

# 'Current Perspectives on Controlling Substances in the UK'

## Bud Hudspith, Amicus National H&S Officer

*Amicus is committed to improving health and safety in all workplaces*



*Union organised workplaces are safer than non-organised workplaces*

BOHS Hot Topics 2006

### Current perspectives on controlling substances in the UK


Bud Hudspith  
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### Silica as an example

- Advisory Committee on Toxic Substances (ACTS)
- New Workplace Exposure Limit (WEL)
- COSHH Essentials - Silica Essentials
- Silica Dust – European Social Dialogue Agreement (SDA)
- Disease Reduction Programme




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### ACTS

- ... to stop people being made ill by exposure to toxic substances at work ...

Advise HSC on


- Prevention, control and management of risks from toxic substances
- Strategic direction
- Specific matters eg REACH
- Continuing work streams, forward looks
- TU topics – cancer, dust, COPD, REACH, DRP



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### Silica WEL

- 1992 standard set - 0.3 mg/m<sup>3</sup>
- Most industries meeting 0.1mg/m<sup>3</sup>, except quarrying
- Over 10 years later a WEL of 0.1 mg/m<sup>3</sup>
- Is this progress?
- Amicus wants 0.05mg/m<sup>3</sup> – and we expect it when measurement allows
- But, silica a carcinogen, as far below 0.1 as reasonably practicable




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### COSHH "adequate control"

COSHH requires employers to:

- apply the eight principles of good practice);
- ensure that the WEL is not exceeded; and
- Asthma, cancer, genetic damage, ensure that exposure is reduced as low as is reasonably practicable.



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### Principles of Good Practice

1. Design and operate to minimise emissions
2. Take into account all relevant routes of exposure
3. Control exposure by measures proportionate to the risk
4. Choose the most effective and reliable control options which minimise the escape and spread
5. Where adequate control of exposure cannot be achieved by other means, provide, in combination with other control measures, suitable personal protective equipment
6. Check and review control measures
7. Inform and train all employees on hazards, risks, use of controls
8. Ensure introduction of control measures does not increase the overall risk to health and safety



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### Silica Essentials

- Brick and tile – 7 sheets
- Ceramics – 5 sheets
- Foundries – 8 sheets
- Manufacturing – 4 sheets
- Quarrying - 11 sheets
- Slate works – 5 sheets
- Stonemasons – 4 sheets
- Construction – 11 sheets

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### European SDA

#### Social Dialogue Agreement – Silica

- EC treaty
- Social partners can negotiate and conclude agreements
- "Agreement on workers health protection through the good handling and use of crystalline silica and products containing it"



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### Who is in the Agreement?

- EMF and EMCEF
- 15 European Silica organisations
- Glass fibre, concrete, foundries, metals, cement, ceramics, mortar, special glass, mineral wool, mining, natural stone, glass, flat glass, industrial minerals, quarries



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### What does the agreement say?

- Protection of health of those exposed at work to RCS
- Minimisation of exposure
- Application of good practices
- Prevent, eliminate or reduce risks
- Increase knowledge about health effects and good practice



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### Silica SDA

#### Good Practice Guide

- Information
- Good Practice sheets
  - cf COSHH Essential
- 20 general guidance sheets
- 40 specific task sheets
- Enforced by parties to agreement
- UK HSE "Good Practice"?



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## Disease Reduction Programme

### HSE DRP

- Cancer, Asthma, Dermatitis
- Many strands
- Who runs it?
- Programme delivery board
- ACTS is the right body to overview decisions and progress



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## Concluding remarks

- Silica is a current issue – and a good example
- Standards, regulation, guidance, agreement all coming together
- Chemicals – DRP needs to fit in
- There needs to be action in workplaces – not just in Committees



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## Concluding remarks

- Achievement of good standards
- Practical workplace activity

Not from ...

- Exposure standard (the WEL)

but from ...

- Silica Essentials sheets
- SDA Good Practice sheets

and

- Enforcement!



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