



British Safety Industry Federation - BSIF

General Election Manifesto

As the 2017 General Election approaches the British Safety Industry Federation is calling on the next Government to ensure that Britain retains its world leading position in occupational safety and health. Ensuring safe and healthy workplaces is essential for the productivity of our economy, the wellbeing of our citizens and reputation abroad. The BSIF believe there are simple but substantial steps that can be taken by the next Government to build on our record.

Our manifesto is built around 4 central pillars with a simple call to action for the next Government and new MPs. The pillars that we believe policy should be built around are:

- Promoting the image and reputation of safety and health.
- Ensuring a good deal for the UK safety industry and workers in a global market.
- Enhancing the quality of safety products in the market and user knowledge.
- Implementing the Health & Safety Executive's Helping Great Britain Work Well strategy.

Our call to action is: We call on the next Government to protect, promote and value safety and health in Britain.

A commitment to protect and celebrate the UK's health and safety record

The UK has a superb record in health and safety and is recognised across the world for its excellence. The BSIF is proud of the culture within UK business that promotes the wellbeing of employees, and believes its members play a significant role in ensuring this continues. We believe that the next Government should commit to maintain excellence where it exists and pledge to improve occupational safety and health along with public health at every practical opportunity.

Since the introduction of legislation in 1974 Britain has been a world leader in improving conditions for employees and has seen a dramatic reduction in accidents and illness. The introduction of the Health and Safety at Work Act has seen fatal accidents at work fall by 85%, with an estimated 500 lives saved

over this period. Increased protection, better working practices in the workplace and improvements in personal protective equipment have also seen improvements in the prevention of work related accidents, illness and death, although further strides are necessary.

The BSIF believes that the UK **should celebrate this record** and build upon it to make the UK workforce the most productive and safest in the world. Health and safety not only keeps the 31.42 million people who work in this country safe but improves the productivity of our economy. By protecting workers these regulations ensure that: fewer working days are lost to illness and injury; companies can act at their most productive; and fewer people are out of work on a long term basis. Too often the “man in the street” view of safety and health is that it’s burdensome. The Government needs to continue to spread positives, **stressing that safety and health is a positive force** for good, both for workers and business. **Good Safety and Health is Good for Business.**

The next Government should make a commitment to not only **keep all existing EU regulations that protect workforces** across the UK but also be open and **willing to improve them where needed**. The UK’s current legislation on safety and health is one of the best in the world but can and should be improved in order to keep up with the changing nature of the UK workforce. We are encouraged that all of the major parties have committed to keep the safety and health legislation from the EU after Brexit but we would ask the next Government to ensure that areas such as ill health caused by work are examined further, with new initiatives put in place that can save lives and boost our economy.

A consideration of safety and health concerns in Brexit negotiations

The BSIF recognises that the UK is leaving the EU and is keen to enter discussions with Government at all levels to ensure that the process of Brexit works smoothly. We believe there are opportunities afforded by Brexit and are committed to ensuring the process allows the British economy to be prosperous and its workplaces kept safe. We are delighted by the commitments made by major party’s that health and safety legislation will remain true to the essence of what exists at this moment and hope that all parties will work together to improve workplace protection in the future.

There are however two issues that we are keen to ensure that the next Government takes into account when negotiating our exit from the EU. These are the future of notified bodies and regulations on personal protective equipment (PPE).

There are 12 Notified Bodies (NB’s) in the UK providing certification services to organisations wishing to place PPE on the market within the EU and requiring the CE mark. NBs offer their conformity assessment services to any economic operator inside or outside the EU, ensuring products have proof of compliance with product performance standards and necessary essential requirements, which is essential for products to be sold within the EU while other markets use them as an indication of quality. These organisations contribute hundreds of jobs and a monetary benefit to the UK economy.



The notification Process can only be undertaken by the Notifying Authority of each member state within the EU and the UK will lose this authority once it leaves the EU, unless provision is made to retain this power as part of the Brexit agreement. The BSIF is extremely concerned that the failure to retain Notified Bodies operating within the UK will impact on UK manufacturers, importers and distributors.

On top of NBs, the BSIF is concerned the effect Brexit might have on the PPE market. In particular there is a fear that in the years after Brexit there will be a divergence of standards as British law no longer matches that of the EU. In this situation British companies importing PPE and exporting into the EU will face significantly higher costs while UK consumers will be hit by both higher final costs and the possibility of substandard equipment.

The Personal Protective Equipment and Safety Products market is premised on and depends on EN standards and we believe that the best way forward in the negotiations is to find a compromise over a mutual recognition agreement. This will enable UK companies to avoid unnecessary costs and complexities and will allow the UK Regulatory Authorities to continue to designate NBs.

Above all however the BSIF wants to ensure that these issues are not forgotten in the negotiations and the Government provides a good deal for UK industry in a global market.

