



The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland NEWSLETTER

PROTECTING & IMPROVING PUBLIC HEALTH

November 2008

REHIS Award for Scotland's Chief Medical Officer

Dr Harry Burns, Scotland's Chief Medical Officer, will receive the Institute's 'Meritorious Endeavours in Environmental Health Award' at its Annual Awards Ceremony in Edinburgh next week. The presentation of the award to Dr Burns recognises his contribution to pioneering work linking the effects of the environment to human health in Scotland.

Concern over work-related deaths

A total of 32 employees were killed and 12,000 others injured as a result of accidents at work in the UK during the period 2007/08 according to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The HSE also found that 113,000 suffered from an illness they believed was caused or made worse by work. A further 3.3 million days were lost due to work-related ill health and injury during the period. In Scotland, the number of fatal injuries to workers continues to cause concern at 32 and the number of major injuries to employees over the same period was 2,721. Enforcement statistics reveal that the number of offences prosecuted by the HSE was 140 and that local authorities prosecuted a further ten. Further details are available on the HSE's website www.hse.gov.uk/statistics.

REHIS Update Courses – places still available!

A limited number of places are still available on the Institute's Food Safety Update, Health and Safety Update and (free to members) Environmental Health Update courses which will be held in The Apex International Hotel, The Grassmarket, Edinburgh on 17, 18 and 20 November respectively. Please contact the REHIS office for further information.

Food Law Code of Practice in Scotland

The Food Standards Agency Scotland has launched a consultation aimed at obtaining the views of its stakeholders on amendments to the Food Law Code of Practice. The Code of Practice is directed at local authorities with responsibility for official controls on food law (food authorities) and feed law at the level of primary production (feed authorities). Responses are requested by 9 January 2009 and further details are available on the FSA's website www.food.gov.uk/consultations/consultscot/2008/foodlawcodepractice.

REHIS Trainers' Update Seminar

A successful REHIS Trainers' Update Seminar took place in Stevenson College, Edinburgh last month. This perennially popular event attracted 125 delegates and provided an update on many developments in the areas of food safety, health and safety and infection control. Delegates included representatives from commercial training companies, local authorities, colleges/universities, schools, the NHS and the Scottish Prison Service. Topics covered in the presentations included food borne diseases, food allergies, *E.coli* O157, noroviruses, the future of food safety training and the work of the Food Standards Agency Scotland. REHIS Approved Training Centres may access several of the presentations on the community training pages of the REHIS website at www.rehis.org/training.

Scotland's forests to help combat climate change

A consultation paper entitled 'Climate Change and the National Forest Estate in Scotland' has been launched by the Scottish Government on the increased role that Scotland's forests can play in the fight against climate change. The paper outlines proposals that include developing

renewable energy projects to help the Scottish Government meet its greener energy targets as well as planting more trees, to increase the area of Scotland covered in woodland by the second half of this century. The consultation invites comments on innovative suggestions including establishing joint ventures with communities or the private sector to develop renewable sources of energy on the national forest estate; how best the national forest estate can contribute to achieving a total of 10,000 hectares of new woodland per year - woodland that will lock up 1.2m tonnes of carbon per year by 2050 and also help to create new jobs; and the possible creation of a not for profit Trust that will bring renewed vigour to the task of woodland creation. Comments can be submitted until January 27, 2009 and further details are available on the Scottish Government's website www.scotland.gov.uk.

Certificate in Safe Operating Practices for Beauty Therapists, Piercers and Tattooists Joint Award

This new REHIS joint award is aimed at ear and body piercing operators, tattooists and other alternative therapy practitioners as a route to meet part of the training requirements laid out in

the new Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 - (Licensing of Skin Piercing and Tattooing) Order 2006.

The first course, delivered by the award partners D&D Partnership, was held in Falkirk on 28 April 2008 and it proved to be very successful. Seven people attended the course and all passed the assessment. The candidates' evaluation of the course was uniformly high with one delegate stating, *'I really enjoyed the course, it was very beneficial to me and I have already changed a lot of things in my salon which I wouldn't have thought of if I hadn't been on the course'*. Several of the successful candidates received their certificates at a ceremony organised and hosted by Falkirk Council, who facilitated and subsidised the course for operators in the Falkirk area. The Institute would like to congratulate the candidates and to thank D&D Partnership and Falkirk Council Environmental Health Department for organising the course and the ceremony. Robert Howe, President of REHIS, presented the certificates.

