Welcome to this edition of the Occupational Health and Safety Information Service News Brief

This edition of our News Brief continues the inclusion of content from our partners at the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) and Sheila Pantry Associates.

The CIEH is a registered charity and the professional voice for environmental health. They provide information, training, evidence and policy advice to public health, health and safety, environmental management regulators and practitioners in the public and private sectors. For more information about the CIEH please visit uk.ihs.com/about/cieh.html

From Sheila Pantry Associates we have the latest prosecutions, and training and conference events.

We are keen to hear your feedback on the content and if you have any suggestions for how we can further enhance the News Brief for you. To provide your feedback please email marketing@ihsmarkit.com and title your email 'OHSIS News Brief'.

Please share this newsletter with your colleagues and keep them up-to-date with the latest news.
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NEWS IN BRIEF

The COVID-19 situation is ongoing, and readers are advised to check the latest information available from the UK government: [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

As Events throughout the country have been cancelled in response to the outbreak, the Events List and Events Calendar usually included in this publication are suspended until further notice.
PROSECUTIONS

Manufacturer Fined After An Agency Worker Was Dragged Into A Press Roller

A manufacturing company has been fined after an employee’s arm was dragged into a press roller. Chelmsford Magistrates’ Court heard that on 19 June 2019, an agency worker at E.G.L. Homecare Limited suffered a severe crush injury to his arm as he attempted to remove dirt from a press roller at the address on Campfield Road, Shoeburyness. He was working on a production line that glued sponge to abrasive sheets to make scourer sponges. His job was to remove the sheets of scourer sponges from the conveyor onto a pallet when his right hand got dragged into the nip point of two in-running rollers up to his shoulder. He was diagnosed with forearm compartment syndrome, a painful condition caused by bleeding or swelling within an enclosed bundle of muscles. He had an operation on his arm and had to stay in hospital for six days.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the company failed to provide a tunnel guard on the press roller to prevent access to the rollers.

E.G.L. Homecare Limited of Campfield Road, Shoeburyness has pleaded guilty of Regulation 11(1) of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. The company has been fined £80,000 and ordered to pay costs of £5,314.08.

Speaking after the case, HSE inspector Carla Barron, said: ‘This incident could have been avoided had the company properly assessed the guarding arrangements on the machine when it was installed. Unfortunately access to in-running rollers is a common cause of injury but it can be easily avoided by providing effective control measures such as the provision of tunnel guards.’

Tayside Health Board Fined £120,000 After Three Patients Died In Acute Psychiatric Ward

Tayside Health Board has been fined following three incidents where patients died by suicide using ligature points.

Perth Sheriff Court heard that, between 1 April 2012 and 4 November 2015, on the Moredun Ward at general adult psychiatry ward of Murray Royal Hospital, Muirhall Road, Perth, three patients were able to utilise ligature points to take their own lives. Patients on Moredun Ward are acutely unwell and often not in a position to ensure their own safety.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Tayside Health Board failed to assess, manage and control the risk of severe injury and death associated with ligature anchor points. Private bedrooms within the facility had multiple ligatures points which could have been removed to reduce the risk to patients on the ward. The Health Board failed to effectively communicate risks associated with the ligature points to staff who were required to monitor and assess patients. A previous attempt by one patient to secure a ligature to a ligature anchor point was not communicated to the staff who monitored her. She later successfully took her own life by the same method.

Tayside Health Board of Ninewells Hospital, Clepington Road, Dundee pleaded guilty to breaching Sections 3(1) and Section 33(1)(a) of the Health and Safety at Work Act and was fined £120,000.

After the hearing, HSE inspector, Kerry Cringan said: ‘These tragic incidents led to the avoidable deaths of three women. These deaths could have been prevented if the Health Board had acted to ensure their ward met the required standards for acute mental health facilities. This requires providers to ensure that spaces where service users are not continually supervised are designed, constructed.
and furnished to make self-harm or ligature as difficult as possible. HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action if providers fail to meet these standards.'

**Poor Management Control Puts Workers At Risk: Company Fined £80,000**

A Blackburn logistics company has been fined after failing to provide fall protection for workers replacing the roof of its premises.

