The European Union’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will change how companies and individuals collect, store and share data. The new law will apply in all EU states from 25 May 2018. GDPR will replace the Data Protection Act 1998 in the UK.

With recent data breaches at organisations such as Facebook and Uber, GDPR will give organisations tougher rules on how they can collect and use data. The GDPR will apply to all data "controllers" or "processors". Controllers determine the means and purpose of processing personal data. Processors are responsible for processing personal data on behalf of a controller.

The GDPR applies to all personal data. That means any information that could identify a living person, directly or indirectly. This could include their name, location, phone number and email address. Some personal information is classed as sensitive by the GDPR, and needs more protection. That could include ethnic origin, sexual orientation, etc.

Anyone will be able to ask a company to confirm what personal data it has about them. That person has the right to be provided with a copy of the information - as well as the reason for that company collecting their personal data and who gets to see it. The company will need to supply this information free of charge and in an accessible way. Individuals can also ask for data to be corrected, if it is not accurate.

People will also be able to ask for their personal data to be deleted at any time - if it's no longer relevant. This is known as the right to be forgotten.

Organisations with more than 250 employees must document all of the data they are processing, including why, how customers opted in, who can see the data, and a description of their security measures. Smaller companies might need only to document data they process on a regular basis, or data they process that is sensitive.

Fines for not complying with GDPR are set to be significant.

More information about GDPR is available from the Information Commissioner’s Office at [https://ico.org.uk/](https://ico.org.uk/).
Accident / incident ratios have come in for some criticism in recent years, but many people believe they can still add value to their safety management efforts.

**Studies by Heinrich and Bird**

Herbert Heinrich worked for a large insurance company. During his time at the company, he collected and analysed accident data. His work was conducted over about 30 years and indicated that for every 1 major injury, there were 29 minor injuries and 300 non-injury accidents.

- 1 major injury
- 29 minor injuries
- 300 non-injury incidents

Criticism of Heinrich’s work is centred around the volume of data and weaknesses in the way he used it to draw his conclusions.

Frank E. Bird, built on Heinrich’s work by analysing more than 1.7 million accidents reported by 297 co-operating companies. Bird also worked in the insurance industry. Bird’s work suggested that the ratio between fatal accidents, accidents, injuries and minor incidents (often reported as 1-10-30-600).

Bird’s work was based on a larger data set, and his methods are generally regarded as being more robust than Heinrich’s, but there are still limitations with his findings.

- 1 serious or major injuries
- 10 minor injuries
- 30 property damage incidents
- 300 near misses / close calls

**Key limitations**

Bird said himself, that such ratios are of a certain group of organisations at a given point in time. This inevitably will mean that the numbers should not be taken too literally as they will change given a different group of organisations at different safety-maturity stages at different points in time.

**Key lessons**

Other studies have been conducted since Bird’s work. While the numbers in the ratio may change, there are some general lessons that can be drawn from the body of work:

- For every serious injury, you can expect there to be a larger number of minor injuries—to property-damage incidents—to near misses and close calls
- Underpinning the accident / incident ratios are the unsafe acts and unsafe conditions that contribute towards the incidents and accidents

Frequently an argument is made that reducing the frequency of incidents at the base of the pyramid will lead to less severe accidents occurring higher up the pyramid.

However, recent thinking has challenged this theory. Instead it is suggested that a reduction in low severity incidents will not necessarily lead to a reduction in more severe accidents. The main reason for this is that they may not share common causes.

Another challenge to the theory is that by placing emphasis on events lower down the pyramid, less emphasis may be placed on and less resources directed towards, dealing with events higher up the pyramid. An example of this was seen in the 2007 report that followed the Texas City Refinery explosion in 2005. The report suggested that BP had interpreted improving personal injury rates as an indication of acceptable process safety performance. BP’s reliance on this data, combined with an inadequate process safety understanding, created a false sense of confidence that process safety risks were being addressed.

**Actions you can take**

Despite the limitations, accident ratios can serve as a useful measurement tool in support of your improvement efforts. For example, you can:

- Build your own accident and incident ratio, based on the information you have available within your organisation
- Monitor change in the ratio over time to quantify the effectiveness of your improvement efforts
- Encourage non-injury incident (near miss or close call) reporting so that root causes can be established and measures can be put in place to prevent similar incidents happening again

John Constable, Director HSQE Ltd.
Nearly a quarter of British construction workers believe they have been exposed to asbestos fibres, according to a survey by the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH). The survey was published by IOSH to coincide with the launch of its latest No Time To Lose occupational cancer campaign.

