



**Briefing 16/47    December 2016**

## **Highways England – Occupational cancer guidance**

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in England

For information only to Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales

### **Key Issues:**

The purpose of this briefing is to promote the release of Highways England’s latest Raising The Bar guidance on occupational cancer.

The full guidance can be accessed by clicking below:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/568124/B33\\_Occupational\\_Cancer\\_Oct\\_2016.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/568124/B33_Occupational_Cancer_Oct_2016.pdf)

### **1.0 Introduction**

Highways England recently published their latest Raising the Bar guidance on occupational cancer. Raising the bar is an initiative that aims to “identify currently health and safety best practice and then define that as the minimum requirement to be implemented on all major projects. Highways England and its supply chain partners are required to review their procedures against these documents then consider and implement standards on site within six months of the document version date.” More information on this can be found on [their website](#).

This guidance sets the minimum and desirable requirements to help prevent ill health from occupational cancer. The term ‘occupational cancer’ is used to cover all cancers contracted as a result of the exposure to a carcinogen at work. According to a 2010 report commissioned by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), over 50 times the amount of construction workers were killed by occupational cancer than accidents.

While the majority of deaths are caused by known substances like asbestos and silica, less obvious cancer-causing substances include:

- Stone dust
- Pitches
- Solar radiation
- Mineral oils
- Coal tar
- Diesel fumes
- Metalworking fluids
- Pesticides

- Varnishes
- Some forms of MDF
- Paint spraying

Research by HSE found that employees in most industry sectors will be exposed to several cancer-causing substances, with construction and manufacturing workers being potentially exposed to between 15 and 20, with the potential to affect multiple cancer sites. This research also found that men in the construction industry and women undertaking shift work were among the most common cancer registrations attributable to occupation.

## 2.0 Minimum and desirable requirements

The minimum and desirable requirements for diesel fumes, asbestos, solar radiation, smoking, radon and welding fumes can be found [here](#); for dust, they can be found [here](#) and for shiftwork/fatigue, they can be found in interim advice notes [189](#) and [190](#).

## 3.0 APSE Comment

APSE encourages our membership to keep up-to-date with Highways England's Raising The Bar initiative, and the health and safety best practice that is shared through their regular guidance updates.

APSE takes an active role in advising our membership on health and safety best practice. Our advisory groups feature regular updates from the Scottish Waste Industry Training, Competency, Health & Safety Forum (SWITCH) and the Health and Safety Executive, we hold regular Health and Safety seminars (previous presentations are available on [our website](#)) and we also offer several health and safety training courses, with one specific to highways - [Health and Safety – Working on Highways and Verges](#).

## 4.0 Useful resources

- Highways England (2016) Raising The Bar 33 'Occupational Cancer' [\[link\]](#)
- Highways England (2016) Raising The Bar 18 'Control of dust' [\[link\]](#)
- Highways England (2016) Raising The Bar Initiatives [\[link\]](#)
- Health and Safety Executive (2010) The burden of occupational cancer in Great Britain: Overview report [\[link\]](#)
- Health and Safety Executive (2012) Working with substances hazardous to health: A brief guide to COSHH [\[link\]](#)
- Health and Safety Executive (2016) Case Study on Landsdowne Chemicals, Oxfordshire using Hydrazine Hydrate [\[link\]](#)
- Health and Safety Executive Occupational Cancer: The biggest risk to construction workers presentation by Chris Lucas, Construction Sector, Health Risk Management Unit [\[link\]](#)
- Standards for Highways (2016) Interim Advice Note 189/16 Policy on Managing Fatigue in the Workplace [\[link\]](#)

- Standards for Highways (2016) Interim Advice Note 190/16 Guidance on Processes for Managing Fatigue in the Workplace [link](#)

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