Blackpool Magistrates’ Court heard how, on 29 May 2019, Health and Safety Executive inspectors visited a warehouse in Blackburn and observed two workers on the roof without any physical protection or any work equipment in place to prevent or minimise the distance of a fall.

Further investigation by HSE also found that the roof of the warehouse was fragile and people were at risk of coming through it. The company, Speed Drop Logistics Ltd, did not have any measures in place to prevent workers falling from or through the roof from which they could suffer personal injury or even death. The removal of tiles should have been carried out from underneath the roof using a scissor lift or a cherry picker. Scaffold should have been in place to create a barrier against and to minimise the distance of a possible fall.

Speed Drop Logistics Ltd of Manner Sutton Street, Blackburn, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 6(3) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005. The company was fined £80,000 and ordered to pay costs of £1570.60.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Stuart Hadfield, said: ‘Falls from height remain one of the most common causes of work-related fatalities in this country and the risks associated with working at height are well known. Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standard.’

**Plymouth Landlord Receives Suspended Prison Sentence After Gas Safety Failings**

A landlord from Plymouth has been sentenced after failing to maintain gas appliances and failing to have landlord’s gas safety checks undertaken at his rental property in Canterbury Drive, Plymouth.

Plymouth Crown Court heard how, in August 2018, a concern was raised with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) by a previous tenant that no landlord’s gas safety checks had been carried out for three years. HSE made numerous attempts to contact the landlord, Mr Thomas Brumby, but received no replies or representations.

Having failed to provide HSE with a copy of any landlord’s gas safety records for his tenanted property, a formal Improvement Notice was served on Mr Brumby requiring him to arrange for the gas appliances at his tenanted property to be checked and maintained. Mr Brumby ignored this Improvement Notice.

Thomas Brumby of Canterbury Drive, Plymouth, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulations 36(3)(a) and 36(2)(a) of the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998. He has been sentenced to 15 weeks in prison for each offence, both suspended for 18 months, and ordered to pay costs of £1,500.

Speaking after the hearing HSE inspector Simon Jones said: ‘Thomas Brumby put the residents and other members of the public at risk of harm by failing to maintain gas appliances in a domestic property. He showed contempt of the law surrounding gas safety at a tenanted property.'
‘Landlords must ensure they obtain a landlord’s gas safety record and they maintain all gas appliances in accordance with the law.’

**Building Firm Fined After Worker Injured**
Stan England Builders Limited has been fined following an incident when a worker suffered serious injuries after falling from a mezzanine level and wooden platform.

Aberdeen Sheriff Court heard that on 31 March 2016, Alan Ness was working at a residential property in Banchory. He began taping areas on the ceiling of a mezzanine level. He gained access to this level by a wooden platform which had a ladder propped against it. As he was working close to the edge of the mezzanine level, he lost his footing and stumbled a drop of 18.5cm onto the wooden platform. He was unable to regain his footing and fell a further 2.5 metres head first onto the floor below. He sustained head, back and neck injuries.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that there was no edge protection on the wooden platform and no safe system of work had been put in place. Mr Ness had received no formal training for work at height or working on ladders, he had a lack of knowledge and awareness of the hazards associated with work at height. Stan England Builders Limited had failed to supervise appropriately and had not corrected deficiencies, despite visiting shortly before the accident there was no written risk assessments for this task.

Stan England Builders Limited of Raemoir Road, Banchory pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 6(3) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005 and was fined £6,000.

After the hearing, HSE inspector, Connor Gibson said: ‘Those in control of work have a responsibility to devise safe methods of working and to provide the necessary information, instruction and training to their workers in the safe system of working.

‘Falls from height remain one of the most common causes of work-related fatalities in this country and the risks associated with working at height are well known. In this case a different and simple approach of using edge protection on the wooden platform could have prevented the life changing injuries sustained by the employee.’
Welcome to the second part of the Occupational Health and Safety Information Service News Brief

This part of the News Brief contains news articles and prosecution summaries in the field of environmental health and health and safety from the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH).

Areas that they will be focusing on include; noise pollution, food safety, air quality, occupational health issues and relevant industry prosecutions.