The survey also found:

- 59% of workers said they have been informed about the risks of working with asbestos, and that this had been reinforced regularly with training.
- 15% said they have never been informed about asbestos.
- Around a third of construction workers have never checked the asbestos register before starting work on a new site.
- Just under one in five (18%) said if they found asbestos they would be unsure or have no idea of what to do.

A waste management company has been sentenced after a 56-year-old man was fatally injured in a lorry runaway incident at a hospital in Plymouth.

Plymouth Crown Court heard how, on 8 June 2015, Lee Jane, an employee of Viridor Waste Management Ltd, was working at Derriford Hospital. Mr Jane had been using a lorry and trailer to remove skips of ash from the incinerator within the hospital premises. He had parked his lorry and trailer on a downward sloping road outside of the incinerator building.

Mr Jane was in the process of coupling the lorry to the skip trailer on this road when he lost control of the vehicle combination. He attempted to prevent the vehicle runaway, but was drawn under the trailer and sustained fatal injuries.

The runaway vehicles continued rolling downhill and collided with the hospital radio building.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) established the handbrake of the lorry had not been applied. The investigation also found that there was no suitable and sufficient specific risk assessment to address the waste collection operation on site and in consequence the work had not been appropriately planned.

During the course of the trial, Viridor Waste Management Limited pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 3(1)(a) of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 in relation to the failure to conduct a suitable and sufficient risk assessment of the work being undertaken. The Company has been fined £237,500 and ordered to pay costs of £128,428.94.
IOSH Safety for Executives and Directors

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**IOSH Safety for Executives and Directors** is for senior staff with strategic responsibility for health and safety. It is suited to executives, directors and board members. It explains the case for good health and safety performance, along with how health and safety can be managed alongside other organisational priorities. Assessment is via a tutor-marked personal statement.

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NHS trust fined for death following legionella exposure

Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust has been fined £300,000 after failing to control the risk to patients from exposure to legionella bacteria in its water systems.

Bristol Crown Court heard how, in July 2015, Mr Terence Brooks, a 68-year-old patient at Bath’s Royal United Hospital, died from legionnaires’ disease. Following Mr Brooks’ death, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) launched an investigation which found that the Trust had failed to put in place all of the necessary precautions to minimise the risk to patients in the annex to the William Budd ward from exposure to legionella.

The HSE’s investigation identified that the annex to the William Budd Ward is on a separate loop of the hospital’s water system to that which supplies the main ward. This important fact had not been recognised by the Trust from the opening of the annex in 2009 until Mr Brooks’ death in July 2015. The failure meant the required temperature checks and tests for the presence of legionella bacteria in the water had not been carried out in the annex over this period.

Tests carried out after Mr Brooks’ death revealed problems with water temperatures in the annex and legionella bacteria were found in water samples taken from outlets in all five isolation suites in the annex to the William Budd ward.

The strain of legionella bacteria which caused Mr Brooks’ death was not the same as that found in the water system. However, HSE concluded there was sufficient evidence to prosecute the Trust for exposing patients to risks from legionella bacteria in its water systems.

Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and has been fined £300,000 and ordered to pay costs of £37,451.78.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Susan Chivers said: “Legionnaires’ disease is a type of pneumonia which can be fatal and people who are being treated in hospital are especially susceptible to infection. That is what makes RUH’s failings in legionella management all the more concerning. “RUH had measures in place to prevent and control the risk to its patients from exposure to legionella from its water systems, but these were ineffective due to the Trust not having accurate knowledge of the layout of those water systems.”

“All organisations have a responsibility to manage their water systems to protect people from the risk of legionella infection. It is essential that organisations review their risk control measures whenever there is reason to suspect that they are no longer valid or when there are changes to a water system.”

Fall through fragile roof

Southern Solar Ltd and an individual have been fined after a worker fell through a fragile barn roof.

Brighton Crown Court heard how a farmer had contacted Southern Solar Ltd to fit 100 solar panels. The company subcontracted the fitting of the panels to a rope access company, Sky High Rope Access Ltd, run by Sonya French.

During the installation, two operatives went onto the roof intending to run a rope along the ridge of the barn and attach it to a large tree, but the roof gave way. One of the operatives, David Mattison, 23, fell approximately 8m through the roof. He spent six months in hospital and is now in a wheelchair, unable to walk.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) into the incident found the person put in charge of planning and supervising the work had never previously worked on a fragile roof. The investigation also found the method statement prepared was totally inadequate as rope access is generally not suitable to be used on fragile roofs.

