



The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland NEWSLETTER

PROTECTING & IMPROVING PUBLIC HEALTH

January 2012

Message from the Editor

As Tom Bell, Chief Executive, advised in the December issue I have taken on the role of production and development of the e-Newsletter and I would like to start by wishing all members a belated happy New Year. The e-Newsletter has developed over the years and has improved communication with the environmental health and wider public health communities in Scotland. I think the words used by Bernard Forteath in the welcome to the first edition in April 2007 to describe the 'remit' of the newsletter are still appropriate and I will use them as my baseline. Bernard wrote, "Each edition of the Newsletter will feature short articles on news, initiatives, events and other activities which promote environmental health and public health across Scotland. It is the intention of REHIS to highlight the work of all public health professionals and their contribution to the improvement and protection of the health of the people of Scotland." This gives me a broad base to work with and as always if you wish to feature any initiative, event or activity, please do not hesitate to contact me. Communication, of course, is a two way process and I would encourage all members to check their contact details on the REHIS website to ensure accuracy and that you receive mailings, circulations, etc. Also, feedback on the e-Newsletter would be welcome. I hope you enjoy reading the Newsletter and that you find it useful and interesting.

Jim Thomson
Editor

Health Protection Scotland

After three years as Director of Health Protection Scotland, Mary Morgan has joined the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service as its Interim Director. Kate Harley, Head of Programme in NSS' Information Services Division, has been appointed Interim Director of Health Protection Scotland. The Institute offers its best wishes to Mary and Kate in their new roles.

Ask the President

Members are reminded that Paul Bradley, President, has invited them to contact him with their views and opinions on environmental health and



the operation of the Institute. This can either be by posting on the members' forum area of the REHIS website (www.rehis.com/forums/members-forums) or through the REHIS office.

CMO's annual report 2010

Action to improve the nation's health is proving effective but obesity, poor diet and excessive alcohol consumption continue to cause unacceptable levels of ill health, according to the sixth annual report from Scotland's Chief Medical Officer. The report also notes that infections continue to be a major public health problem in Scotland. Its final chapter summarises significant trends in the incidence of the main communicable diseases of public health importance in 2010, as well as reviewing progress in Scotland in the management of two significant conditions namely tuberculosis and *Escherichia coli* O157 infections. The CMO's report can be accessed at www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/12/14120931/0.

New joint award - allergy awareness

This course was first developed in 2009 by Graeme Kerr (now of Allergy and Hygiene Solutions Limited) in partnership with Hazel Gowland of Allergy Action. It is a three hour allergy awareness course aimed at food handlers and others whose work involves responsibility for people with allergies. This course is based on those delivered by Allergy Action from 1995 onwards to a wide range of audiences from backgrounds including school meals, catering, retail, manufacturing, child care, youth leaders, Environmental Health Officers and many others. It is not a medical course and does not include training in how to give injectible adrenaline. Such training needs to be provided by properly qualified people. However it should be remembered that most good allergy management does not involve emergency medication. Those caring for allergic children and being ready to serve allergic customers can do a great job to prevent reactions occurring in the first place. This course will provide basic information about allergies - adults and children affected, symptoms, treatment and simple controls to protect the growing population at risk. The aim of the course is to protect increasing numbers of people with allergies, focusing particularly on food allergies and providing those responsible for their care and their food with information and skills.

Objectives of the course

- To understand the needs of people with allergies, intolerances and coeliac disease and the challenges of choosing food suitable for them when shopping and eating out
- To know which foods are most likely to cause reactions and which recipes require them
- To understand about related conditions such as asthma, eczema and allergic rhinitis (eg, to pollens, cats, dogs, etc.)
- To have some insight into the needs of particular groups, babies, young children, teenagers and the elderly and appreciate who is at greatest risk
- To know how to choose, prepare and serve suitable food for somebody with a food allergy or intolerance
- To understand environmental and other allergy risks in the everyday environment, eg, from latex, soap, and cleaning products.

Hazel Gowland of Allergy Action said, "I am delighted to work with Graeme Kerr and REHIS on this joint award. We have known for some time that allergy awareness training was needed in a wide range of food businesses, schools, nurseries and care workplaces throughout Scotland." Graeme Kerr of Allergy and Hygiene Solutions Limited said, "The course is accessible and gives students confidence to reduce allergy risks through simple changes leading to best practice."

For more information on the course please contact Graham Walker, Director of Training.

