



Occupational Health & Safety Authority

## Media Release

### **Need for More Health and Safety Measures on Construction Sites**

17.06.05

The latest figures from Eurostat also reported on the local media show that amongst the EU member states, Malta has registered the highest increase in the construction sector in the first three months of this year as compared to the previous year – an effective increase of 7%.

From a commercial point of view, this may be good news. However, on a number of occasions in the past, the Occupational Health and Safety Authority has highlighted the direct association between a higher number of building and construction projects and an increased number of work-related accidents, some of which lead to fatalities. Conscious of this fact, the Occupational Health and Safety Authority (OHSA) is appealing to all involved in the sector to ensure that they abide by the occupational health and safety (OHS) standards on site. Refraining from doing so will inevitably lead to an even greater increase in the number of occupational accidents and fatalities in the sector.

An on-going information campaign has been undertaken by the OHSA for several months. This has included personalised information packs being sent to all construction companies registered with the ETC as well as to all registered quarry owners. Moreover, at the moment, a construction 'blitz' is underway whereby all inspections by OHS officers are being carried out at construction sites. Following a three-day stint of inspections targeting the construction sector, about 31 entities

and/or persons will be arraigned in court for breach of OHS legislation pertaining to construction safety.

The OHSA would like to remind anyone involved in the sector including the contractor, project supervisor, self-employed person, the employee or even the client for whom the construction work is being undertaken to ensure that they all abide by the requirements and responsibilities enshrined in the legislation (Work Place [Minimum Health and Safety Requirements for Work at Construction Sites] Regulations – Legal Notice 281 of 2004.

In effect, the **client** for whom the project is carried out has to appoint a project supervisor for both the design and construction stage, for each and every project undertaken. S/he has also to keep and make available health and safety files prepared according to the law.

Where work on site is scheduled to last longer than 30 working days and on which more than 20 workers are occupied, or where the duration of the project is longer than 500 person days, the project supervisor has to send a **prior notice** to the OHSA (as per regulations) at least four weeks before the work commences. This notice has also to be displayed on the site when work commences, and should be updated as necessary.

The **project supervisor for the design stage** has to ensure that a health and safety plan is drawn up prior to the setting up of a construction site. They also have to prepare a health and safety file appropriate to the characteristics of the project, amongst other duties.

The **project supervisor for the execution stage** has to coordinate the implementation of the general principles of prevention and safety as well as ensure that contractors and self-employed persons apply the necessary OHS provisions and where necessary follow the health and safety plan. Amongst other duties, they also have to make adjustments to the health and safety plan and files as required, pertaining to any changes and to the progress of the work being carried out. Moreover, they have to organise cooperation between contractors to mainly protect workers and prevent accidents and occupational health hazards, including also self-employed persons as required. Necessary steps must also be taken to ensure that only authorised persons are allowed onto the construction site.

**Contractors** are obliged to follow the general health and safety requirements outlined in the regulations as well as take into account directions given by the project supervisor on health and safety matters, amongst others.

**Self-employed persons**, like contractors, also have to abide by the above-mentioned general health and safety requirements. They must also abide by the regulations pertaining to work equipment, personal protective equipment and to the general provisions for health and safety at work places. Self-employed persons should also take into account the directions of project supervisors on OHS.

In all cases, workers and / or their representatives have to be informed, consulted and allowed to participate in all the measures taken concerning their OHS. Such information must be in a form that is comprehensible to the workers concerned.

A copy of all the regulations mentioned above can be obtained from the Department of Information or even downloaded from the OHSA website: <http://www.ohsa.org.mt> For further information, one may contact the Occupational Health and Safety Authority on 21 247677/8 during office hours or by sending an email: [ohsa@gov.mt](mailto:ohsa@gov.mt)