



SAFETY AND HEALTH AWARENESS DAYS (SHADs)

1. Organisations involved

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Ginsters

2. Description of the case

2.1. *Introduction*

According to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) Census 2010¹, the Agricultural industry within the UK tends to be made up of micro, small and medium sized businesses, with an aging workforce, the majority of which consists of the self-employed or family members. There is a general trend within the industry for a gradual decline in the number of employed workers. However, the proportion of agency, temporary and migrant workers remains significant. Much of the workforce is believed to be self-taught and, thus, likely to have developed their own ways of working, which may not necessarily be best practice.

Despite only accounting for approximately 1.4% of the UK's workforce, agriculture accounts for between 15% and 20% of all reported work related fatalities in Great Britain, with an average of 45-50 work related deaths each year.² The main causes of fatal injuries include workplace transport, falls from height, being struck by moving objects and livestock. The actual number of non-fatal injuries is not known due to gross under-reporting within the sector; it is estimated that only about 26% of accidents to employees and 5% involving the self-employed are reported.²

Evidence suggests that the industry also has a poor occupational health record. A Labour Force Survey estimated that in 2008/09 between 10,000 and 22,000 people whose current or most recent job in the last year was in the agriculture sector, suffered from an illness which they believed was caused or made worse by their work; i.e. a prevalence rate of between 2.1 and 4.7%.²

The agricultural industry is notoriously hard-to-reach, with few formal management structures with which to engage. The industry demographic needs to be carefully considered when attempting to engage them in health and safety initiatives. Self-reliant workers and business owners may be ill informed and unwilling to accept changes. Furthermore, they may be reluctant, or even afraid to seek advice from what they may feel is an autocratic organisation.

To develop closer links to the industry and a rapport with its' workforce, HSE decided to hold a series of events, which they called Safety and Health Awareness Days (SHADs). To help promote these events HSE approached Ginsters, a food manufacturing company with a supply network consisting of a multitude of farms and other agricultural businesses.

2.2. *Aims*

The HSE aimed to facilitate a cultural change within the agriculture industry, by developing working relationships with agricultural workers and raising their awareness of the risks associated with their work. Ginsters aimed to provide their suppliers with a platform where they could not only access health and safety expertise and experience through presentations from the HSE and other presenters but also forge closer links with Ginsters and the HSE.

2.3. What was done, and how?

In 1999 the HSE started to host farm Safety Health Awareness Days (SHAD) at national, regional and local agricultural shows, to enable farm workers to meet safety advisors, watch practical demonstrations and obtain materials designed to raise awareness about safety concerns.

These SHADs provided an excellent opportunity for those working on farms to get practical advice free of charge from trained instructors with an industry background and take often simple and cheap precautions to avoid people being killed, injured or made ill on their farm. Attendance is voluntary and free of charge, with lunch and refreshments provided.

A SHAD typically consists of five or six practical demonstrations, which are mainly delivered by instructors, who have an industry background or are themselves farmers. Some of these instructors are provided and trained by the Sector Skills Council for land-based and environmental industries (LANTRA). Much of the material that is delivered at SHADs is a result of joint initiatives with other organisations, such as government departments and agencies, workers unions and equipment manufacturers. Each demonstration shows good practice that anyone working on a farm can use to spot and deal with potential dangers. Those attending can take leaflets and brochures home with them, which may be shared with other workers or family members.

Topics include:

- livestock handling;
- handling and use of harmful chemicals (Figure 1);
- working at height;
- work on fragile roofs (Figure 2);
- manual handling;
- human behaviour;
- workplace transport (Figure 3);
- risk assessment;
- user-worked railway crossings;
- smoke free regulations; and
- fire fighting and fire safety.

Figure 1: By using a light box, HSE advisors show how chemical contamination may be present on hands despite it not being visible to the naked eye, and can show how different handling techniques and appropriate personal protective equipment can minimise exposure.



CASE STUDIES

Figure 2: Demonstration rig to show the dangers of working on fragile roofs and the precautions that need to be taken.