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Food redistribution organisations across England will benefit from £3.25 million of Government funding to help them cut food waste and redistribute up to 14,000 tonnes of surplus stock during the COVID-19 outbreak. Grants will be available to redistributors working hard to ensure food supplies do not go to waste.

Fangcang Shelter Hospitals - A Novel Concept for Responding to Public Health Emergencies?

Fangcang shelter hospitals are a novel public health concept and were implemented for the first time in China in February 2020, to tackle the COVID-19 outbreak.

Link Between Air Pollution And COVID-19 Mortality In Italy

A team of environmental researchers has studied whether there could be a link between the high mortality rate seen in northern Italy, and the level of air pollution in the same region during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Pesticide Residues In Food

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has published its annual report on pesticide residues found in food in the European Union. The report is based on data from the official national control activities carried out by EU Member States, Iceland and Norway and includes both targeted and random sampling.

EFSA Consults On Micro-Organisms Obtained Through Synthetic Biology

The European Food Safety Authority’s (EFSA’s) Scientific Committee has launched an open consultation on its draft opinion: Evaluation of existing guidelines for their adequacy for the microbial characterisation and environmental risk assessment of micro-organisms obtained through synthetic biology.

New Rules On Labelling Origin Of Primary Ingredients In Food

New EU rules requiring food businesses to label foods with the country of origin or place of provenance of primary ingredients are now in force.

Salmonella Food Poisoning In China Linked To Food Ordered Online

In July 2018, an outbreak of 10 cases of Salmonella enterica serovar Enteritidis infection occurred in Shenzhen, China.

Lucy’s Law Aims to End Puppy Farming

The Government has introduced new legislation to tackle the low-welfare, high volume supply of puppies and kittens, by banning commercial third-party sale in England.
Role Of Building Design In Disease Transmission

Social distancing has Americans mostly out of the places they usually gather and in their homes as they try to reduce the spread of COVID-19. However, some buildings, such as hospitals and grocery stores remain open, and at some point, most people will return to their office or workplace.

Now, new research considers the role of building design in disease transmission, and whether it is possible to change the design of the built environment to make it healthier.

Among the simplest suggestions for healthier buildings include opening windows to improve air circulation and opening blinds to admit natural daylight.

While more research needs to be done on the effect of sunlight on SARS-CoV-2 indoors, according to the researchers, daylight exists as a free, widely available resource to building occupants with little downside to its use and many documented positive human health benefits.

We spend almost all of our daily lives inside human-built environments whether homes, vehicles or workplaces. Built environments provide lots of opportunities for people to come into contact with viruses and bacteria, via air flow, from surfaces and also from the way buildings make us interact with each other.

So far, the only documented route of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 is thought to be directly from person to person. Yet viruses also settle on surfaces, which can become heavily contaminated quite quickly. How long SARS-CoV-2 survives on surfaces is still subject to debate, with estimates ranging from a few hours to a few days, depending on the material and conditions. Regularly cleaning surfaces and thorough handwashing are important.

Viral particles are too small to be blocked by HEPA and MERV air filters, but ventilation strategies can still play a role in reducing disease transmission, the authors write. Increasing the amount of air flowing in from outside and the rate of air exchange can dilute virus particles indoors. This can include ‘perimeter ventilation’ i.e. opening a window, when outdoor temperatures allow it. However, high air flow could also stir up settled particles and put them back in the air and also uses more energy.

Virus particles like drier air, so maintaining a high relative humidity can help. Virus-bearing droplets grow in humid air, meaning they settle out more quickly and don’t travel as far. Humidity also seems to interfere with the lipid envelope around viruses such as SARS-CoV-2. Too much humidity, however, can promote mould growth.

Modern buildings are generally designed to promote social mixing: from open plan living areas in homes to open offices where many workers share space. By promoting interaction and chance encounters, these layouts are thought to generate more creativity and teamwork. At the same time, they are probably also conducive to spreading viruses more widely.

Whilst it may not be practical in the short term to make big changes in office layout, understanding how this layout and the ways people use shared spaces affect disease transmission could help in developing effective social distancing measures and making decisions about when people can go back to work.

