

## **Government Report advocates less than three minutes a day for health and safety**



A government report says small firms spend under three and a half minutes a day on health and safety admin, but thinks to the dismay of Unite, that this should be cut further to reduce costs.

The report 'Improving outcomes from health and safety' from the Better Regulation Executive (BRE), was backed by secretary of state for business John Hutton. He said "Cutting the amount of paperwork for low risk businesses, and making complex regulations easier to understand, will also help create safer environments for workers and the public." The strategy will mean fewer inspections for workplaces deemed 'low risk',

The Unite Health & Safety Unit said "Inspections and investigations by the HSE have already fallen to an alarmingly low rate, and a strategy based on giving more credence to so called low risk sectors will push this rate even further down."

The report does not spell out if firms currently considered sufficiently risky by the HSE to warrant inspection will now be moved into the 'low risk' category. Nor does it establish how in the absence of inspections it will know if individual employers are operating unsafely within the 'low risk' sectors.

There also seems to be no account of the high rates of certain occupational diseases in some of these sectors. Hotel workers in one of the identified sectors have the highest rate of musculoskeletal disorders of any industry, a major occupational health problem also afflicting warehouse, checkout and other retail sector staff.

Unite believes it's not businesses that are over burdened because of health and safety commitments; it is workers who bare the brunt of little or no commitment, in many instances with their lives.

The report 'Improving outcomes from Health and Safety' can be viewed at <http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file47324.pdf>.

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