

Raising the bar in health and safety

WISH Chairman of the SME Group Toni Robinson discusses the group's plans to improve health and safety performance in 2019



The Waste Industry Safety and Health (WISH) forum has been supporting the sector's health and safety challenges for over 10 years, in order to help businesses avoid any injuries, staff absences and extra costs as a result of an accident.

WISH members consist of representatives from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), trade associations including UROC, regulators as well as waste management and recycling organisations, whose overall goal is to "identify solutions" and "stimulate action" across the industry.

One of the main members at the forefront is Toni Robinson - probably better known to others in the sector as Head of Compliance at Grundon Waste Management. Although she has been indirectly involved with the group since 2013, Ms Robinson officially took over as WISH SME Group Chairman in 2017, where she has played a vital part in changing the health and safety culture within many organisations.

AWARENESS

Speaking to UROC, she explained that the WISH SME Group has been banging the health and safety drum through various initiatives, not only to raise awareness in the workplace, but also alter behaviours to prevent work-related injuries and fatalities from happening.

One of its most successful campaigns was the launch of the group's first Safety Awareness Event in September last year, which offered practical training advice and information to skip hire and waste operators.

Held at T J Waste & Recycling in Southampton, the event attracted multiple businesses and focused on demonstrations showing how to control issues surrounding; manual handling, working at height, isolation and guarding and traffic management at work.

Senior representatives from HSE and the Environment Agency were also in attendance to speak with delegates about any concerns or issues they may face, while reiterating the importance of a secure health and safety infrastructure.

"Our goal, as a group, is to support improvement in the safety culture within smaller SMEs," said Toni. "Although there is plenty of advice available online, our vision for the success of the event was for an informal half-day session held on a working site, where boots and hi-vis vests would be the norm and everyone would feel comfortable, whether they were a site manager, supervisor or a small business owner."

Ms Robinson expanded: "There were a wide range of topics and all of the delegates had the opportunity to visit

the different stands, network with safety professionals and consultants and share best practice."

Following the success of the event, WISH is planning its second Safety Awareness Day in 2019, which will be confirmed once a suitable site has been allocated.

TOOLS

The SME Group said it will continue spreading its gospel on health and safety by raising awareness of the tools it has produced for SMEs and by ensuring they have everything at their disposal to build on their current infrastructures.

Developed with EU Skills, the 'Practical Pocket Guide' is a downloadable document, designed to help waste operators identify their minimum legal requirements for a healthier and safer workplace.

In conjunction with this, WISH has developed an inspection report within the iAuditor* app. The audit titled, 'Health and Safety Made Simple for the Waste Industry,' takes company's through all of the main areas that require consideration and also where risk assessments or other records may be needed.

Ms Robinson concluded: "I would suggest that all operators check to ensure that they have the latest versions of any relevant guidance by visiting the WISH Forum website (www.wishforum.org.uk).

"It is imperative that all waste operators work together to improve the standards within our industry. The small changes will certainly make a big difference and help to ensure we are all kept safe at work."