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Volcanic Ash Crisis

The recent volcanic ash cloud that closed skies over the UK and much of northern Europe was probably not listed on anybody’s risk register – although travel problems may well have been considered. The incident seemed to have affected many businesses throughout Europe and even interrupted manufacturing at Nissan’s car plant – a consequence of JIT. Whereas some of the airline businesses seemed to be very slow at responding to the crisis, other businesses did manage to respond much more quickly. UPS (United Parcel Service) responded by redirecting air freight from Asia for Europe to Istanbul and then arranged for it to be transported by road from there to the rest of Europe. Tesco organised for its produce from Africa to be landed in Spain and transferred to lorries for onward travel. As Kevin Knight, leader of the ISO that developed the standard, said, “The really successful organisations, like UPS, work on understanding the uncertainty involved in achieving their objectives and ensuring that they manage their risks so as to ensure a successful outcome.”

After dealing with the resulting problems, many organisations will be coming to the conclusion that their risk management and business continuity plans and preparations need to be re-examined. At the end of last year a standard, ISO 31000:2009 Risk Management – Principles and guidelines, was published and this can help industrial, commercial and public sector organisations to confidently address their risks.

The standard can help all organisations to:

- Reduce losses
- Operate more effectively and efficiently
- Manage proactively rather than reactively
- Identify their opportunities, strengths, weaknesses and threats
- Reduce the environmental, health and safety risks

The standard includes a framework and a process for the management of risk that can be applied to any public or private organisation. It does not prescribe a single approach to the management of risk, but stresses that the management must be matched to the specific needs and structure of the individual organisation.

The standard makes clear that, as for all initiatives, top management commitment is vital and the Board must provide sufficient resources to turn that commitment into action. It is often difficult to succeed in gaining the Board’s attention and winning the necessary funding required for risk management and business continuity, however, the ‘fall out’ from volcano might have demonstrated very clearly the need for such commitment and attention.

For further information on the ISO 31000:2009 standard, please visit www.iso.ch

Rights to Train

Recent legal changes in the UK will mean that employees have the right to request time for study or training. Time to Train will give workers in businesses which employ more than 250 people the legal right to request time off to take up relevant training. The right will be

made available to all employees from April 2011, giving smaller organisations time to prepare. However, employers are not obliged to approve every request; they can be turned down if there is a good business reason to do so.

Skills Minister Kevin Brennan said, “We need to empower people to speak about training opportunities and the benefits they can bring to a business’ success. Many companies and organisations are very good at training their staff, but we need to make sure that all businesses are advising employees on what is on offer. This is where a regulation like Time to Train will be able to help people. It will give them the confidence to ask about training and skills, allowing them to take control of their own careers.”

There is guidance available for employers on the ‘right to time to train’ and it can be found on the Business Link website www.businesslink.gov/timetotrain

Standards in the Oil and Gas Sector

The use of international standards in the Oil and Gas sector has been highlighted in the recent edition of the Oil and Gas Producers (OGP) Standards Bulletin. The OGP strongly support the use of international standards and they are increasingly being adopted, not just in Europe and America but in Russia, Kazakhstan and the Gulf States. The portfolio consists of 145 standards, plus updates. Using the standards reduces costs and delivery times and facilitates trade across borders by replacing the multiplicity of industry and national standards.

The OGP Standards Bulletin can be downloaded as a PDF from www.iso.ch

Standard for Driving Controls

Currently cars have a variety of controls for lights, wipers, locks etc that can cause confusion when driving a new car, but this could soon be improved. An updated ISO

standard addresses this issue by giving recommendations for the design of the operating motions of the controls. *ISO 12214:2010, Road vehicles – Direction of motion stereotypes for automotive hand controls* should improve the usability for all car users by recommending designs for hand controls that conform to driver need and enhance the driving experience. In general the orientation and motion of the hand controls should correspond to the orientation of and motion of the controlled element.

John Shutko, Chair of the subcommittee that developed the new standard, said, “Failure to conform to direction of motion stereotypes can lead to actuation errors, longer operating times and an increase in driver workload. The standard will improve the ease of use with which the driver can recognise and use the motion of controls, especially when the car is moving.”

Further details on the standard can be found on www.iso.ch

Queen’s Award for Enterprise

The latest winners of the Queen’s Award for Enterprise were announced recently on the Queen’s birthday. 95 companies won awards for International Trade, 38 for Innovation and 10 for Sustainable Development. The winning organisations cover a wide range of sectors from architecture to transport and include all sizes of business. A full list of winners can be found at www.queensawards.org.uk

Businesses can apply for these awards and a survey of past Award winners demonstrated the benefits that winning can bring.

- 77% of winners reported that the win had brought added commercial value to their business
- 73% of winners saw employee engagement rise
- 73% of winners gained extra press coverage



- 85% of winners said the impact of winning a Queen's Award met or exceeded their expectations
- 57% of International Trade winners achieved increased recognition overseas

Further information on how to apply for an award and the application form for the 2011 Awards can be found on www.businesslink.gov.

Technician Council

This new Council aims to support the UK government's commitment to develop a technician class in sectors such as engineering, scientific research and manufacturing. Initially the Council will aim to expand and develop technician registration schemes by

- Assisting in the drafting of registration standards
- Making appropriate support and information available
- Promoting the professional status and recognition for technicians

Business, Innovation and Skills Minister, Pat McFadden said, "In securing future economic growth it is essential that we have the right people with the right skills in the right jobs. Employers must be able to find skilled technicians and be confident that their knowledge and abilities have been rigorously assessed. The new Technician Council has a vital role to play in bringing together all of those who employ and train technicians to make this happen."

For further information please visit www.bis.gov.uk

Update to Motorcycle Speed Standard

The ISO have recently released an update to *ISO 7117:2010, Motorcycles – Measurement method for determining maximum speed*. The standard has been updated to reflect the changes in technology

and should provide for more accurate results. For example, the old standard allowed 'hand flag' and 'stopwatch' measuring methodology, whereas the revision uses modern technology to increase measurement accuracy. Mikio Kato, Chair of the subcommittee that developed the standard, said "ISO 7117:2010 gives testers useful information on test equipment and ambient atmospheric conditions that should be respected to ensure the accuracy of measurement and the speed of motor cycles".

Further information on the standard can be found on www.iso.ch

Encouragement for Flexible Working

Employers are being called on to do more to promote flexible working. As a demonstration of Government commitment to the approach, flexible working will be promoted across the public sector. Further, Jobcentre Plus are making changes to their systems such that everytime a new vacancy comes into a Jobcentre the employer will automatically be asked if it can be part time, job share or flexible. Ministers believe that increasing the availability of quality flexible and part time jobs will be crucial for the recovery as it will stimulate more jobs, help parents off benefits and give them the opportunity to work, continue their careers and balance the needs of their family too. A booklet "Think Fathers: How flexible working for Dads can work for your business", is available that provides a collection of case studies of how businesses large and small across many different sectors have implemented flexible working and reap the benefits, plus tips on how to make it work for your business. The booklet is available online and can be downloaded free of charge from the [Government Equalities Office](http://www.equalities.gov.uk)