Leslie Dietz, Patrick F. Horve, David A. Coil, Mark Fretz, Jonathan A. Eisen, Kevin Van Den Wymelenberg.


mSystems, 2020; 5 (2) DOI: 10.1128/mSystems.00245-20: http://dx.doi.org/10.1128/mSystems.00245-20
Domestic Pets Play No Part In The Transmission Of COVID-19 To Humans

The French Agence nationale de sécurité sanitaire de l'alimentation, de l'environnement et du travail (ANSES) convened an expert group to consider the potential transmission of COVID-19 disease to humans via domestic animals.

The recently acquired initial findings of investigations into the possible infection of pets during COVID-19 outbreaks and experimental inoculation models of certain domestic animal species have since led the Agency to update its expert appraisal. In particular, there have been reports of sporadic cases of contamination of domestic animals, and experimental infections have demonstrated the susceptibility of some animal species to the virus. After taking this new information into account, ANSES nevertheless considers that there is currently no scientific evidence showing that domestic animals (livestock and pets) play an epidemiological role in the spread of SARS-CoV-2.

Since the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus – responsible for the COVID-19 disease – emerged in China in December 2019, the knowledge acquired has shown that its main route of transmission is human-to-human, through contact between people or inhalation of infectious droplets emitted when they sneeze or cough.

Nevertheless, because the virus's genetic structure indicates that it probably originated in animals, ANSES was asked to examine the potential role of domestic animals in virus transmission. Following the urgent mobilisation of its expert group, the Agency produced its first opinion on the subject on 9 March 2020, which was subsequently updated on 15 April 2020, in light of the new scientific knowledge available.

With regard to possible transmission of the virus by domestic animals (livestock and pets), the conclusions of the expert group indicate that:

- pigs and poultry (chickens and ducks) were not susceptible to SARS-CoV-2 under the conditions of the two trials conducted in China and Germany;
- young cats were receptive to the virus, based on the results of the only experimental trial available. This trial identified respiratory tract lesions following infection in a young cat and transmission of the virus from the infected cat to one of the contact cats (a cat living in the same enclosure but without direct contact with the infected cat);
- in the three experimental studies published, ferrets were susceptible to the virus and developed clinical signs and respiratory tract lesions following infection. There was also proven transmission of the virus to contact ferrets. The same was true for hamsters.
- There have been reports of rare cases of contamination and/or natural infection of pets with SARS-CoV-2, following close contact with their owners who were themselves infected with COVID-19. These cases remain sporadic and isolated in view of the high level of virus circulation in humans and the scale of the current pandemic.

In conclusion, in the current context and in view of the available information, ANSES considers that there is currently no evidence that domestic animals (livestock and pets) play an epidemiological role in the spread of SARS-CoV-2. Moreover, no cases of contamination of humans by pets have been reported to date.

Nevertheless, ANSES reiterates the need to prevent pets from coming into close contact with sick people, to follow basic hygiene measures when in contact with a pet (washing hands before and after stroking it and after changing cat litter), and to apply ‘barrier gestures’ in any situation.

www.anses.fr
Fear Of Coronavirus Declining Among German Population

For months, the novel coronavirus has been causing the world fear and concern. However, a change in perception seems to be emerging in Germany.

This is the result of the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment's (BfR's) Corona-Monitor, a recurring (multi-wave) representative survey of the German population's perception of risks from the novel coronavirus. Since 24 March 2020, around 500 randomly selected people have been asked by telephone every Tuesday about their perception of the risk of infection and the protective measures they have taken, amongst other things. A summary of the data is regularly published on the homepage of the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment. More information about the method and sample can be found in publications about the BfR-Corona-Monitor.

While in the previous week 40% of the respondents stated that they considered the consequential harms of an infection with the coronavirus to be large, this figure has now dropped to 26%. According to BfR President Professor Andreas Hensel, young people in particular no longer consider the health impacts to be this large.

The risk of certain infection pathways is also perceived differently. For example, a smear infection via door handles, cash or toys is considered less crucial than in the first survey of the BfR-Corona-Monitor three weeks ago. Proximity to other people is still regarded as a main path of infection by 74%, but a slight decline has also been observed over the past few weeks.

