



STACS of News

Safety Training And
Consultancy Specialists
Ltd

Volume 13, Issue 5
June 2017

The dangers of too much caffeine

The University of Northumbria at Newcastle has been fined £400,000 after two students nearly died when overdosing on caffeine in a botched laboratory experiment.

The court heard how students had been learning about the effects of the stimulant for a study on sports performance. Part of the course included a practical exercise where volunteer students would take quantities of caffeine to demonstrate the impact. Two of the students became dizzy, suffered blurred vision, vomiting, shaking and a rapid heartbeat after drinking caffeine at a solution of 100 times the recommended amount for the experiment. They had to undergo dialysis to rid their bodies of the caffeine.

HSE's investigation found they had been given caffeine in powdered form instead of 200mg tablets, which led them to miscalculate, ingesting the equivalent of 300 cups of coffee, according to media reports.

The investigating HSE Inspector said "The university completely failed to control the risks during these experiments and two young students were made seriously ill".

The University pleases guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and was fined £400,000 with costs of £26,468.22.

HSE has power to access internet history

HSE investigators will soon be allowed to access every website visited by suspects in the preceding 12 months with new powers under the so-called "Snoopers Charter".

The Investigatory Powers Act, which received royal assent on 29 November, will give the regulator and other public authorities the power to obtain internet connection records, which include details of visits to websites and social media, and information about when emails were sent. However, this element of the Act has been postponed until the government and internet companies can work out how the information can be collected safely.

Under existing legislation, the HSE already has the ability to access two categories of "communications data" - the name and address of a subscriber to a mobile phone number, and their telephone bills. The new Act will widen the definition of communications data to include internet connection records.

Under the new law, the HSE will be able to see the websites suspects have visited, but not individual pages or the content of messages.

CCTV owners risk falling foul of data law

It's only £35 per year, but businesses are still failing to register their CCTV systems with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and risking a hefty fine.

The most recent case was a prosecution brought by the ICO against a Coventry-based business which was using a non-registered CCTV system. The case was only brought to court after the owner repeatedly ignored reminder letters to register its premises.

The owner said that she thought the ICO's reminder letters were "spam". Though magistrates only fined the owner £650, the ICO can impose penalties up to £500,000 for the most severe breaches of the regulations.

Lack of compliance will almost certainly come to light the second an organisation tries to use camera footage for a prosecution.

Businesses need to ensure that:

- They have registered with the ICO (<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/register/>)
- Recordings are not kept longer than necessary
- Use of recorded data does not breach people's rights
- Data is kept securely and is not passed to foreign countries.

Most domestic CCTV systems do not fall under the Data Protection Act, however, if your recordings include people outside of your property, then you may have to register.

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Nottingham City Council has today been fined after an apprentice suffered serious hand injuries.

Nottingham Crown Court heard how the 22-year-old worker was on site at a primary school when the lawnmower he was using became blocked. The court heard how the worker was trying to unblock the machinery when his hand came into contact with the rotating blade. His right index finger was severed and he also suffered serious cuts and ligament damage to other fingers on his right hand.

An investigation by the HSE found the council had removed some of the manufacturer's safety measures of the machinery, and replaced it with its own design which was not to the required safety standard.

The council failed to suitably control the risks posed by the physical equipment in use and also didn't fully consider training needs of the employees to operate the machinery in a safe and appropriate manner. Failures were also identified in the levels of supervision provided for the lawn mowing activity by apprentices.

Nottingham City Council pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(2)(a) of the Health and Safety At Work Act 1974, Section 9(1) of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment 1998 and Sections 3(1) and 5(1) of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

They were fined £33,000 and ordered to pay costs of £12,000.

Energy drinks

The energy drink market is booming, but behind their attractive appearance lurk some dangerous substances.

The health risks associated with energy drink consumption are primarily related to their caffeine content.

According to European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) the recommended daily limit of caffeine is 400mg. This is the limit after which overdose symptoms can appear, ranging from palpitations, nausea, vomiting, hypocalcemia, convulsions and in rare cases, death.

As a 500ml Monster can contains 160mg caffeine and one 250ml can of Red Bull contains 80mg of caffeine, energy drinks are under this limit individually and not much stronger than a cup of brewed coffee (around 100mg). But the problem lies in the number of cans consumed per day.

Caffeine in energy drinks is not the only potentially harmful ingredient. According to NHS, adults should not consume more than 30g of added sugar per day. Some brands of energy drink contain up to 20 teaspoons of sugar (78g) per 500ml serving.

Check the information on the side of the can.

Four die in trench collapse

Two companies have been fined a total of £700,000 and a director has received a suspended prison sentence following the fatal crushing of four workers at an excavation site in Norfolk.

The court heard that the men were constructing a large steel structure as part of the foundation for a large Pressure Test Facility.

^[1]The structure, which weighed several tonnes, collapsed on top of the group. A large-scale emergency response took place to try and rescue the trapped workers. The four trapped men were all pronounced dead at the scene.

The excavation for the horizontal PTF was more than 23m long, 3m wide and 2m deep. The horizontal steel cage being constructed would have weighed about 32 tonnes when completed.

The HSE investigation found serious flaws in the planning, management and monitoring of this complex project on the part of the Principal Contractor and the groundworks Contractor and its company Director.

The Principal Contractor pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 9(1)(a) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007. The company was fined £500,000 and ordered to pay costs of £100,000.

^[2]The groundworks Contractor pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. It was fined £200,000 and ordered to pay costs of £50,000.

The Director pleaded guilty to breaching Section 37(1) of Health and Safety at Work Act. He was sentenced to a seven and a half month custodial sentence, suspended for two years. He was ordered to complete 200 hours of unpaid community work within 12 months, and also ordered to pay costs of £7,500.