

**AP243**

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## **LAWYERS WARN GOVERNMENT TO GET TOUGH ON CARELESS EMPLOYERS**

Employers who flout health and safety laws must not be allowed to get away with only a “rap on the knuckles”, warns a group of leading health and safety lawyers.

Responding to a Health and Safety Commission consultation paper on workplace safety, the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) said employers must face serious consequences if safety laws are breached.

APIL president David Marshall said the use of ‘proportionate enforcement’ – the HSC’s current enforcement policy – is not a strong enough deterrent for careless employers.

“Every breach of health and safety must be taken seriously,” said David. “We are extremely concerned that under proportionate enforcement, the HSC has said any action taken will be “...the minimum necessary to secure future compliance” from the errant employer.

“Even if a worker has not been seriously injured, treating breaches with tolerance in this way gives out the wrong message, and could encourage complacency,” he said. “Employers must know that if they break the law, then the consequences will be serious, otherwise workers could pay the price in injuries at a later date.”

Good communication between employers and the HSC is also key to pushing forward any changes, and APIL is calling for the introduction of a HSC phone line to enable employers and staff to gain information and advice on a confidential basis. mf

**AP243/2**

“There is a definite need for the HSC and employers to communicate more openly,” said David. “Providing information and offering advice and suggestions to both employers and their staff would create a culture of openness. It would also provide a confidential channel through which criticism and concerns could be fed back to the HSC.”

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**Note to editors:**

APIL has responded to the Health and Safety Commission paper “A strategy for workplace health and safety in Great Britain to 2010 and beyond”. A full copy of the response is available at [www.apil.com](http://www.apil.com)

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