

Welsh Authorities with Training Fly Through HSE Inspections

by Andy Firman, AJF Waste Management

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is halfway through an inspection into waste management practices across all 407 local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland, and so far almost one fifth have been found lacking.

It is encouraging then to report that as a training provider, at AJF Waste Management we are recording record levels of staff training by local authorities; 2012 saw us top 3,000 delegate attendances, with 1,000 of those occurring over the last 12 months. Perhaps most significant, however, has been the impact. In Wales, for example, where we have worked with almost half of the 22 local authorities, each one has passed its HSE inspection with flying colours.

Vehicle-related accidents are still the biggest killers in our industry and five of the 27 improvement notices issued following HSE inspections related to a need for reverse assistant training.

In an industry with a fatal injury rate nine times higher than the average, it is clear to me that where prosecutions arise, over 90 per cent relate back to an absence of training for frontline operatives.

Just last month, two London companies were fined almost £110,000 after a lorry driver sustained life changing injuries from falling down a waste processing chute. After sentencing, the HSE said that companies must manage risks through training, instruction, supervision and monitoring, and adopt safe working practices.

Training is not something our industry is good at unfortunately, especially with agency staff. But it is still a requirement under the Health and Safety at Work Act, and whether employees are there for a day, a week, or a year, they still have to have training. Nobody wants to be found responsible for causing personal injury, but solely from a cost perspective, training operatives at as little as £25 per person is much cheaper than stumping up a £110,000 fine.

Health and Safety Executive guidance advises companies to put in place 'proper training and supervision'. I think it is absolutely critical that training has direct industry accreditation. A wide range of bodies will accredit training but how many of them know the exact requirements of the waste industry – simple things like working one side of the road only and not crossing free-flowing traffic to get to bins on the other side of the road? We are accredited by RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents), and also by CIWM and IOSH (the chartered body for health and safety professionals), so we are confident that our training is suitable in the context of waste management activities.

For local authorities, accreditation gives peace of mind that training is designed for the right purpose. Increasingly, we find more and more clients taking up the option of franchise training – using our course under a licensed agreement with their own trainers. This gives them the flexibility to train smaller numbers and individuals such as agency staff at short notice, but still meet accredited standards.