after worker was injured**

A Glasgow based waste management and packing company has been fined £20,000 after a worker was struck by a falling 500kg bale of compacted waste paper in 2016.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Jane Scott said: “In the waste and recycling sector the risks associated with falling objects are well known. This incident could easily have been avoided by providing a segregated workspace for operatives to clean bales before they are stacked and safe bale stacking procedures.” (Read more: [hse.gov.uk](https://www.hse.gov.uk))

## **OTHER TOPICS OF INTEREST**

### **People putting their lives at risk by taking shelter in bins**

A new study by waste management company Biffa, the Open University and the Chartered Institution of Wastes Management (CIWM) has found that as homelessness figures rise in the UK action needs to be taken to stop people putting their lives at risk by taking shelter in bins. The report, '[Research into the issues associated with people sleeping in waste containers](#)', calls for a collaborative approach amongst waste companies, waste producers, homeless charities and the general public to tackle the issue, noting since a previous 2014 survey –

- The UK homeless population has significantly increased in recent years, meaning more people are at risk (Data source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2019)
- 35% of waste companies discovered people sleeping in bins within the last 12 months, compared to 21% in 2014
- Only 40% of commercial bins in use are fitted with working locks, which is the same as in 2014 despite industry guidelines
- People are discovered taking shelter in bins all year round – this is not just a winter problem
- There have been seven known fatalities in the past five years from people sleeping in bins (Data source: Health & Safety Executive)

### **Outdoor worker exposure to air pollution**

Outdoor workers in London are exposed to 15% more pollution than the average person, new research by the British Safety Council has revealed.

The British Safety Council launched the 'Time to Breathe' campaign in March 2019, offering the 'Canary app', developed by King's College London, free to give outdoor workers and employers information about air pollution exposure as well as providing free advice and guidance. The app gathers data based on London's air quality monitoring stations and provides individual users with a read-out of the air pollution they are exposed to at work.

Over six months the Canary app has gathered data from a sample of Londoners and initial data release from British Safety Council confirms that outdoor workers are put at more risk than average Londoners, being exposed to air pollution averages higher than guidelines for NO<sub>2</sub>, particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub>) and Ozone. (Read more: [pbctoday.com](http://pbctoday.com))

## **SEMINARS AND CONFERENCES**

### **Health and Wellbeing at Work**

The conference, at the NEC in Birmingham on 10 & 11 March, will profile national developments, service innovations, best practice and the latest research. Presentations will consider the state of positive psychology coaching and its value to organisations, and autistic women in the workplace as part of its neurodiversity programme. The legal programme will consider data protection from an employment law perspective, whistle blowing and public interest, and staff surveillance. (Read more: [healthwellbeingwork.co.uk](http://healthwellbeingwork.co.uk))

### **CIWM Resource Conference Cymru 2020**

'Maintaining momentum towards a circular economy' CIWM's resource conference in Cardiff on 18 March includes speakers on Wales' biggest recycling campaign, electric vehicle adoption, community empowerment, waste crime and circular economy principles in business. (Read more: [ciwm.co.uk](http://ciwm.co.uk))

### **Future of Gas III: informing a safe decision by 20205 – part of the safety excellence in energy series**

Hosted by HSE in Birmingham on 25 & 26 March, the conference will look at how decarbonisation can happen in the UK, and the importance of the future of the gas system to achieve this. Keynote speakers will share knowledge, insight and current thinking to overcome the health and safety challenge of innovating and regulating this growing area of new technology, plus views on the future of gas at a global level. (Read more: [hsl.gov.uk](http://hsl.gov.uk))