

Health and Safety at Work- an essential guide for managers
Jeremy Stranks, 9th Edition (2010) KoganPage Limited,
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Book Review by Sally Ramage

This ninth edition of *Health and safety at work* is itself evidence of its popularity and fitness for purpose. Most importantly this edition includes the latest relevant legislation, including the Corporate Manslaughter and Homicide Act 2007. The 18 chapters in this book cover topics including the principal legal requirements; stress at work; occupational diseases; dangerous substances; engineering, electrical and structural safety; and an important chapter on construction and contractors. Encouragingly, the author gives the reader some of the relevant criminal law sources.

Oil drilling

The latest UK Parliamentary debate on offshore oil drilling (see HC Deb, 11 November 2010, c408) debated on 11 November 2010 will be relevant as far as engineering safety is concerned. This important issue follows the publication of the analysis of the causes of the oil spill in the gulf of Mexico. The DECC regulates environmental aspects of the oil and gas sector, and the Health and Safety Executive is responsible for safety. Since the oil spill in Mexico, the UK has doubled the number of its environmental inspections.

Oil spills

Charles Hendry, Minister of State (Renewable Energy), Energy and Climate Change told Parliament that the UK, after advice by the Oil Spill Prevention and Response Advisory Group (OSPRAG), an industry-led initiative, set up by the industry in the UK in the light of the disaster in the gulf of Mexico, recently ensured possession of two containment devices that could deal very quickly with an emergency oil spill in the UK and work is in progress within the industry on capping devices that would provide early, permanent solutions (see HC Debate, 11 November 2010, c408).

1989 Hillsborough football deaths- lest we forget

Nobody living in the United Kingdom can ever forget the 1989 Hillsborough football overcrowding disaster, which led to the deaths of 96 football fans who were there to enjoy the Football Association Cup semi-final game between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest. It has been alleged that the police did not make full disclosure about that very tragic event. The public, having pressed for an inquiry about the Hillsborough deaths, were rewarded for their perseverance when the government ordered Yorkshire police constabulary to release papers. It was discovered that the police had amended some of the paperwork. Yorkshire police constabulary had allegedly vetted junior police officers' statements, and amended many of these statements to hide evidence which would bring criticism of the police's own operation.

Culpable under today's laws

There were allegations that the police tried to cover up their own culpability for the disaster. Although the official inquiry, chaired by Lord Justice Taylor, concluded that police mismanagement of the crowd had caused the disaster, no punishment has been meted out to anyone. In his report, Lord Justice Taylor said that failure to give that order was a huge blunder. Lord Justice Taylor criticised South Yorkshire police for refusing to accept that truth. The eventual verdict was one of accidental death, not unlawful killing but had this taken place today, the verdict would most probably be one of corporate manslaughter. The police mismanaged the

situation; the ambulance services were poor and the football ground was unsafe and its safety certificate was out of date, yet the Football Association, with that knowledge still commissioned the football match to be held there. With the new Coroners Act 2009, the witnesses who had not been called at the Hillsborough disaster inquest would have been called today. It has been alleged that the ambulance service were negligent and it has been alleged that many of the victims could have been saved if correct ambulance techniques had been used and if they had had proper care, and oxygen.

Conclusion

For managers, this is the best book in the country on health and safety issues.