

MAINSTREAMING HEALTH AND SAFETY

Many local authorities have appointed capable, competent health and safety advisors yet challenges remain. The role played by city and county managers and their senior management teams is, therefore, crucial in driving the health and safety programme forward, consultant Mary Darlington tells 'Council Review'.

Each employer has a common law duty of care to their employees as well as wide-ranging duties within Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act 2005 and General Application Regulations 2007 and other relevant regulations including construction.

Over the last couple of years there have been cases where the Health and Safety Authority prosecuted local authorities with heavy fines, and in some cases suspended sentences, being imposed. With this as a backdrop it is timely that city and county managers renew their commitment to protecting their most important asset – their employees.

Health and safety issues within local authorities are extremely wide ranging and typically include hazards and risks within Housing, Environment & Roads, Landfill/Waste, Water Treatment, operation of the Fire Service, Planning, Motor Tax and Community & Enterprise/Libraries.

Mary Darlington of Darlington Consulting has delivered health and safety briefings for county managers and their senior management teams in Laois County Council, Louth County Council, Galway County Council and others to inform, educate and assist them to actively manage health and safety within their authorities.

SAFETY LEADERSHIP

In her briefing Mary Darlington stresses issues of ownership and leadership followed

by mainstreaming and accountability. "Leadership is simply taking pride in your authority and your employees and it is not just about the law," she says. In addition to being legally compliant, Darlington urges all senior managers within local authorities to refer regularly to their moral barometer and to adopt a style of management that puts people first.

She encourages all senior managers to get out and about within their areas and talk health and safety up. "In order to manage health and safety effectively, management needs to accept that they are the risk creators while their employees are the risk takers, if all major risks have not been engineered or managed out."

MEANING OF MAINSTREAMING

In her briefing she spends time teasing out the meaning of mainstreaming health and safety in a large, complex local authority. "It simply means integrating health and safety thinking into everything around which managers make decisions. It requires senior management to have a budget for health and safety and to talk about it at every meeting, dealing with both negative and positive aspects with a focus on preventative action."

She also refers to the Health and Safety Authority's 'Guidance for Directors and Senior Managers on their Responsibilities for Workplace Safety and Health' (published in October 2007). She actively encourages

all city and county managers and their senior teams to read it and be familiar with it.

RANGE OF COURSES ON OFFER

Senior Management Safety Programme (two days)

Fire Prevention Training

Line Management Training (one day)

Manual Handling Training

Preventing and Managing Stress (one day)

Claims Management

Safety Committee Training (one day)

Office Safety Awareness

Safety Representative Training (two days)

Introduction to Ergonomics

Personal Safety Training (one day)

Safety Awareness Training

Corporate Social Responsibility Training

Time Management Training

H&S CONSULTANCY SERVICES

- Technical advice on all health and safety issues.
- Preparation of safety statements procedures.
- Risk Assessments.
- VDU Assessments.
- Pregnancy Risk Assessments.
- Health and Safety Audits.
- Accident Investigations.

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ABOUT MARY DARLINGTON:

Mary Darlington (BSc OSHM, CFIOSH, MIITD, FCIIPD) is one of Ireland's best known health and safety practitioners and has over 20 years experience both in industry and as a consultant. She is a former board member of Health and Safety Authority and a former chairperson of IOSH Ireland. As well as working with local authorities, Darlington Consulting also works with Allergan Pharmaceuticals, Siemens, Bewleys Hotels, ESB, Revenue Commissioners, HSE, Society of St. Vincent de Paul and many others.