Southern Solar Ltd was found guilty of breaching Regulation 4 (1)(a) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005. The company, who have gone into administration, were fined £1.

Sonya French was found guilty of breaching Section 37 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. She was given a 20 month custodial sentence suspended for two years and ordered to carry out 240hrs unpaid work. She was also ordered to pay costs of £5000.
Fine for explosion that put worker in coma and caused life changing injuries

Greenseal Insulation Ltd, a company specialising in spray foam insulation services, have been fined after an inexperienced worker suffered severe burns while attempting to refuel petrol powered equipment.

Southwark Crown Court heard how, on 11 January 2015, workers were spraying insulation into a ceiling cavity of a retail outlet. The foam spraying equipment was installed in a van parked outside the premises. When foam ceased from the spray gun, one of the operatives entered the van to refuel the equipment. A jerry can was fixed with straps within the compartment containing a compressor and generator (both petrol operated). The worker took the jerry can, opened it and petrol sprayed over him and the compartment. Ignition followed immediately, covering him in flames. Following the event he was in a coma in hospital for three months and subsequently spent over a year in hospital.

The HSE investigation into the incident found that Greenseal failed to ensure that risk from dangerous substances, namely petrol, was either eliminated or reduced so far as is reasonably practicable.

In order to minimise the risk, the company could have taken a number of reasonably practicable actions, including the use of diesel powered spray foam equipment or reducing the frequency of refuelling by installing a larger fuel tank or tanks. Refuelling could then be reduced to once a day and taken place at the beginning of the day when the equipment was cool and not in operation.

The potential for spilling petrol could have been reduced by storing it away from sources of heat and confining it to smaller containers or by using a non-spilling fuel delivery nozzle.

Greenseal Insulation Ltd pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 6 of the Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations (DSEAR) 2002. The company was fined £40,000 and ordered to pay costs of £11,779.

Speaking after the hearing HSE inspector Gabriella Dimitrov said: “This was the worker’s second day on the job. He suffered horrific injuries due to the company’s failure to adequately consider the risks from refuelling and implementing safer alternatives to the system of work requiring refuelling petrol powered equipment every two hours.”

Key lessons

The risk of fire could have been reduced by:

- Using less hazardous equipment (eg diesel operated, rather than petrol operated)
- Reducing the frequency that refuelling needed to occur
- Keeping fuel sources a safe distance from potential ignition sources

Fatality leads to £2m fines

A civil engineering company and a district heating firm have been sentenced for safety breaches after a worker suffered fatal crush injuries.

Sheffield Crown Court heard how on 10 December 2015 36-year-old David Beresford was employed by R K Civil Engineers Ltd working at the EON Renewable Energy Plant in Sheffield.

He was one of two workers unloading large heating pipes (12 metres long and weighing approx. 840kg) from a trailer to place them into stillage containers at the site. The pipes were being lifted and moved using an excavator and were incorrectly stacked above the top edge of the stillages. During the positioning of the pipes, two of the pipes rolled off and fell into a gap between two stillages. Mr Beresford was standing within this gap and the second pipe fell onto him.

R K Civil Engineers Ltd was found guilty of breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and was fined £1,000,000

R K District Heating Ltd was found guilty of breaching Section 3 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and was fined £1,000,000.

The Judge also ordered that costs of £15,847 are to be repaid.

After the hearing, HSE inspector Mark Welsh commented: “This was a wholly avoidable incident, caused by the failure of both companies to follow safe systems of work, and a failure to identify the risks.”
An asbestos removal company, and two of its managers, have been prosecuted after forging documents in order to obtain an asbestos licence from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

The HSE investigation found the defendants had used forged medical certificates and training documents to obtain an asbestos licence from HSE. They also could not show that they had adequately monitored their workers who were exposed to asbestos.

The Operations Manager pleaded guilty to breaching Regulations 10(1)(a) and 22(1)(c) of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012. He was sentenced to 12 weeks in prison suspended for two years and was ordered to carry out 200 hours of community service. He was also ordered to pay costs of £1,000.

The Managing Director pleaded guilty to breaching Regulations 10(1)(a) and 22(1)(c) of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 and was ordered to undertake 80 hours of community service and pay costs of £1,000.

