

Health and safety: Winter operations

UNISON recognises the hard work of all members over the winter in trying to get the City back up and running after the heavy snowfall in March.

However, we raised concerns at the time of the red alert as to whether managers had properly prepared for the winter emergency to make sure staff had adequate equipment for the tasks they were being asked to carry out. We were also concerned staff were being asked to travel when it wasn't safe to do so and confusion over who was deemed to be "essential".

Unfortunately in some cases, UNISON's concerns were realised.

Some members have reported to the branch that they were put under undue pressure to travel to work



(Against Police advice); members were sent to clear streets in inadequate footwear and were slipping and sliding; vehicles were unsuitable and unable to get on to the streets. A small number of members have reported that they have had to fight with managers to get time back for the day they were unable to get into work, despite advice from HR.

Ian Mullen (Branch

Health & Safety Officer) and other UNISON colleagues are meeting with Emergency Planning managers as well as other local managers to highlight where there were failings. We would really like to hear from anyone about their own experiences this winter, good and bad and we can feed this back to management and help avoid similar problems occurring again in future.

WASTE & STREET CLEANING

Making sure new sites have staff facilities

UNISON, Unite and GMB twice a month have meetings with senior management to discuss everything from health and safety to changes to working conditions.

Over the past few months, UNISON has met with senior managers to discuss the changes to the two largest recycling centres.

You will likely be aware that the Council is building two new large facilities at Sighthill and Seafield. These are to house the new waste transfer stations. There will also be new facilities for staff in Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing on these sites.

UNISON has asked that staff be briefed on the new facilities and we have made sure that management have learned lessons from the building in phase 1 at Seafield.

We have made sure that the new site will have adequate first aid facilities and adequate welfare facilities for staff to use.

Please ensure you speak to your local UNISON rep or contact the branch if you have any matters you want taking to management.

School crossing review

Tom Howorth (Place Shop Stewards' Convener) attended the School Crossing Patrol review meetings on 7 and 8 February,

These meetings were called by management to look at school crossings as they haven't been comprehensively reviewed since they came to the Council in 1996.

UNISON has been calling on Council management to consult and engage with staff at the earliest

opportunity when there are any thoughts to changing services.

It is a welcome sight that the Road Safety team is engaging staff in the future of the school crossing services.

At this stage, there is no threat to jobs or service provision, this is about providing an effective service and ensure that it is fit for purpose. Should any formal review be proposed, UNISON will ensure that staff are

properly consulted again.

Health and safety was high on the agenda of the staff attending the meetings.

As a result, UNISON committed to meeting with management to ensure that risk assessments are adequate, up to date and relevant and that your safety is paramount in the Council's mind.

Continued overleaf



We want to hear your views on vehicle telematics plans

The Council is proposing to spend £1.5m over the next few years on a new telematics system in 800 Council vehicles.

The system will record the whereabouts of each vehicle, with live tracking. It will also record driving style, speed and distance covered. The intention is to save money on fuel with more efficient vehicle usage.

UNISON and Unite have questioned whether £1.5m is really a sum worth investing in a system that shows no obvious means of saving fuel. There are also concerns about whether it creates an unsupportive work environment where staff are not trusted, may feel



like they are being constantly monitored and the potential loss of goodwill when so many colleagues currently go above and beyond the call of duty.

UNISON understands that the Council is already contractually committed to this new system so we have put on record our disappointment in only

being consulted a year after this system was first being considered.

UNISON is interested in hearing views of members on this new system, which will affect all Council vehicles if and when it is introduced.

Currently UNISON is not accepting this system, so there should be no requests from management.

Take 5 Risk Assessments

This is a new system that the Council is proposing to introduce and has piloted in Edinburgh Road Services (ERS).

The idea is that frontline staff will take the "Take 5" booklet out to a work site and carry out a "dynamic" risk assessment.

After meeting with management, UNISON reps expressed grave concerns over the introduction of a new health & safety system without proper consultation with unions.

We stopped the system being rolled out until we could discuss the potential pitfalls with such as system.

Initial concerns became apparent that this would turn out to be a system used to blame frontline staff in the event that a serious incident occurred, using it to absolve management of responsibility. So we have set down some requirements to get in place before this system is rolled out:

- All general risk assessment must be up to date and consulted with and communicated to staff;

- Safe systems of work and method statements must be up to date to ensure staff know how to safely undertake a hazardous task;
- Adequate supervision must be put in place to ensure that work is safely carried out;
- Staff must be trained on health and safety, with toolbox talks used to supplement detailed training;
- Staff must be trained on the use of a "Take 5" risk assessment to ensure they know what hazards should be identified and what measures should be implemented.

The current format of the "Take 5" assessment is not fit for purpose as it is too vague in its scope. UNISON has asked management to ensure that it is tailored to the job to be assessed.

After it has been successfully rolled out in ERS, the Council intends to roll it out across the board. UNISON will continue to monitor the situation but would appreciate input from members on any concerns around this system or health & safety in general.

School crossing review

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To that end, UNISON would encourage all members to report any accidents or near misses to your line manager to be recorded on the Council's "SHE Accident Reporting" system.

Management and politicians need to know the great work you all do and the risks you take every day standing in the road.

Since early February, UNISON has been involved in the consultation. A letter from management went out in March to all staff, so the results should now be coming back in.

Tom Howorth met management on 10 April to discuss health and safety in school crossing patrols.

A number of matters were raised including, air pollution, road traffic incidents and near misses, first aid, lone working and personal protective equipment.

A site visit is to be arranged to see how the school crossing patrols operate and ensure that proper risk assessments are made.

Feedback to the branch

Call: 0131 558 7488

branchoffice@unison-edinburgh.org.uk

Shop Stewards and Health & Safety Reps in Place

Tom Howorth - Shop Steward's Convener and H&S Rep (East Neighbourhood Centre)

Ian Mullen - Steward, Service Conditions Officer and Health & Safety Officer (Infirmary St)

Stevie Bishop - Steward and Health & Safety Rep (Cowan's Close - Red Shift)

Steve Devlin - Steward and Health & Safety Rep (Seafield Recycling Centre - Red Shift)

Neil Rodger - Steward (Sighthill Recycling Centre - Red Shift)

Joy Hadden - Steward (East Neighbourhood Centre)

Morag Stevenson - Steward (249 High Street)

Kathryn Henderson - Steward (City Arts Centre)

Christina Goddard - Steward (Scientific Services, Marine Esplanade)

Anne Hazelwood - Health & Safety Rep (Scientific Services, Marine Esplanade)

Neil Ramage - Steward (249 High Street)

Stephen Edmunds - Steward and Health & Safety Rep (Barnton Depot)

Paul Stewart - Steward (Bankhead Depot)

Douglas Boxall - Health & Safety Rep (Kings Haugh)

Allan King - Health & Safety Rep (Inch Nursery)