

BUILDING ON SAFETY IN CONSTRUCTION

INDUSTRY

Health and safety lawyers have welcomed moves which could improve the safety of the nation's construction workers.

Patrick Allen, President of APIL, responded to the Health and Safety Executive's 'Revitalising Health and Safety in Construction' consultation document by stressing that workplace safety must be top priority for all employers. He said: "We represent injured construction workers or bereaved families and know how much heart break such preventable accidents cause. Current guidelines and new voluntary initiatives, as proposed by the HSE, are helpful but are no substitute for the thorough policing and enforcement of existing health and safety legislation that already exists to protect workers.

"We suggest policing can be improved through regular site inspections, introducing site safety representatives and ensuring that health and safety is considered at every stage - from the design stage through to completion of the project."

APIL also recommends legal duties should be imposed on directors to force them to improve their firm's health and safety, as it's feared the HSE's voluntary code will be flouted by bosses who already ignore health and safety laws.

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A further safety initiative could be reform of employers' liability insurance (ELI) to ensure company directors can see a clear link between health and safety performance and insurance premiums. Patrick advises: "ELI should operate like motor insurance – if a firm has a good safety record it should be reflected by a lower premium."

"Everyone has the right to go to work and come home again unharmed and we applaud any efforts to make Britain's building sites safer," concluded Patrick.

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