

Gordon Thompson, Health & Safety Technical Officer at the Organics Recycling Group, reports on the WISH forum health and safety summit

WISHING FOR A HEALTHIER AND SAFER FUTURE



The waste management industry has a very poor health and safety record, it is one of the three most dangerous industries in the UK.

Since April 2012 there have been 14 fatalities within the industry. For every fatality there are hundreds of injuries, dangerous occurrences and near misses. In 2009 the Health & Safety Executive launched the Waste Industry Safety & Health (WISH) initiative to help address these issues. The strategic objectives of WISH are:

1. Reduce the overall recurrent reported accident rate by 10% year on year (2005/6 baseline) by December 2013.
2. Produce a standard format measuring the number of working days lost due to occupation health & safety incidents.
3. Gain widespread adoption of safety management systems such as those consistent with HSG 65 principles or compliant with OHSAS 18001.
4. Improve attitudes within the workforce to health and safety.
5. Increase the level of competence within the industry.

WISH has been developed over the past years by a number of waste

management industry organisations, including the REA's Organics Recycling Group.

On February 7th approximately 150 delegates from all parts of the waste management industry attended the inaugural WISH forum in Solihull. Alexander Maddan, Jeremy Jacobs, Susan Relf and Gordon Thompson represented the REA at this event. Keynote speaker for the event, Judith Hackitt CBE, Chair of the HSE, explained the industry's health and safety record and asked delegates to engage with WISH and share their experience and knowledge for the benefit of the whole industry.

Other speakers included Lawrence Waterman OBE who gave a presentation on health & safety lessons learnt from the London Olympics. Mike Short, National Health & Safety Officer for UNISON explained health & safety from a trade union prospective. The morning session concluded with a presentation by WISH Chairman Christopher Jones (Compliance Director at Cory Environmental) who reinforced the issues raised during the morning's presentations.

Following lunch delegates split into five workshop groups to discuss areas of interest including: Leadership, Competence, Worker Involvement, Creating Healthier Safer Work Places, and Customising Support for SME's. The leaders of each of these workshops were subsequently asked to report back to the forum on barriers to their topics and actions required to overcome these barriers.

All of the workshop leaders praised their groups and facilitators for being very active in identifying the barriers to development and actions to overcome these barriers in the individual subject areas.

It was interesting to note that there were certain recurring themes arising across these workshops. These recurring themes included a need to share best practice, lack of defined standards, the general perception of health & safety and inconsistency between regulators, insurers and training providers.

Following presentations by the workshop leaders there was an open panel discussion of the issues raised by these workshops.

The event was closed by Heather Bryant, Director of HSE Southern Division and Waste Management & Recycling Industry Strategy Lead. Heather reinforced the message of the day; the waste industry needs to improve its health and safety culture.

In addition to the support given by REA staff before and during the event Gaynor Hartnell CEO of the REA has fully committed to support the WISH initiative. This support is demonstrated by the Organics Recycling Group of the REA continuing to run a vigorous health and safety program aligned to the objectives of WISH.

All of the delegates appeared to have enjoyed the event and found it to be both interesting and rewarding. ☺