The photo below shows Tom Bell with Hazel Gowland, from Allergy Action and Graeme Kerr, from Allergy and Hygiene Solutions Limited.



Building standards

The Scottish Government announced on 20 December 2011 that council staff will continue to be the only government-appointed verifier for new homes and buildings in Scotland. Verifiers protect the public by independently checking building work - from design through construction to completion - to make sure new homes, offices and public buildings meet all relevant building regulations. Ministers have decided, following a recent consultation, that they will not introduce private verifiers and retain the services of council building standards departments, which employ around 700 staff across Scotland. The Minister for Local Government and Planning, Derek Mackay, said, "Scotland's building standards system is recognised as being one of the most successful in Europe. Local authority building standards services are helping support sustainable economic growth while tackling climate change, promoting sustainability and improving compliance with

building regulations. Following consultation, I have decided that local authorities are still best placed to protect the public and to deliver the government's key building standards objectives. I am extremely encouraged by the strong commitment that local authorities have given me to continue improving their services. This will be achieved by introducing a new performance framework next May, with a focus on improving performance and predictability, while enhancing the customer experience. While I understand the desire by some to introduce choice to the market, I believe local authorities are best placed, on this occasion, to serve the public interest given their four decades of experience."

Public consultation earlier this year looked at introducing the private sector on a limited basis to verify building standards. The consultation attracted nearly 200 responses from the construction and development sector, and nearly three quarters of those who responded were not in favour of change.

Ref: www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2011/12/20104241.

Health and Safety Executive issues fresh warning after 15 Scottish workers killed

Fifteen people lost their lives while at work in Scotland last year and 2,645 suffered a major injury, according to the latest statistics. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has issued a fresh warning about workplace safety after the number of deaths rose across Great Britain in 2010/11. It is urging employers to make the safety of workers their top priority for 2012, and is reminding them of their legal responsibility to ensure lives are not put at risk. A total of 171 people were killed at work in Great Britain last year, compared to 147 deaths during 2009/10. More than 24,700 workers also suffered a major injury in 2010/11. The 15 deaths and 2,645 major injuries across Scotland compare to 22 deaths and 2,655 major injuries in 2009/10. Another 7,598 workers suffered an injury or ill health which required them to take at least three days off work in 2010/11, compared to 8,137 in 2009/10. The latest provisional figures show that, on average, six in every million workers were killed while at work between April 2010 and March 2011. High-risk industries include construction which had

50 deaths last year, agriculture with 34 deaths, and waste and recycling with nine deaths, making up more than half of all workplace deaths in Great Britain during 2010/11.

Dr Paul Stollard, HSE Director in Scotland, said, "The families of the 15 workers in Scotland who lost their lives last year had to face Christmas without them. Hundreds of other workers have had their lives changed forever by a major injury. These statistics highlight why we need good health and safety in British workplaces. Employers should spend their time tackling the real dangers that workers face rather than worrying about trivial risks or pointless paperwork. It's important to remember that we still have one of the lowest rates of workplace deaths in Europe, but one death is still one too many. I'd urge businesses to help cut the number of deaths in 2012."

Information on tackling health and safety dangers in workplaces is available on HSE's website at www.hse.gov.uk.

Independent Regulatory Challenge Panel launched

An independent panel to consider challenges to health and safety regulatory advice is now established. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is supporting the new panel, which will look into issues raised by business where they believe an HSE or local authority health and safety inspector has given advice that is incorrect or disproportionate. The panel will not look at issues where other independent appeals processes exist, such as for enforcement notices or prosecutions. The panel will be chaired by Tricia Henton, an experienced former regulator at the Environment Agency and is comprised of independent panel members who have the competence and experience to assess advice that has been given on regulatory matters.

For more information on the panel, see hse.gov.uk/contact/challenge-panel.

Lung disease - asthma

HSE has advised that the jobs with the highest rates of occupational asthma are bakers, vehicle spray painters, solderers, woodworkers, healthcare workers, laboratory animal workers, agriculture workers and engineering workers.

Simple changes in the workplace can make workplaces safer. Information on this update can be found at www.hse.gov.uk.