Excavation and Contracting (UK) Ltd of West Quay Road, Warrington, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulations 10(1)(a) and 22(1)(c) of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 and was fined £13,000 and ordered to pay costs of £10,000.
Care home fined

A care home has been prosecuted after a 77-year-old resident slipped down in her specialised wheelchair and died.

Chesterfield Magistrates’ heard how, on 21 July 2013, a resident at a care home managed by Hill Care Ltd in Bakewell had been left in her room in her wheelchair for almost three hours, with no checks taking place. She slipped down the wheelchair and died.

The home’s policy was to not leave residents in wheelchairs in their rooms, but this was not followed, due to poor communications at shift changeover. The resident was only found by oncoming nightshift when they carried out their nightly checks, having previously being left by a family member.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Hill Care Limited both failed to train staff in the proper use of specialised wheelchairs and to inform family and friends how to use the chair on trips out.

The investigation also found the company failed to devise, implement or properly manage structured and effective systems assuring the whereabouts of patients is known and failed to ensure there was clear communication of such essential information at shift handovers.

Hill Care Limited pleaded guilty to breaching section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and was fined £100,000. The company was also ordered to pay £12,000 in costs.

Farm worker killed

A farming partnership has been fined £400,000 after a teenage employee died when the tractor he was driving collided with a bridge.

Cambridge Crown Court heard that Harry Christian-Allan had been employed by G W Topham & Son for three weeks before the tractor and tandem-axle trailer he was using to transport grain failed to negotiate a roundabout and struck the bridge on Rusts Lane, Alconbury on 1 August 2014. The 19-year-old sustained major injuries and later died in hospital.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the trailer was fitted with drum type brakes that had not been correctly adjusted rendering them ineffective.

G W Topham & Son was found guilty of breaching Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and Regulation 5 of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. The partnership was fined £400,000 and ordered to pay costs of £67,274.12.

Speaking after the hearing HSE Inspector Roxanne Barker said: “The defendant failed to implement and monitor safe systems of work. This young man’s death could have been prevented if the employer had managed the risks involved and ensured all work equipment was properly maintained.

Many trailers are only used at harvest time and therefore this failure to maintain is likely to be widespread across the industry. Farmers are therefore reminded to ensure that they adequately maintain all work equipment including any which is not in main-stream use.”

Company and its directors fined

Skip-It Containers Ltd, a waste management company and its Directors have been fined after an employee got his arm caught in a conveyor at a material recycling plant.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) into the incident found that the company failed to ensure the conveyor guards were maintained and fully functioning at all times.

The individual Directors, Mark Penfold and Rachael Penfold, failed to monitor for health and safety including machinery safety standards.

Skip-It Containers Ltd was found guilty of breaching Regulation 5(1) and Regulation 6(2) of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 and was fined £120,000.

Mark Penfold, Director of Skip-It Containers Ltd, pleaded guilty to Regulation 5(1) and Regulation 6(2) of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 and was given a 16 week custodial sentence, suspended for nine months, as well as a fine of £2293.00.

Rachael Penfold, Director of Skip-It Containers Ltd, pleaded guilty to Regulation 5(1) and Regulation 6(2) of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 and was given a 16 week custodial sentence, suspended for nine months, as well as a fine of £2293.00.
Asbestos surveyor fined

Greater Manchester Magistrates’ Court heard how EAS Asbestos Limited were commissioned to conduct refurbishment and demolition surveys by Mercer Brother Limited, a construction company who were contracted to demolish garages for Hyndburn Homes.

EAS Asbestos stated in their surveys that asbestos was only present in the cement roof sheets, there were no areas that could not be accessed, and that there was no asbestos insulation board present in the garages.

On Wednesday 1 February 2017, the demolition of the garages went ahead but work was immediately stopped when suspect material was found. Another surveying company was brought in and confirmed the presence of large amounts of asbestos insulation board in the demolition rubble.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the survey carried out by EAS Asbestos Limited was incorrect and misleading.

EAS Asbestos Limited pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The company was fined £6,700 and ordered to pay costs of £1,000 and a victim surcharge of £170.

Speaking after the case, HSE inspector Jacqueline Western said “This incident could so easily have been avoided by simply carrying out correct control measures and safe working practices.

Fine for inadequate height protection and welfare facilities

A contractor carrying out refurbishment and basement extension work was prosecuted after the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) identified a series of serious safety breaches during inspections.

