

FLAGship

IN BRIEF



August 2007

Michael Kemp reporting affairs as he finds them

New tax threats to all prices

IGNORING a huge public 'No' to road pricing the Government is pressing it ahead plus a business tax rise for local 'infrastructures'. All commodity prices are threatened. Time to rebel?

A MAJOR H&S change has been averted by Britain defeating an EU move to have to *do everything practical* to replace UK law requiring employers to *take every reasonably practical precaution*.

OF 49 TRUCKS spot checked on the M4 three were legally compliant. Of the rest 21 were unroad-worthy, 10 'prohibited', seven breached driver hours, four overweight, two stolen, and two had drunk drivers.

MOST single vehicle crashes are on sharp bends caused by speed. A safe way is to watch the 'limit point' ahead where visibly road sides meet. If it is getting closer reduce speed, says IAM.

AROUND 2000 UK workers are seriously injured and five die by falling out of vehicles annually at a cost of £36.7m, says the HSE in launching a risk reduction drive.

CYCLISTS on pavements and jumping stop lights are being blitzed with a £60 penalty by City of London police - on proof of ID. Those without ID are being held in custody until they produce it.

New workplace death liability active April '08 Corporate killing law 'panicking directors'

FEAR is flashing through boardrooms that the new corporate manslaughter law may easily catch out ill-prepared directors. They have eight months to ensure it does not.

For then police evidence of relevant management failure will be sufficient to prosecute a business for unlawful killing in its workplace, perhaps in a company vehicle road crash.

The new law, coming next April, will also allow for Health & Safety (H&S) guidance to be taken into account to establish a management's gross failure resulting in death. In addition directors will remain liable under existing H&S and manslaughter laws.

Huge fines and fierce costs are forecast. Damage to business reputation threatens to be severe.

Leading City H&S defence lawyer Michael Appleby* warns: "I think the new law will cause panic in parts of UK plc to start with as executives become aware of their H&S weaknesses. There is little understanding of what is really happening.

"Slow growing awareness is causing some companies to look at their risk procedures and how they would deal with the crisis of a corporate manslaughter charge, even though these should already be in place as protection against current H&S law.

"Ironically pending new legislation is bringing into focus H&S issues which employers

should already be concerned with.

"Tactics will be crucial for the first company to be prosecuted under the new law. That means the wise business, especially a big name, must know now in advance:-

"How will it deal with the media in a corporate manslaughter crisis...its right procedures to deal immediately with its insurer...How to marshal its legal force quickly...How it will communicate with its workforce and stakeholders."

Mr Appleby added: "An organisation may have its own PR department but communicating with the Press in a disaster is much different from issuing market information. Several new skills are required to operate immediately, not on first day of a trial.

"Senior executives need to make sure their companies have all necessary processes in place and appropriate insurance cover to ensure they can defend a corporate manslaughter prosecution."

David Bergman, Director of the Centre for Corporate Accountability, forecasts "greater justice for work-related deaths", in warning:-

"No large or medium sized organisation has ever been convicted of corporate manslaughter despite hundreds of work-related deaths each year." He expects "an end to that immunity".

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Video raises driver car care

MASTerview is improving the condition of FSG client companies' cars - by 'friendly driver persuasion'.

Employee drivers are now realising that if they neglect vehicle care it will be recorded and reported to companies LIVE ONLINE. Masterview video cameras, active in garage workshops and by mechanics at the roadside, are relaying evidence to employers.

"They are seeing what

garage technicians are having to deal with," says FSG in adding:-

"News has spread fast among drivers that neglecting a company vehicle and compromising safety legally cannot be tolerated.

"Employers are seeing the bad state of their vehicles and taking relevant action."

Online imaging equipment enables garages to transmit live pictures of customers' vehicles to FSG Authorisa-

tions to prove that particular repairs are required and to supply evidence of fleet vehicle abuse.

From received images FSG informs client companies.

"If ever proof of value was needed scores of employers are seeing it now.

"That is justifying a commitment by FSG in introducing Masterview technology in all Masterserve garages," says FSG Chairman Geoffrey Bray.