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Safety guidance must be in plain English, say lawyers

Campaigners say a review of workplace safety must ensure that all updates to important guidelines are made in plain English.

The not-for-profit Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) has submitted a response to the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) consultation on proposals to simplify its Approved Codes of Practice (ACOPs).

"It's imperative that guidance is easy to understand and allows employers to assess the safety of a workplace without the need for consultants to translate any jargon," said APIL president Karl Tonks.

"It's also important that the priority for this review is to improve the quality of guidance documents, not just to put an arbitrary limit on their length, which is what has been proposed by the HSE.

"For instance, it would be useful for examples of previous court decisions to be included in ACOPs so that employers can be aware of the courts' interpretation of guidance.

"Not only would this provide employers with an understanding of how the law needs to be applied, but it may also illustrate what pitfalls there can be."



In its response to the HSE's consultation, which closed on Friday, APIL also stated that any revisions must not lead to the watering down of important regulations.

Tonks went on: "Although this consultation is a good opportunity to bring the ACOPs up to date and make them easier to understand, it's vital that this is not at the expense of the existing health and safety framework which has helped lead to a reduction in the number of workplace injuries over the years."

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Notes to editors:

- APIL (Association of Personal Injury Lawyers) is a not-for-profit organisation whose members are dedicated to campaigning for improvements in the law to help people who are injured or become ill through no fault of their own
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