Photo – The photo below shows Robert Howe with Rhona Douglas and John Davidson from the D&D Partnership with the successful candidates and officers from Falkirk Council Environmental Health Department.



Exposure to dust and bio-aerosols in poultry farming

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recently published a report on research investigating poultry farm workers' exposure to organic dusts and associated microbiological contamination as part of the HSE Disease Reduction Programme. The UK poultry industry (mainly the production of hens' eggs and chicken, turkey and duck meats) involves a range of activities including laying litter, populating with young birds, depopulating (reducing bird density during growth or removing at the end of the cycle), litter/manure removal, cleaning houses after depopulation and routine 'crop maintenance' and housework. The objective of this study was to measure workers' exposure to airborne dust and bio-aerosols (micro-organisms and their products) associated with these tasks in a representative cross-section of commercial poultry production. Previous studies have tended to provide only an overview of agriculture workers' exposure to bio-aerosols. However, this is of limited use in assessing health risks, because of the diversity of tasks at different times of the day, week or season. Workers' exposure to dust and bio-aerosols is certain to differ according to the task being performed. Therefore HSE was interested to obtain measurement data and to relate exposure measurements to specific tasks. The report and the work it describes were funded by the HSE. Its contents, including any opinions and/or conclusions expressed, are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect HSE policy. Further details are available on the HSE's website www.hse.gov.uk/research.

EFEH Meeting on Malta

The most recent meeting of the European Federation of Environmental Health (EFEH) took place on 25 October on Malta with 14 persons in attendance representing the EFEH member organisations from England/Wales/Northern Ireland, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Scotland and Sweden. A full report, by Mike Halls, will be published in the Winter edition of the Institute's Journal *Environmental Health Scotland*.

Pregnant women advised to limit caffeine consumption

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has issued new advice on caffeine consumption during pregnancy. This follows the results of new FSA-funded research carried out by the Universities of Leeds and Leicester. Pregnant women are advised to limit their daily caffeine intake to 200mg a day – roughly two mugs of coffee a day. This is because too much caffeine might result in a baby having a lower birth weight than it should, which can increase the risk of some health conditions in later life. There is also some evidence which suggests that high levels of caffeine can result in spontaneous miscarriage. Caffeine is found in coffee, tea, chocolate, some soft drinks, and certain medicines. The Agency had previously recommended a maximum daily intake of 300mg. However, the new research, published by the British Medical Journal, suggests a limit of 200mg per day will help to reduce this low risk even further. Further details are available on the FSA's website www.food.gov.uk.

Dates for your diary

NHS Public Health in Scotland – Annual Conference '**Forging New Collaborations**' – 13 and 14 November 2008, Aviemore. Further information from NHS Convention Management Service (tel: 0131 275 7748).

REHIS **Food Update Course** – 17 November 2008, Edinburgh (further information available from the REHIS office).

REHIS **Health and Safety Update Course** – 18 November 2008, Edinburgh (further information available from the REHIS office).

REHIS **Annual Awards Ceremony** – 19 November 2008, Edinburgh (evening).

REHIS **Environmental Health Update** (a free to members CPD event) – 20 November 2008, Edinburgh (am).

REHIS **Annual General Meeting** – 20 November 2008, Edinburgh (pm).

Bel Educational Noise Courses (in conjunction with REHIS and IOA) **Certificate of Competence in Environmental Noise Measurement** – 30 March to 3 April 2009, Hamilton. Further information from Dr Cameron Procter belnoisecourses@sky.com.

University of Strathclyde (in conjunction with REHIS and IOA) **Certificate of Competence in Environmental Noise Measurement** - 20 to 24 April 2009, Glasgow. Further information from SCOSH scosh@strath.ac.uk.

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 225 6999 or tb@rehis.com