Figure 3: Lantra trainers demonstrate how weight distribution affects ATV's stability



CASE STUDIES

In an attempt to mitigate the lack of management structure within the agricultural industry, HSE approached Ginsters with the aim to promote safety initiatives via their supply network. Ginsters is a food manufacturing company with 600 employees. They have direct contact with agriculture workers and are well placed to influence their suppliers and contractors health and safety regimes. Their supply network consists of small companies, such as local potato growers, large multi-national companies, and everything in-between.

Ginsters welcomed the opportunity to work with HSE and quickly took the lead in this regard, holding regular meetings with HSE to discuss strategies for improving safety and hosting their first SHAD event on the 30th November 2006 (Figure 4). Twenty representatives from their supply network attended the event, which included content previously presented at HSE run events as well as some new content specifically tailored by Ginsters for their suppliers. Following the success of their first SHAD which received very positive verbal feedback from the attendees, Ginsters and the HSE decided to hold a second event in 2007 which more than doubled the number of attendees from the previous year and most recently saw around 100 attendees in total. Ginsters parent company, Samworth Brothers Limited, adopted the initiative and rolled it out to other companies within the Samworth group. Subsequent events were held, to which suppliers, contractors and associates were invited, with more than 100 people attending the most recent events.

Figure 4: Ginsters first SHAD event



Initially Ginsters were concerned that their supply network would perceive that they may be under pressure to attend as they were suppliers, it soon became apparent that the companies attended because they wanted to work closer with Ginsters and for the events to be successful they had to be of mutual benefit, the days were purposely structured to allow break out sessions which would allow the suppliers, HSE and Ginsters personnel ample time to interact with one another.

For companies to commit to attending these sessions it was agreed early on between Ginsters and the HSE that they would be over half a day as opposed to full days – this was



particular relevant as some of the suppliers / contractors travelled considerable distances to attend.

2.4. What was achieved?

Since their inception, more than 43,000 people have attended over 140 events, which have been held at various locations throughout the UK, including livestock auctions, lecture theatres and agricultural shows. Research shows that a majority of those who attend a SHAD make at least one change to improve health and safety on their farm as a result, and almost all would recommend them to another person.

2.5. Success factors

- Collaborative working with private business has proved to be mutually beneficial, HSE provides expert speakers and best practice guidance, whilst Ginsters organise events and use their contacts and influence to ensure a good level of attendance.
- The practical demonstrations and informal nature of the events have proved to be very popular with farmers and encourages active participation.
- Choosing convenient locations and times to hold the events has provided busy farmers with an opportunity to receive guidance and training without unduly infringing upon their working day.

2.6. Further information

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2.7. Transferability

Following the success of the farm SHADs, similar events were hosted to address the main problems encountered in the arboriculture, forestry and fish farming sectors, as described below:

- In 2009/10 SHADs targeting managers in Local Authorities and other large clients (including, highways maintenance and construction companies, etc), who commission arboriculture contracts were hosted. The aim of these SHADs was to promote understanding of safe working techniques, the legal framework within which arboriculture contractors operate and to improve the selection, monitoring and review of contractors.
- SHADs aimed at forestry works managers, site safety coordinators and land owners were held that focused on the management of forestry operations, using practical demonstrations of forwarders/transport of harvested timber, manual felling using chainsaws including the take-down of hung-up trees and the analysis of cut stumps as a tool to assess competence of operators and contractors.
- With the collaboration of the Royal National Lifeboat Institute and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, SHADs were hosted to address the safety issues faced by the fish farming industry.

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These, along with the events hosted by Ginsters have demonstrated that the SHAD format can be transferred to different sub-sectors within the agriculture industry and can be implemented by both safety organisations and private business. Furthermore, the SHAD format has also been used by HSE in non-agricultural industries, such as in the hospitality and construction sectors.

3. References, resources:

1. Defra Census 2010 - available from:
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/evidence/statistics/foodfarm/landuselivestock/junesurvey/documents/Jun2010-Eng.pdf> (accessed: 26 October 2010)
2. Health and Safety Executive Board Paper No: HSE/10/33 – available from:
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/meetings/hseboard/2010/310310/pmarb1033.pdf> (accessed 26 October 2010)