



# The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland NEWSLETTER

PROTECTING & IMPROVING PUBLIC HEALTH

July 2010

## Certificate is just their cup of tea!

Six ladies enjoyed a celebratory lunch at Dundee College on Friday 25 June when they were presented with their REHIS Elementary Food Hygiene Certificates. Not only did Pamela Bruce, Jennifer Paterson, Elizabeth Newlands, Linda Bruce and Isabella Ingram all from Dundee, and Elizabeth Adam from Blairgowrie, gain the qualification but they each had to overcome profound deafness in the process. The group is involved in opening the new Tayside Deaf Hub for deaf and hard of hearing people and, before they start to prepare and serve food at the venue, they decided to gain the certification to meet the requirements of food safety legislation. With BSL (British Sign Language) being their first language rather than English, the group had to have two interpreters on hand. "This is a one-day course

which culminates in a multiple-choice exam so things were pretty animated at times," said Christine Fraser, Training and Development Officer, Hospitality and Tourism, who delivered the course. "The exam comprises 30 questions and each had to be signed by an interpreter, as did all the answer options. I was overwhelmed by the students' enthusiasm and hard work." The group's dedication impressed everyone involved with them to the extent that Rod House, REHIS President and Graham Walker, Director of Training visited the college to present the ladies with their certificates in person. Run under the auspices of Deaf Links, a local deaf awareness charity which does advocacy work for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, the Deaf Hub which aims to bring all the various groups together and enhance services to the deaf community, should be opening in late summer.



*Sign of success! Profoundly deaf students show their approval in BSL on gaining their REHIS certificates in elementary food hygiene. Receiving their awards from REHIS President Rod House (right) and Graham Walker (Director of Training) are (back from left) – Jenny Paterson, Elizabeth Adam, Pam Bruce and Linda Bruce; front – Elizabeth Newlands and Isabella Ingram.*

## Bravery award for REHIS member

A volunteer lifeboat crew from Kirkwall were presented with special awards for 'exceptional' bravery by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) last month. Kirkwall RNLI second coxswain, Stewart Ryrie, received the Thanks of the Institution on Vellum for his role during the rescue of three people and a yacht in severe gale force conditions off Stronsay on Sunday 25 October 2009. In addition, four volunteer crew members, Graham Campbell, Iain Seatter, Paul Turner and Magnus Croy received RNLI Vellum Service certificates thanking them for their part in the rescue. Paul is a Chartered Environmental Health Officer and works with the Orkney Islands Council's Department of Development and Environment Services. The Institute offers its congratulations to Paul and his fellow crew members.

## Review of the Clean Air Act

The Atomic Energy Authority (AEA) has undertaken a review of the 1993 Clean Air Act for the Scottish Government. The Clean Air Act was designed to control smoke emissions, primarily from coal fired industrial boilers and furnaces and, domestic appliances. However, the Act needs to be revised to provide suitable control for modern biomass boilers. The report reviews both interim measures which could be introduced, along with the more difficult technical investigations that will be required as part of a full review of the Act. The available tools for local authorities and developers to assess the possible air quality impacts of biomass boilers are also reviewed in the report. The findings of the study are summarised in a series of recommendations for consideration by The Scottish Government. The AEA report can be found at [www.scottishairquality.co.uk/reports.php?item=290](http://www.scottishairquality.co.uk/reports.php?item=290).

## Tackling alcohol abuse

More than 50,000 Scots received an 'alcohol brief intervention' in 2009-10, helping them address their drinking before it causes lasting health damage, according to figures published by the Scottish Government last month. The latest figures, published by ISD Scotland, show that 82,564 brief interventions have been carried out since 2008-09. The target is for 149,449 to be completed by the end of 2010-11. Brief interventions are used

when someone visits their GP or hospital and it is clear to the professionals that alcohol may be a factor in their ill-health. They typically take the form of short motivational interviews, in which the costs and benefits of drinking are discussed, along with information about health risks. In 2008-09 the Scottish Government introduced a three year NHS target for screening for alcohol problems and delivering brief interventions where appropriate. The target requires boards to deliver a cumulative number of screenings and brief interventions (149,449), over the period 2008-09 - 2010-11, in Primary Care, antenatal care and Emergency Departments. The aim is that brief interventions become part of the standard offer of the NHS.

## Last Chernobyl sheep monitoring restrictions lifted in Scotland

The Food Standards Agency has released the last Scottish sheep farm affected by the 1986 Chernobyl accident from monitoring requirements imposed under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985. In 1986, an accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the former USSR (now Ukraine) released large quantities of radioactivity into the atmosphere. Some of this radioactivity (primarily radiocaesium) was deposited on upland areas of the UK where sheep are farmed. To protect consumers, statutory restrictions under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 were placed on the movement, sale and supply of sheep from the affected areas.