The changed perception may explain why the acceptance of certain protective measures continues to decrease. In comparison to a few weeks earlier, the curfew and closures of most shops in particular are rated as appropriate by fewer and fewer respondents. Nevertheless, most people take measures to protect themselves or their family from an infection. Compared to the previous week, however, the proportion of people who stated that they actively avoided the public fell by ten percentage points to 42%. More than 20% still say that they wear protective clothing such as masks.

It is also noticeable that the possible health impacts of the coronavirus pandemic are currently receding into the background. For instance, 36% of those surveyed think that they will be more affected by economic, as opposed to health impacts. In contrast, 24% consider the health consequences to be greater and 13% assume that they will be affected neither health-wise nor economically.

For the first time, the current issue of the BfR-Corona-Monitor surveyed how the respondents evaluate the overall media coverage of the novel coronavirus. The majority views the reporting to be appropriate, about one third considers it to be exaggerated.

www.bfr.bund.de/de/start.html

Sentencing Guidelines For Assault And Attempted Murder

The Sentencing Council is consulting on revised sentencing guidelines (www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/consultations/assault-offences-consultation) for seven assault offences, including common assault and attempted murder, and a new guideline for assault on emergency workers.

The consultation introduces a new high-culpability factor in common assault offences of ‘Intention to cause fear of serious harm, including disease transmission,’ and the inclusion of ‘spitting or coughing’ as an aggravating factor.

The guidelines, which apply to adult offenders, will help courts in England and Wales take a consistent approach to sentencing assault offences, make a more effective assessment of the seriousness of those offences, and impose appropriate and proportionate sentences.
The proposed new guidelines reflect the intention of the legislation. They also include specific
guidance for the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018 and contain an increased
number of custodial starting points.

In response to the current circumstances, the Council has issued interim guidance to assist the courts
in sentencing common assault offences in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The interim
guidance clarifies that, when sentencing common assault offences involving threats or activity relating
to transmission of COVID-19, courts should treat this as an aggravating feature of the offence.

The Council is inviting views from judges, magistrates, legal practitioners and the public during the
consultation process, which is open until 15 September 2020. Definitive guidelines are expected to
come into force in 2021.

**Factors That Influence Physical And Psychological Health In Safety-Critical Industries**

Shell Shipping and Maritime commissioned the Institute of Employment Studies to research the
factors that influence psychological and physical health in the seafaring community, how wellbeing
influences adverse incidents and safety at sea, and what interventions could be implemented to
improve the wellbeing of seafarers.

The report, ‘The journey from health and safety to healthy and safe’, gathered information from
around 110 publications and 28 interviews with experts from the maritime industry and other safety-
critical sectors, including aviation, nuclear and construction, to establish which factors had the biggest
impact on workers’ health.

A survey of 1,000 staff by maritime trade union Nautilus, found a quarter of seafarers screened
positive for signs of depression; 26% reported feeling ‘down, depressed or hopeless’ on several days
over the previous two weeks; and 20% felt down, depressed or hopeless every day.

Four key questions shaped the research:

1. what factors influence psychological and physical health in seafaring and other safety-critical
   industries?
2. how, and in what ways, do/can psychological and physical health influence adverse
   incidents?
3. what existing data could be collected on health-related factors that could impact on safety?
4. what interventions are there in seafaring and other safety critical-industries, that could be
   implemented in order to bring about a positive impact on the psychological and physical
   health of seafarers?

Five main themes that influenced health and wellbeing were established:

1. fatigue – impact of long working hours, changes in working hours, shift work and overtime
2. working environment – heat, noise, ship movement, food quality, length of deployment,
   access to gym and exercise equipment
3. role – level of autonomy, task and skills variety, workload, job satisfaction and rank
4. socialisation – social interaction on board, cultural awareness, transient nature of crews on a
   ship, and openness of communication
5. leadership – the level of support offered and influence over conditions and culture.
The report encouraged employers in safety-critical industries to adopt the SCARF+ model when assessing the impact work has on health and wellbeing. SCARF+ identifies status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness and fairness, as well as other factors specific to maritime, such as noise levels and on-board facilities, as key to individuals’ perceptions of threat and reward.

'The journey from health and safety to healthy and safe’ is available at: www.employment-studies.co.uk/resource/journey-health-and-safety-healthy-and-safe

Improving Lives Of People With Musculoskeletal Conditions

The Nuffield Foundation has awarded £4 million in research funding to six research teams across five UK Universities to improve the lives of people living with musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions by influencing policy and practice.