Westminster Magistrates’ Court heard that PVAD Limited was the contractor controlling work at a construction site at on Montholme Road, London, when it was inspected by the HSE in March 2017. The inspection found that numerous areas of the site had no edge protection to prevent falls, including where workers could fall four metres into the basement from the site entrance area. Unsafe ‘homemade’ ramps were being used to allow access to some parts of the site.

It was also found that the welfare facilities fell far below the legally required standard, with the WC having no cistern to allow flushing and the washing arrangements on site consisting of a cold water outdoor tap and bucket, with no soap or towel.

A prohibition notice was served on PVAD Limited, but further inspections in April and May 2017 found new work at height issues that were so serious that all work had to be halted on both occasions until the site was made safe. An improvement notice was also served requiring PVAD Limited concerning the inadequate welfare facilities. The company breached the notice as the improvements made were insufficient.

The HSE had previously inspected other PVAD Limited sites several times in 2015 and 2016. As a result, the company had been served with three improvement notices relating to welfare facilities and two formal letters highlighting work at height risks and giving advice.

PVAD Limited pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 6(3) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005, Regulation 15(11) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (CDM) and Section 33(1)(g) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The company was fined £51,334 and ordered to pay £1,525.50 in costs.

HSE inspector Adam Thompson commented after the hearing: “After the March 2017 inspection PVAD Limited were provided with clear written advice to help them make improvements. They failed to take note of this and continued to rely on a site manager with no formal health and safety training. “On the three occasions the site was visited the workers were at such risk of falling that all work had to halt. It was just good fortune that no one was killed or seriously injured at the site”. “The standards were particularly inexcusable as the company had received clear warnings in the past. It speaks volumes that, even after being issued with three welfare improvement notices at other sites, they provided their workers at the new site with a non-flushing WC and an outside cold water tap and a bucket as washing facilities”.

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Fined following fall from a ladder

Safestyle UK has been sentenced after a worker fell from a ladder sustaining a fracture to his lower leg.

Sheffield Magistrates’ Court heard how, on 1 March 2017, a window installer working for H.P.A.S. Limited, trading as Safestyle UK, was attempting to install a first-floor rear bedroom window at a property in Doncaster, when the ladder he was climbing slipped. The ladder was not footed or tied and the operative fell from a height of over three metres, sustaining a broken knee cap which required surgery.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the company’s system for planning work at height was inadequate in that it failed to ensure that work was carried out in a safe manner. Windows were found to be not routinely installed from the inside and ladders were used in a way that constituted serious risk. Additionally, there was no system of monitoring or supervision in place and operatives were left to their own devices.

H.P.A.S. Limited trading as Safestyle UK pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 4(1) of The Work at Height Regulations 2005 and was fined £850,000 with £1,083 in costs.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Stuart Whitesmith said: “This incident could easily have been prevented had the company implemented reasonably practicable precautions. “Such precautions include having effective and enforced safe systems of work, whereby windows are installed internally where possible, or by using suitable access solutions which provide edge protection, and having a formal system in place to ensure works are appropriately supervised.”

Fall leads to £965,000 fine

BAM Nuttall and McNealy Brown have been fined £900,000 and £65,000 respectively after they admitted failing to put proper control measures in place to prevent a painter from falling through a waiting room ceiling.

The injured person suffered severe ligament damage and has been unable to return to work as an industrial painter since falling around 10 feet while working at East Croydon railway station on 7 January 2015.

The court heard that the two companies agreed the £12 million contract with Network Rail to undertake the replacement of station floor surfaces, canopy roofs and cladding.

BAM Nuttall started work in January 2014 and later that year a third company, DRH, was asked by the existing contractors to supply industrial painters to undertake specialist tasks.

The injured person and a colleague were given a site induction when they arrived for work in December, but they were not briefed on the risk assessment, which required work over the platforms to be undertaken at night, for workers to wear full body harnesses and for the waiting room below to be locked. Returning to work in January following the Christmas holiday, the injured man and his colleague were not given another safety briefing, nor were they warned about fragile roofs. Latter that day he fell through the unguarded suspended ceiling into the waiting room below.

In a prosecution brought by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), the companies were fined after admitting charges under S 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
BT fined for inadequate streetworks

British Telecom (BT) has been prosecuted by Transport for London (TfL) for putting the public at risk during streetworks in London.

The work was being carried out in Bishopsgate in August 2017. BT failed to properly sign and guard the work area and also used the wrong traffic management methods.

