

APPG on Working at Height: Enhanced Reporting Meeting

Wednesday 23 October 2019, 4:00-5:00pm

Non-Verbatim Minutes



Working at Height

Welcome and opening remarks – Alison Thewliss MP

Chair of the APPG, Alison Thewliss MP (AT) opened the meeting by welcoming attendees and speakers. She introduced the topic of enhanced reporting as the headline recommendation from the APPG's inaugural report, *Staying Alive: Preventing Serious Injury and Fatalities while Working at Height*. She said the meeting would build on the report and the discussions the group has already had with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Department for Work and Pensions. She then asked attendees to continue to speak to their local MPs about raising the issue and inviting them to future meetings of the APPG.

Pitch from Industry – Andrew Delahunt, Director of Technical Safety, International Powered Access Forum

AT then invited Andrew Delahunt (AD), Director of Technical Safety at International Powered Access Forum to deliver a pitch from industry on the benefits of enhanced reporting. He said that all Access Industry Forum members supported the introduction of enhanced reporting because of the benefits it would deliver. The benefits he listed included the production of clearer data, increased focus and efficiency and he highlighted that the changes could be implemented without any additional financial or administrative burdens to industry or regulators. He also said that enhanced reporting would remove the emotional barrier that often obstructs the comprehensive reporting of incidents through the current free text reporting system. He said there was a real opportunity to implement enhanced reporting and the industry was ready to work closely with government and regulator to support it. He said that the UK leads the world in terms of health and safety and any positive change, such as the introduction of enhanced reporting, will be followed by countries throughout the world who look to the UK as the benchmark for health and safety rules. He added that the introduction of enhanced reporting would mean that the APPG, UK industry and the UK government will have achieved something significant throughout the world.

Update and response from the Health and Safety Executive – Rick Brunt, Head of Operational Strategy and Alex Farnhill, Acting Team Leader – Safety Unit

AT thanked AD for his contribution and invited Rick Brunt (RB), Head of Operational Strategy at HSE to respond to the points that had been raised. RB began by introducing himself and providing information about his background. He said he was formerly Head of the Vulnerable Workers, Agriculture, Waste and Recycling Unit at HSE and has a lot of experience on the frontline. He said that HSE had responded to the APPG's report and the headline recommendation of enhanced reporting. He reiterated the HSE's position, that RIDDOR already provides a free-text box to capture information and that the implementation of enhanced reporting could require legislative or widespread technological change. He said that that he fully accepted some of the points about the benefits of enhanced data. However, he made clear that the primary purpose of RIDDOR is to allow HSE to fulfil its role as a regulator. He added that the additional data that is being proposed as part of the changes would not improve the HSE's ability to carry out its regulatory activity nor was it likely to alter HSE's response to incidents as it would not provide any additional information. He added that enhanced reporting will put extra pressure on businesses and organisations. He explained that an area the HSE

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does see value in is helping organisations understand what they can do better, and this could be done by publishing additional guidance on how to input data into the free-text box as opposed to enhanced reporting.

Questions and general discussion

AT thanked RB for his contribution and opened the floor for questions. Peter Bennett OBE (PB), Managing Director of PASMA, Chair of the No Falls Foundation and Executive Director of the Ladder Association thanked HSE for their contribution. However, he wished to state that enhanced reporting would not incur any cost and will, contrary to the HSE's point, reduce burden as people will not have to worry about telling a story when reporting an incident as is currently required with the free-text box reporting. He added that enhanced reporting would also eradicate the anomalies that currently exist with free text reporting. He said that enhanced reporting would also allow the industry to know where to direct resources because the data will be better and that the best way to reduce falls from height is to capture as much information about how an incident happened.

Jason Harfield (JH), President of ATLAS asked about training. He said that lots of people working today on building sites are not trained appropriately to work at height and there is no available data to show the scale of this to trade associations. He said that enhanced reporting could reveal more information about how many people are trained and this evidence could then be taken to central government and the training organisations to ask them to invest more money into training. He made clear that without enhanced reporting and without extra information, the industry's current response to reducing fatalities and serious injuries is not as effective as it could be. In response, RB said that the AIF's enhanced reporting proposal would not provide the level of detail that the industry is looking for.

John Bungay, Trustee of the No Falls Foundation said that even if enhanced reporting saves one life then the changes will be worth it.

Sarah Phillips, Company Secretary of The National Access & Scaffolding Confederation said that she has a data scientist in the family who frequently stated that free-text reporting does not provide accurate data.

AT made the point that the money HSE are putting into automated text mining to correct the quality of the data is counter-productive and that money could be invested into enhanced reporting.

RB said that HSE and industry should and must work together. He picked up on the point from Mark Davison, Divisional Director at Premier Technical Services Group about providing case studies and pushing them out to the media. He said that HSE would be interested in continuing this dialogue with the industry.

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Concluding comments and summary

AT thanked HSE and all attendees for their contributions which have given the group much to consider. She said it was very useful to hear from the HSE and the APPG will respond with queries, ideas and will seek further assurances.