According to Public Health England, musculoskeletal conditions – including arthritis and back pain - affect 18.8 million people in the UK and are the leading contributor to disability in the UK, with one in five people in England consulting a GP about a musculoskeletal condition every year.

More years are lived with musculoskeletal disability than any other long term condition.

There are more than 200 musculoskeletal conditions which:

- affect 1 in 4 of the adult population (many being young and of working age) which is around 9.6 million adults and 12,000 children in the UK;
- account for 30% of GP consultations, in England (Department of Health (2006);
- have an enormous impact on the quality of life of millions of people in the UK; 10.8 million days are lost as a consequence of musculoskeletal conditions;
- are associated with a large number of co-morbidities, including diabetes, depression and obesity;
- account for over 25% of all surgical interventions in the NHS, and this is set to rise significantly over the next ten years (Arthritis Research UK);
- account for £4.76 billion of NHS spending each year (Department of Health (2011).

Despite the huge number of people living with these conditions in the UK, there is a lack of evidence on how these conditions progress and their effect on people’s well-being and life chances. The new interdisciplinary research projects will address this by exploring the impacts of musculoskeletal conditions on different aspects of well-being.

The research projects will create new datasets, as well as utilising existing data in new and innovative ways.

www.nationalhealthexecutive.com/Robot-News/nuffield-foundation-msk-research

Babies In Low-Riding Pushchairs Exposed To High Levels Of Pollution?

Parents who are using popular low-riding pushchairs could be exposing their babies to high levels of air pollution, finds a new study from the University of Surrey.

Researchers from Surrey's Global Centre for Clean Air Research (GCARE) investigated the amount of harmful air pollutants babies potentially inhale while out in a pram.

The study looked at three different pushchair types: single pushchairs facing the road; single pushchair facing the adult and double pushchairs facing the road, and assessed the difference in
The concentration of pollutants compared to those experienced by adults. The researchers also investigated whether pushchair covers altered exposure levels.

The researchers simulated 89 school drop off and pick up trips in Guildford, Surrey, walking just over 2 km, between the times of 8am to 10am and 3pm to 5pm. It was found that on average, regardless of the type of pushchair, babies could be breathing 44% more harmful pollutants than their parents during both morning and afternoon school runs.

The researchers also found that a child at the bottom of a double pushchair faced up to 72% higher exposure to pollutants than a child on the top seat. However, the researchers discovered that pushchair covers actually reduced concentration of small-sized particles by as much as 39%.

Ashish Sharma, Prashant Kumar.

Quantification of air pollution exposure to in-pram babies and mitigation strategies.


Prevention Of Food Waste In The Service Sector To Have Major Environmental Benefits

Approximately 88 megatonnes (Mt) of food are wasted every year in the European Union, thereby giving rise to 186 metric tons (Mt) carbon dioxide equivalent (CO2-eq) — a universal measure for all greenhouse gases.

The impact of food waste on the climate, acidification and eutrophication is around 15–16% of the environmental impact of the entire food chain. In developed countries, food waste is high at the point of consumption, and significantly reducing food losses would require a food-waste reduction in both households and the food-services sector.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) include a target for halving global food waste by 2030 compared to 2015. The European Commission’s (EC) goal is more ambitious: to halve food waste by 2020 and reduce resource input into the food chain by 20% by 2020.

To achieve the UN’s SDG goal, the food-service sector would need to implement significant food-waste reduction measures. This study aims to assess the impact of such measures to establish whether the UN goal is achievable and to examine the associated environmental benefits. Food waste within this study was defined as food which is produced for human consumption but is then redirected for non-food use (including animal feed) or waste disposal. Food-waste prevention does not include the inedible parts of food, such as shells, bones and fruit and vegetable peel.

The researchers examined studies analysing food waste from food services in Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Finland and the UK, examining how food services can reduce food waste across the entire supply chain. The reduction scenarios were based on 13 case studies in Germany and Switzerland, with a full assessment of the environmental impacts in Switzerland. All food categories were considered, excluding alcohol due to a lack of data.

