

EDITOR'S COMMENT



Now that all Covid-19 restrictions have been lifted in Ireland since 1 April 2022, it's been a case of getting back to business as usual, with the return to the physical workplace on a phased basis.

This follows the publication of the Transitional Protocol by the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment Leo Varadkar TD towards the end of January. This guidance document, which sets out best practice for keeping the workplace safe to help employers and their employees return to work safely, was revised after consultation with employer and employee representative groups.

It means that employers may refuse requests by employees to work remotely on at least 13 different grounds under the draft legislation. However, they must justify their decision if it is appealed by the employees, and all such appeals can be brought internally, to the Workplace Relations Commission or to both.

On welcoming the Transitional Protocol, Ibec Director of Employer Relations, Maeve McElwee had said that the removal of most public health restrictions give rise to many questions by the business community, mainly on effectively managing a safe and phased return to the workplace.

However, ICTU's General Secretary Patricia King commented that it took a pandemic to fully awaken everyone to the potential for remote working. "Working from home or remotely from another location close to home, such as a rural hub, has many advantages for workers' quality of life, for businesses, communities, and the environment, she added.

She claimed that ICTU was first to call for legislation requiring employers to give justifiable reasons why they could not agree to a worker's request to work remotely, bringing Ireland into line with long-established

employment law in European peer countries.

So, will the new workplace protocols and legislation strike the right balance between the needs of both employers and employees? Only time will tell!

Grace Heneghan
grace@oceanpublishing.ie

CONTENTS

ISSUE 51

4 NEWS UPDATE

8 EUROPEAN NEWS

12 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence and harassment of women has come to the fore more than ever this year. For the first time in Ireland, legislation will now be in place to protect against crimes based on gender, and to categorise stalking as a standalone criminal offence, reports Deirdre O'Flynn.



16 WORKPLACE PROTOCOLS

Flexibility is now a key trait for employers and employees to cope with changes taking place at an increasing pace over the last two years, notes John Gallagher, Chief Health Officer of Cognate Health Ltd. He says that many

employers have come to realise the benefits of allowing employees to work from home during these uncertain times.

19 NISO/NISG SAFETY AWARDS

It's that time of year again as companies put preparations in place to enter the NISO/NISG All Ireland Occupational Safety Awards. The closing date for the awards competition is Thursday 16 June. The early bird date is 12 May while all late entries will be due on 7 July.



20 AVIATION SAFETY MANAGEMENT

Serious shortfalls in safety practices were highlighted in the Air Accident Investigation Unit's final report into the Irish Coast Guard's 'Rescue 116' fatal accident (off the North Mayo coast in March 2017). Kevin Byrne, Security and Safety Aviation Auditor, says the speedy implementation of the report's

recommendations would now certainly be welcomed by the whole aviation community.



24 PERSONAL INJURY GUIDELINES

Measures to approve the development of new legislation to significantly enhance and extend the services provided by the Personal Injuries Assessment Board (PIAB) form part of the Government's reform programme to reduce costs associated with personal injury claims, thereby lowering insurance costs.

26 HSA STRATEGY STATEMENT

The new Strategy Statement for 2022-2024 sets out the Health and Safety Authority's continued goals to promote, regulate and influence the culture of workplace health

and safety. These include emerging from the COVID-19 public health pandemic, dealing with the fallout from the UK's exit from the EU and addressing new ways of working.

29 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

Migraine affects 12-15% of the population – with up to 600,000 people in Ireland alone suffering from the condition. They may find that many of their work colleagues or employers do not understand that it is a complex neurological condition, just like diabetes, epilepsy, or asthma. In fact, it is more prevalent than all three conditions put together, according to the Migraine Association of Ireland.



33 MARITIME SAFETY

Met Éireann and Irish Lights have collaborated on a trial project to improve safety for mariners and those living along the coastline, which will involve adapting existing navigation buoys with new wave sensors and providing quality control near real-time meteorological and hydrographic data.



35 SAFE PASS TRAINING

Safe Pass – the mandatory one-day health and safety awareness training programme for construction workers – looks set to undergo a significant overhaul since it was first launched 20 years ago, with plans by SOLAS to provide an alternative online assessment facility, writes safety consultant Declan Gibney.



39 CONSTRUCTION SAFETY

Collen Construction's innovative safety programmes aim to encourage full worker engagement and greater personal responsibility, according to Joe O'Dwyer, Collen's Health & Safety Manager. Here he outlines how his company's current 'Creating Safer Sites' programme, has been built to fit in with furthering a contractor's worker safety philosophy.



43 TELEWORKING REGULATIONS

Although the rate of telework has been increasing over the past decade, the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 instigated an unprecedented shift towards working from home. As a result, countries

quickly needed to reassess legislation concerning teleworking to protect workers from new and emerging ergonomic risks to workers' health.



47 UK FIRE SAFETY

The UK's Fire Brigades Union lawyer Martin Seaward told the Grenfell Tower Inquiry that any assessment of the fire and rescue service must take place "in the wider political and economic context" and that the disaster was caused by individual private companies and government, with "total" building failure and "widespread" systematic failings.

51 HEALTH & WELLBEING

Keeping staff happy, healthy and safe should be a priority for all businesses, but how can it be done so that efficiency and productivity are not compromised? Contrary to popular belief, these aims do not have to be diametrically opposed, as outlined by Claire Price, QMS International, one of the UK's leading ISO certification providers.

54 UK NEWS

58 INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Editor Grace Heneghan **email:** grace@oceanpublishing.ie

Managing Director Patrick Aylward **email:** patrick@oceanpublishing.ie

Graphic Designer Niall Mc Hugh **email:** niall@oceanpublishing.ie

Circulation: info@healthandsafetytimes.ie

Advertising Co-ordinator: Audrey Fitzgerald

14 Upper Fitzwilliam Street, Dublin 2. Tel. 01 6785165

Email: admin@healthandsafetytimes.ie | Web: www.oceanpublishing.ie/health-safety

Health & Safety Times has no connection with the Health and Safety Authority, which is also known as the National Authority for Occupational Safety and Health. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the information published is correct, the publisher cannot accept responsibility for errors, omissions or discrepancies. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the publisher.

All rights reserved. *Health & Safety Times* @2022



'FOLLOW' Health and Safety Times on Twitter at www.twitter.com/healthandsafetymag



and 'LIKE' our Facebook Page www.facebook.com/healthandsafetytimes