Support the Health & Safety Executive's *Helping Great Britain Work Well* strategy

The BSIF urge the next Government to support the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) to implement their *Helping Great Britain Work Well* strategy in the next Parliament. The strategy provides an excellent basis for safety and health policy in the coming years, allowing for changes in the workforce and putting a much needed emphasis on preventing ill health. We believe that the Government should enable HSE to implement the strategy in full, giving the funding and support needed to improve the safety and wellbeing of Britain's workforce and continue to lead the world in occupational safety.

At the heart of the strategy is the promotion of the idea that "health and safety is everyone's responsibility" within businesses and the BSIF agrees fully with this. We agree with the HSE that embedding an effective safety and health culture should not be burdensome and that good practices should be embedded within the culture of a company and should not just be the responsibility of a single Health and Safety representative. Empowering a strategy with this ethos at its heart will improve safety and health across the country, reduce any burdens on employers and promote the idea that safety and health is a force for good for business.

We also agree with the focus that the strategy gives to ill health. While great strides have been made towards radically reducing work related injury in the UK, ill health is still a significant cause of missed work and death in the UK. Accident, injury and ill health caused the UK to lose 31m working days last year with ill health accounting for 85% of work related sickness, 25.3 million lost working days and

13,000 deaths: a serious human and economic burden for the UK. The HSE strategy rightly highlights this as a key issue to be tackled and we believe that the HSE's strategy will provide the focus and power to improve these issues, making workplaces and employees healthier and safer.

In order to support this strategy, the BSIF believes that the next Government must ensure that the **HSE is funded at an adequate level** and that it is supported with further Government action. The HSE has received considerable cuts to funding in recent years and we believe that if it is to implement this excellent strategy and continue to lead the world in occupational safety and health these cuts must be tempered. Similarly, the HSE has a worldwide reputation, one that it can expand through continuing to offer services in an international market place. This reputation of excellence and can only be protected through ensuring that standards are maintained and resources are continually available.

In addition, we believe that the BSIF run **'Clean Air? Take Care!'**, **'Listen Today Hear Tomorrow'** and **'Fit2Fit'** programmes help promote the HSE's strategy.

These 3 initiatives are currently supported by the HSE and 'Clean Air? - Take Care!' and "Fit2Fit" focussed clearly at reducing occupational respiratory disease by raising awareness among RPE users, employers, fit testers and advisors on the correct selection, deployment, use, maintenance and storage of RPE. We are confident that these schemes work in reducing respiratory illness and would recommend the Government consider how it can become further involved in promoting them and reducing illness.

'Listen Today Hear Tomorrow' works in a similar way, raising awareness and best practice of the use of hearing protection. If promoted, it would support the HSE's strategy by further protecting the health of workers.

To help kick start a focus on preventing ill health, we believe that the next Government should consider a renewed effort to support awareness of the correct use of respiratory protective equipment – through supporting initiatives such as the BSIF's Fit2Fit programme. This scheme provides an accreditation scheme to confirm the competency of any person performing face piece fit testing and provides a user with the knowledge that they can be properly protected, in line with legal requirements.

All three of these schemes will boost the effectiveness of the HSE's strategy and overall work and we would be delighted to work with the Government to continue protecting the health of Britain's workforce.

Improving local Government's safety and health practices

The BSIF believes that local government can do more with their responsibilities for safety and health to protect people from illness and accident. With the powers given under the 2012 Health and Social Care Act local councils were given responsibility for public health spending, alongside public health, and we believe they can do more to prevent illness.

Despite improvements and changing occupational patterns, illnesses such as mesothelioma, silicosis and

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) are still a significant issue for the UK. In a BSIF report, including the results of a Freedom of Information Request, we found that very few councils were using their powers to tackle these illnesses.

The BSIF calls on the Government to remember that good occupational health is a key contributor to good public health.

The report argues that councils can help prevent occupational illness by integrating the requirement within their Public Health remit and we recommend that the next Government should consider the following recommendations:

1. Local authorities should include schemes to improve occupational health in public health spending. Public health includes occupational health
2. Local councils should dedicate a set amount of their public health budget to tackling work related respiratory illnesses
3. Local councils should support training for the correct/proper use of respiratory protective equipment, through incentivising or supporting providers and purchasers
4. Local Government should take advantage of willing support from industry experts
5. Local government should ensure that all contractors used for government projects use equipment suppliers who are part of the Registered Safety Supplier Scheme
6. Councils should insist on face fit testing by Fit2Fit accredited providers for all workers using tight fitting respiratory face pieces
7. Councils should instigate a targeted publicity campaign to raise awareness of occupational respiratory diseases within the local area
8. Local Authorities should ensure that inspections of workplaces are regular and thorough, and include a focus on respiratory health

For more information please visit www.bsif.co.uk