Consumer views on targeted food safety inspections

A new report published by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) shows that consumers are broadly in favour of reducing inspections on compliant businesses so that resources can be focused on those which are higher risk. Under the proposed 'Earned Recognition' scheme, food businesses that are able to demonstrate a history of good compliance with the legislation, or that are members of a private assurance scheme, would receive a lighter touch in terms of the number and type of official inspections. The proposed changes will help to ensure consumer safety by concentrating resources where improvement is most needed, for example, on businesses that are less compliant or higher risk. The Agency commissioned a series of citizens' forums to explore consumers' views about proposed changes to the regulation of food businesses. Participants considered Earned Recognition a positive step for the Agency to take on the condition that these businesses were still regulated sufficiently and that the scheme was applied fairly across the food industry. Nine workshops were held with groups of approximately 10 people between June and August 2011. The full report can be found on the FSA website at www.food.gov.uk.

The Food Standards Agency has produced an update on products free of colours associated with hyperactivity

The Agency has updated its list of product ranges that do not contain the six food colours associated with possible hyperactivity in young children. Another two companies producing product lines free of the colours have been added to the list: Clearspring Ltd and Redwood Wholefoods Ltd. The list includes companies that have product ranges which have never contained the six colours and companies that have reformulated their product ranges to remove the colours. The colours, identified by a Southampton University study

financed by the Food Standards Agency, are: sunset yellow FCF (E110), quinoline yellow (E104), carmoisine (E122), allura red (E129), tartrazine (E102) and ponceau 4R (E124). The Agency is publicising the product ranges to encourage the food industry to participate in the voluntary ban. The voluntary ban was agreed by Ministers in November 2008. Consumers who are particularly concerned about the presence of the colours should continue to check labels, especially in the case of products with a long shelf-life, where the availability of reformulated products may vary. Any food manufacturer, retailer or caterer wishing to notify the Agency that their brands or products are free of these colours should email the details to Benedict Duncan, at benedict.duncan@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk. The Agency's website will be updated regularly as new information is provided.

Continuing Professional Development

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) submissions should be in the process of being completed. Submissions must be submitted by 31 January 2012 and it is particularly important for Chartered members who are registered with the Occupational Safety and Health Consultants' Register (OSHCR) to ensure that at least 50% of the minimum core CPD requirement of 10 hours relates specifically to occupational health and safety, ie, a minimum of five hours. Approximately 250 CPD returns were submitted last year and you are encouraged to participate in CPD as it is of benefit to individuals on a personal basis as well as the profession as a whole. Recently qualified EHOs are especially encouraged to participate in the scheme.

For further information please contact Robert Howe, Director of Professional Development, at the REHIS office at rh@rehis.com.

REHIS Council update

John Bell has been co-opted onto the Council in the EHO (North) category for one year to fill a vacancy. Patricia Sheldon is the new Chairman of the Northern Centre with ex-officio membership of the Council.

Council member Graham Robertson has signed up to take part in a climb of Kilimanjaro from September 28 to 7 October, a major challenge, to coincide with a special birthday this year! Graham and his brother, Mark, will be raising money for Alzheimer's Scotland in memory of their mother, Sheila Robertson, and anyone wishing to support Graham can do so by visiting : www.justgiving.com/GMKilimanjaroTrek.

OSHCR update

As at 12 January 2012, 2,737 consultants have been approved onto the Occupational Safety and Health Consultants' Register (OSHCR) and this figure includes a number of Chartered EHO members of the Institute. Further information on the Register is available from the OSHCR website www.oshcr.org.



Forthcoming events

REHIS Law Enforcement Course, 2/4 March 2012, Tulliallan

REHIS/CAMPDEN BRI Advanced HACCP Course, 13/15 March 2012, Glenbervie

REHIS/SFSORB Professional Examination, 20/21/22 March 2012, Edinburgh

REHIS Annual Conference, 18/19 April 2012, Edinburgh

International Radiological Protection Association Congress, 13/18 May 2012, Glasgow

IFEH World Congress on Environmental Health, 21/27 May 2012, Vilnius, Lithuania



IFEH 12th World Congress
on Environmental Health
Vilnius, Lithuania
21st–27th May, 2012

HPA Health Protection 2012, 11/12 September 2012, Warwick University

REHIS/SFSORB Professional Examination, 30/31 October and 1 November 2012, Edinburgh

If you wish to feature any Environmental Health or Public Health initiative, event or activity in the REHIS Newsletter, please contact Jim Thomson, Policy/Professional Development Officer, The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland, 19 Torphichen Street, Edinburgh, tel: 0131 229 2968 or jt@rehis.com