Food-waste quantification includes data from 2005–2017, with 2017 used as the status quo scenario, as this year has the most data in the literature. The case studies included 20 datasets from food-waste measurements in 29 food-service sub-sectors (including three health, five education, four staff catering, 13 hotels and four restaurants). Eight datasets were collected by the researchers, eight were collected by food services internally and four were collected in school canteens by students.

For most datasets, food waste was sorted into categories of waste type and by the main ingredient of the food. Food-waste reduction was estimated for each sector individually and was calculated by measuring food waste before and after introducing food-waste reduction measures, such as smaller portion sizes or different serving systems (plate-serving versus buffet).
In addition to the case studies, a progressive restaurant, focusing on food-waste minimisation, was used to estimate the long-term potential of food-waste reduction. Over-production is avoided in this restaurant by using the sous-vide technique of cooking. Meals are packaged in small, vacuum-packable quantities and cooked in a water bath at a regulated temperature; the vacuum packaging extends the shelf-life of both the uncooked and the cooked food and allows it to be cooked in batches of one to five portions - amounts that are most likely to be consumed. Plate waste is reduced by serving smaller portions (350–400g) with the option of refills. The customers are also given information on the impacts of food waste. The restaurant aims to use around 77% of unmarketable vegetables and products close to their store shelf lives to prevent waste. Staff are trained in efficient food-waste-cutting techniques.

Food waste in food services in Europe was calculated using data from 1024 food-service sub-sectors (healthcare, hotels, restaurants, staff catering, school and university canteens) across Austria, Finland, Germany, Switzerland and the UK. The composition of status quo food waste in each sub-sector was based on 13 measurements.

Existing avoidable food waste was found to be 108 g/meal (13% of purchased food), causing 238 g CO2-eq) per meal. Food-waste reduction achieved in the case studies was, on average, 38% of status quo, with 32% for the education sub-sector and 62% in the business sub-sector. The 38% average food-waste reduction lowers its climate impacts by 41% and its biodiversity impacts by 30%. In the study’s extended reduction scenario, food services use 50% non-marketable vegetables that would otherwise be wasted. In combination, food-waste amounts are reduced by 70% with potential climate savings of 239 kilotonne (kt) CO2-eq (67% of total food-waste impacts in Swiss food services).

The researchers conclude that the UN’s SDG goal is realistic and can even be exceeded in the long term. However, meeting the goal would require more food-service providers to participate, requiring implementation of effective measures and training over the course of the decade. Initial investments and political support are important to reach all smaller food-service providers, but, for relatively little effort, there can be big gains for the environment, and customers’ motivation to reduce their own food waste can also be positively affected. Aside from environmental benefits, the researchers note that food-waste reduction in food services could offer considerable potential for financial savings.

Potential environmental benefits from food-waste prevention in the food service sector.

**Hygiene, Traceability And Trade Of Processed Animal Proteins In The Netherlands**
Published by the European Commission, this report describes the outcome of an audit carried out in the Netherlands from 10 to 20 September 2019 as part of the Commission’s Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety published work programme.

The audit is part of a series of audits aimed at evaluating the measures put in place by the competent authorities to verify and ensure that the requirements regarding the hygiene, traceability and the trade of processed animal protein (PAP) are implemented by relevant business operators, as required by Regulation (EC) No 1069/2009, Regulation (EU) No 142/2011, Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 and Regulation (EC) No 882/2004. The audit focused on the production, placing on the market and trade of PAP and included its export to and import from third countries. Official controls carried out at food processing plants, including food retailers, where animal by-products (ABP) are generated, were excluded from the scope of the audit.

With regard to the implementation of official controls on hygiene, traceability and trade of PAP, the overall picture is mixed. Overall, in three of the Category 3 processing plants visited, the HACCP based plans were in place and relevant critical control points were adequately described and managed. The traceability systems of the plants were also adequate, and lists of suppliers and clients were available. The audit team reviewed the records of the previous official controls and noted that
the checks on the HACCP and traceability were part of the official inspections and had been carried out adequately.

On the positive side, the system of official controls is underpinned by comprehensive establishment listing, well-managed cooperation and communication within the competent authority, and comprehensive instructions and guidance for inspectors. The official controls carried out on-the-spot generally provide a good basis for verifying that operators satisfy EU rules on hygiene and traceability.

