

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY FAILS IN ATTEMPT TO CUT BACK ON SAFETY

A construction industry attempt to wriggle out of its duty to protect workers has back-fired after the Health and Safety Commission refused to compromise on new work at height regulations.

Colin Ettinger, president of the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL), says construction bosses tried to water down the new regulations by challenging the HSC's decision to scrap the so-called 'two-metre rule'.

"The 'two-metre rule' is a set of safety measures which employers have to put in place for any work carried out above a height of two metres," explains Ettinger.

"The HSC now appears to have stood by its decision to get rid of this rule, so that safety measures have to be in place for work carried out at any height – whether below or above two metres. Implementing new safety measures may create extra costs for construction bosses, but at the end of the day it will hopefully ensure that any work at height is made as safe as possible."

Ettinger says the shocking rate of deaths within the construction industry make it even more crucial that safety measures are stepped-up.

"235 workers were killed between 2003 and 2004 and nearly a third of these were construction workers," he said. "Over half of these deaths involved a fall from height.

"We at APIL are constantly saying that what this country needs is a safety culture, in which people take the health and safety of others seriously. Any move towards reducing this appalling number of deaths will be a step in the right direction - there is no question that workers' safety is more important than profit."

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Note to editors: The Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) has around 5,000 members worldwide including solicitors, barristers, academics and students, who are dedicated to providing a voice for injured people. Our main objective is to ensure access to justice for injured people and focus on prevention of avoidable injuries.

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