

FCTU UPDATE

February 2014

Health & Safety

This year saw Health, Safety and Wellbeing right at the top of everyone's agenda not least here in FCTU. We have reps working closely with the FC at all levels ensuring that members are fully engaged in the new Strategy and Action Plans. It is through this close co-operation that we strive to help bring about a culture of safe working no matter what the job, task or location and that every one of our members and other staff go home safe and well.

In June the FC launched a new health and safety strategy for the whole organisation. Over the summer they asked teams to get together to watch a short film and feed back their thoughts on how to manage health and safety better. The feedback from across the Forestry Commission indicated that we need to focus on four key health and safety themes

Culture change

It's unsurprising that culture change came out top with some 76% saying that a change in our safety culture is long over due if we want our safety record to improve. FCTU wholeheartedly support this view and will work closely with the FC to achieve this outcome. We will support the FC in standing up for our members who challenge unsafe acts carried out by other FC staff or external contractors.

Training, mitigation and reporting

For this 54% of teams feeding back said this was a key area for improvement. FCTU will support training that gives the proper sense of H&S but at same time doesn't put people off by being dull and uninspiring. Our constituent unions and the TUC also offer training which allows union members to take on the legal duties of a Health and Safety Representative.

Driver safety

FCTU would like to see a reduced level of travelling not only to and from work but whilst at work and we are glad that 37% of teams stated that driver safety was a key issue. Many of our members are complaining that the areas they are now expected to cover are so large that much of their valuable work time is spent travelling. Many are indeed extending their working day to accommodate this increase. We would like to work positively with the FC in looking at solutions that can radically reduce the amounts of travel being undertaken and support initiatives to ease the potential stress burden on our members.

Lone working

We have many members who are often required to be lone working and it is useful to see that 29% of feedback forms indicated that lone working was a key issue, mainly due to limitations with the Guardian 24 (G24) system. FCTU will support the FC in identifying systems that meet the 'fail to safe' criteria and that the use of modern technology provides union members the safety net that meets their expectations.

FCTU will provide members with updates on how these four themes are progressing and seek views from members on how they feel about some of these issues.

FCTU Secretary