During 1987, raised levels of radioactivity were detected in new lambs leading to new restrictions being placed on sheep farms across the UK including 73 areas in central and south-west Scotland. A monitoring technique was developed that enabled live sheep to be monitored and only moved from the restricted areas if radioactivity levels were acceptable. Since the early 1990s an annual post-Chernobyl sheep monitoring programme has been carried out on restricted areas in Scotland. Over time, radioactivity levels have continued to decline, and, as of February 2010, only two areas in Scotland remained under restrictions. Of these, one area has been taken out of agricultural use, so is no longer being used to farm sheep, and the other area was removed from restrictions on 21 June 2010. Further information is available from the FSA website [www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk).

## Annual Environmental Health Review – 2009

The Annual Environmental Health Review of REHIS and its Scottish partners for 2009, collated and published by the Institute, can now be accessed at the REHIS website [www.rehis.com](http://www.rehis.com).

## Worker deaths in Britain fall to record low

New figures released last month reveal that the number of people killed at work in Britain fell last year to a record low. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has released the provisional data, which shows that 151 workers were killed between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2010 compared to 178 deaths in the previous year and an average number over the last 5 years of 220 deaths per year.

Large falls have been recorded in some of the other historically most dangerous industries in Britain: 41 fatal injuries to construction workers were recorded - a rate of 2.0 deaths per 100,000 workers, compared to an average of 66 deaths in the past five years and a fall from the 52 deaths (and rate of 2.4) recorded in 2008/09. 42 fatal injuries to services workers were recorded, a rate of 0.2 deaths per 100,000, compared to an average of 72 deaths in the past five years and a fall from the 62 deaths (and rate of 0.3) recorded in 2008/09. 24 fatal injuries to manufacturing workers were recorded, a rate of 0.9 deaths per 100,000, compared to an average of 38 deaths in the past five years and a fall from 33 deaths (and rate of 1.1) in 2008/09. The new figures show that compared with the latest data available for the four other leading industrial nations in Europe - Germany, France, Spain and Italy - Great Britain has, for more than the last six years, had the lowest rate of fatal injuries.

## Caning for Singapore graffiti

A Swiss man pleaded guilty Friday to spray-painting graffiti on a Singapore subway car and could be caned as punishment. Oliver Fricker, 32, pleaded guilty to one count each of vandalism and trespassing for breaking into a train depot and

drawing graffiti on a subway car on May 16. Prosecutors dropped a second vandalism charge but submitted it to the judge for consideration in Fricker's sentencing. Vandalism in Singapore carries a fine of up to \$1,437 or up to three years in jail, in addition to three to eight strokes of a cane. Singapore reiterated a ban on the sale of chewing gum this year and announced a crackdown on littering last month.

## Inspectors' report on Perth hospital

Patients praised the standard of cleaning at Perth Royal Infirmary, during a visit by the Healthcare Environment Inspectorate. The inspectors' report, published today, highlights that the hospital was clean and that patients had described cleanliness as 'excellent'.

The report notes that senior charge nurses were supported to take ownership of healthcare associated infection issues at the hospital and commends the use of colour coded commodes as an infection control measure. However, the report also called for the dress code to be consistently implemented throughout the patient care environment. The report called for a number of further improvements, including correct use of sharps bins, consistently complying with linen procedures and, more public-friendly hand washing guidance which should be displayed next to hand gels and soaps.

Further information is available from the Scottish Government website [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk).

## Forthcoming events

11th World Congress on Environmental Health, 5 to 10 September 2010, Vancouver, Canada

REHIS Public Health and Housing Update, 7 and 8 September 2010, Stirling

REHIS Trainers' Update Event, 20 October 2010, Glasgow

REHIS Health and Safety Update Event, 26 October 2010, Edinburgh

REHIS Food Update Event, 27 October 2010, Edinburgh

REHIS Professional Examination, 2 to 4 November 2010, Edinburgh

REHIS Annual Awards Ceremony, 17 November 2010, Edinburgh

REHIS Environmental Health Update Event, 18 November 2010, Edinburgh

REHIS Annual General Meeting, 18 November 2010, Edinburgh

4th International Swimming Pool and Spa Conference, 15 to 18 March 2011, Porto, Portugal

If you wish to feature any Environmental Health or Public Health initiative, event or activity in the REHIS Newsletter, please contact Tom Bell, Chief Executive, on 0131 229 2968 or [tb@rehis.com](mailto:tb@rehis.com)