Despite repeated demands by TfL, BT also failed to take actions to improve the situation, leading to unsafe conditions for road users, pedestrians and cyclists.

BT pleaded guilty to the unsafe execution of streetworks, with significant risk to public safety. It was fined £90,000 and ordered to pay a further £3,394 in court costs.

In passing sentence, the District Judge said: “There is clearly a disconnect between BT and its contractors, consistently resulting in a number of these breaches, which must be fixed by BT to avoid future offences.

First Aid at Work Guidance Update

The Health and Safety Executive have recently amended their first aid at work guidance. The key changes are:

- The introduction of blended learning as an accepted method of first aid training delivery.
- The addition of Automated External Defibrillator (AED) use to First Aid at Work / Emergency First Aid at Work course content.
- Haemostatic dressings/tourniquets have been added as examples of additional training/equipment that might be identified as appropriate in an employer’s needs assessment.
- Minor amendments to clarify the removal of HSEs training approval status and the revision of links to other legislation that has changed over the last few years.

The following publications and have been updated accordingly:

- The Health and Safety at Work (First Aid) Regulations guidance - L74
- First Aid at Work – Your questions answered -INDG 214
- Basic advice on first aid at work – Guidance – INDG 347
- Selecting a first aid training provider – a guide for employers -GEIS 3
- Basic advice on first aid at work – INDG 347
- Basic advice on first aid at work – Poster
- Electric shock – First aid procedures – Poster

Pledge to cut plastic pollution

More than 40 companies have signed up to a pact to cut plastic pollution over the next seven years. The firms, which include Coca-Cola and Asda, have promised to honour a number of pledges such as eliminating single-use packaging through better design. They have joined the government, trade associations and campaigners to form the UK Plastics Pact.

The set of pledges to tackle plastic pollution over the next seven years include:

- Eliminate difficult or unnecessary single use plastic packaging through better design
- Make 100% of plastic packaging reusable or recyclable or compostable
- Make sure 70% of plastic packaging is recycled or composted
- 30% of all plastic packaging to include recycled material

For more information, go the the WRAP website at: http://www.wrap.org.uk/
Fine for water company following hazardous chemical leak

Pollutants entered the river from an outfall pipe

Severn Trent Water Limited has been fined £350,000 and ordered to pay Environment Agency costs of £68,003 for causing water pollution that it is estimated killed 30,000 fish and damaged 5km of ecology along the River Amber.

The Environment Agency (EA) received reports of several hundred dead fish in the River Amber on 1 November 2015. The area was searched, and following discussions with Severn Trent Water employees, the source of the pollution was found to be a release of sodium hydroxide from the Ogston Water Treatment works, operated by Severn Trent Water.

Severn Trent Water identified that a leak within a chamber at the Treatment works had led to the contents becoming contaminated with sodium hydroxide, which was then washed through the road gully into the River Amber via an outfall pipe.

The pollution had a significant negative impact on the fish and invertebrate populations within the River Amber. The Environment Agency has been monitoring the natural recovery of the river ecology over the last two years. Monitoring has shown that whilst there has been some improvements, something resembling a full recovery is not expected until the summer of this year.

In passing sentence, His Honour Judge Smith said “It beggars belief that a company of the size and expertise of Severn Trent Water had no policy whatsoever in respect of potential incidents arising in connection with their dosing chamber, either at this treatment works or indeed at any others throughout the UK. To have no policy whatsoever when dangerous chemicals could have leaked out in any number of ways is highly negligent. The size and success of Severn Trent makes it even more astonishing.”

In mitigation Severn Trent expressed regret and apologises for the incident. The company co-operated fully with the investigation and contributed £228,000 to the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust.

PET eating enzyme improved

Scientists have improved a naturally occurring enzyme which can digest some of our most commonly polluting plastics. PET, the strong plastic commonly used in bottles, takes hundreds of years to break down in the environment.

The modified enzyme, known as PETase, can start breaking down the same material in just a few days. This could revolutionise the recycling process, allowing plastics to be reused more effectively.

Researchers reported in 2016 that they had found the strain living in sediments at a bottle recycling site in the port city of Sakai, Japan.

Prof John McGeehan, who was involved in the current study said “[PET] has only been around in vast quantities over the last 50 years, so it's actually not a very long timescale for a bacteria to have evolved to eat something so man-made.”

Once researchers understood its structure, the team noted that they could improve the performance of PETase by adjusting a few residues on its surface.