



Work-related bereavement

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EVERY YEAR THOUSANDS of people die in work-related incidents around the world. In the UK alone the Health and Safety Commission reported 241 such deaths in the year 2006-7*. Here, as in many other countries, agricultural and construction workers have the highest rates of fatal injury, with the majority of the fatalities resulting from falls, impact with moving objects, or collisions with vehicles in transit.

The Australian non-profit organisation, **The Industrial Deaths Support and Advocacy**, provides support and information to anyone concerned with workplace deaths. Its website, www.idsa.com.au, highlights the fact that a death at work can give rise to specific and unusual bereavement issues for both colleagues and families, for a number of reasons. The manner of death can be highly traumatic, with victims typically suffering horrendous injuries including crushing, burning and dismembering. Often there are prolonged investigations, sometimes extending for a number of years before a conclusion is reached. Such a death is usually sudden and unexpected and unfortunately many first hear of it via the media, adding to the overall shock. In addition, anger and feelings of blame are common, especially if the death was caused by an employer's negligence.

The organisation offers free emotional help in the form of **telephone support**, a quarterly **newsletter**, **home visits**, local monthly **forums** and **referrals to specialist health professionals and counsellors**. It also conducts **critical incident debriefing training** for volunteers, families and others who require it.

Practical support includes providing information about probable processes that will be encountered with likely time-frames, and referral to legal firms specialising in workplace death and injury. An **advocate** from the organisation can also accompany bereaved members to meetings involving lawyers, employers and government departments, as well as assisting with

correspondence and funeral arrangements. In addition, the organisation is involved with **community education** and will give presentations in the workplace.

There are some PDF downloads and information on publications available online including details of a **free DVD**, *The Impact of Workplace Deaths*, which features the experiences of several bereaved families. Although this organisation will perhaps be of greatest help to those living in and around the Victoria area of Australia, anyone with questions related to workplace death will gain valuable insight by contacting this site.

The **Centre for Corporate Accountability** at www.corporateaccountability.org is a UK charity, promoting worker and public safety. It claims to be the only non-governmental organisation monitoring workplace deaths in England and Wales, and offers **independent and confidential advice and assistance** to bereaved families and friends on investigation and prosecution issues. This includes helping them to deal with the police, health and safety executives, local authorities and the Crown Prosecution service, often for several years, from the time of death to the completion of the investigation and prosecution. The organisation presents **conferences** around Britain, with government ministers, employers, trade unions representatives, academics, bereaved families and lawyers as speakers.

On the website there is detailed information on coroners courts, inquests, and manslaughter (**Research and Briefings** section). The **International** section includes details of workplace deaths worldwide as well as international reforms in Canada and Australia. An **advice leaflet** can be downloaded in **English, Hindi, Gujarati, Bengali, Urdu and Punjabi**. The organisation's newsletter is only available by subscription but all other help and advice from this organisation is free of charge. ●

* www.hse.gov.uk (HSE Statistics)

Directory of Bereavement Services IN THE UK 2007 £25 (inc p&p)

Detailed information about more than 600 services
- support organisations, hospice-based services
- advice centres, umbrella services, networks

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