

MOT YOUR WORKFORCE

Building Health managing director and Demolition & Dismantling columnist Nichola Elvy welcomes the National Men's Health Week initiative and extols the virtues of health MOTs for demolition operatives.



get better on their own, given time. But with diagnoses of prostate and testicular cancer rising rapidly, and an alarmingly high rate of mesothelioma within the sector, it is often better to be safe than sorry.

When it comes to reducing accidents at work, no other trade places such an emphasis on health and safety and on risk avoidance, but still, the construction sector accounted for nearly a third of all fatalities at work in 2006/7, which was also an increase of 24 deaths from

the previous year (53 in 2005/6 and 77 in 2006/7). Major injuries at work were down four percent on last year to 295.4 per 100,000, but that is still approaching triple the rate of injuries across other industries.

On the other hand, if you look at ill health then we actually do quite well in the construction industry; the rate of illness is more or less the same as across other industries. But the conditions that crop up over and over again will come as no surprise. Musculo-skeletal problems, upper limb problems, occupational deafness, hand arm vibration syndrome, asbestosis and mesothelioma are all significantly above the national average, and are all preventable. Last year 90,000 workers in the construction industry reported



illnesses or injuries that were made worse from being at work.

But it's not all doom and gloom. If you work in the construction industry then you are four times less likely to suffer from stress than the general working population. And the National Men's Health Week and the Men's Health Forum aims to promote good health and a healthy lifestyle as well as highlighting the problems that men can develop while at work.

This year for NMHW, Building Health has been at The Erith Group offering health MOT's, advice and free fitness equipment and gym membership to the drivers in their haulage department. The MOT itself is a quick and simple check up, monitoring their blood pressure and weight and testing for

diabetes and high levels of cholesterol. Hopefully it will show that the operatives at Erith Group are all fighting fit, but with men visiting the doctors three times less often than women there is always the chance that something is lying undetected.

If you think all of this sounds like an unnecessary expense, then bear in mind that every £1 spent on health promotion can lead to a £2.50 saving elsewhere in the business. And with 2.8 million work days lost each year to illness and injury, it clearly makes good business sense to invest in the health of your workforce.

If you would like to find out more about National Men's Health Week, visit

www.menshealthforum.org.uk

www.buildinghealth.co.uk

As this issue of Demolition and Dismantling goes to press, a lot of the UK's media attention will be directed at an area close to my heart - National Men's Health Week. With men still accounting for 90 percent of the construction and demolition workforce, the aims of National Men's Health Week have never been more relevant to the industry.

The case for NMHW is simple: men are more prone to illnesses such as heart disease, stress and mental illness; they are more likely to work in high risk industries, like construction and demolition; they are more likely to be smokers, heavy drinkers or take illegal drugs; and as we all know, they are less likely to visit a doctor or get something checked out. In many cases this is fine as the majority of illnesses are self limiting, so the patient will