There are however several weaknesses in the system, notably regarding the official assessment of operators’ validation of method 7, controls on TRACES notifications on intra-Union trade of PAP, organic fertilisers and soil improvers and checks on consignments of ruminant PAP exported from the EU via the exit point in the Netherlands. Collectively these elements undermine the effectiveness of the official control system in this area.

The report contains recommendations to the Netherlands' competent authority aimed at rectifying the shortcomings identified and enhancing the implementing and control measures in place.

Final report of an audit carried out in The Netherlands from 10 to 20 September 2019 in order to evaluate the implementation of hygiene, traceability, and trade requirements of processed animal proteins, including exports, imports and ultra-union trade.


EU Exceeds Several Environmental And Climate Limits
A new joint EEA-FOEN report explores two key questions related to Europe’s long-term environmental and climate ambitions: how to define a ‘safe operating space’ for Europe, and whether Europe’s environmental footprint is currently smaller or larger than its estimated ‘safe operating space’.

The report builds on past work by the European Environment Agency (EEA) on operationalising the planetary boundaries framework in Europe and the experiences of the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) in measuring its environmental footprints against planetary boundaries.

Overall, the report aims to explore ways of defining an environmentally safe operating space for Europe and to test the approach on a number of selected planetary boundaries. This involves two specific steps that build upon each other:

- The first step explores how to define European shares of the global safe operating space. Such a definition of shares inevitably involves normative choices. Most previous scientific studies have employed the equality principle only, which assumes the basic idea of equal rights for all humans on Earth. This report takes an important step forward by exploring multiple allocation principles to define shares depending on normative choices regarding aspects such as human needs, right to development, sovereignty and capability, independently of any specific planetary boundary. The resulting shares are subsequently used to calculate actual European limits for three selected planetary boundaries.

- The second step is to evaluate the extent to which current European environmental footprints are compatible with the European limits as calculated for the three planetary boundaries. The report calculates European footprints based on a state-of-the-art multiregional input-output (MRIO) model and compares them with the calculated European limits to assess whether or not Europe is living within its environmentally safe operating space.

Using a consumption-based analysis for four of the Earth’s life support systems, the report shows that Europe currently exceeds its safe operating space for nitrogen cycle by a factor of 3.3; phosphorous cycle by a factor of 2.0, and land system change by a factor of 1.8. Conversely, Europe does live within its limits when it comes to freshwater use, although problems with overconsumption and water scarcity remain locally and regionally.
The report also includes a case study of Switzerland's biodiversity footprint. Considering the potential for global species loss because of land use, and by using an equal share of land use per capita, the Swiss biodiversity footprint exceeds the threshold value by a factor of 3.7.

'Is Europe living within the limits of our planet?' may be downloaded free of charge from: www.eea.europa.eu/publications/is-europe-living-within-the-planets-limits

**Scope For Targeted Price Signals To Curb Vehicle Emissions**

Carbon dioxide emissions from New Zealand’s transport sector have experienced rapid growth since 1990. In this paper, researchers investigate the scope for a targeted price signal to curb emissions growth and help deliver on the country's Paris Agreement pledges. Cost burdens on various income groups are investigated, and experts’ opinions are elicited to evaluate two types of carbon price policies (i.e. a carbon tax and an increase in the current Emissions Trading System (ETS) price).

Estimates of the social cost of carbon and the price elasticity of fuel demand are used to understand the mitigation potential of a higher carbon price, while a multi-criteria analysis technique is used to understand experts' preferences between an ETS and a carbon tax. The findings are that with a price elasticity of transport fuel demand of around −0.7, a carbon price between NZD 100 (USD 65) per tonne of carbon dioxide (tCO2) and NZD 235 (USD 153)/tCO2 could reduce transport emissions by between 33% and 44% in 2030, respectively, from the 2016 level.

Experts marginally favoured a carbon tax over an ETS because the revenue collected through a carbon tax could be utilized in a more holistic way to offset the tax burden on lower income households and fund emissions reduction technologies and infrastructures.

Key policy insights include:

- A carbon price of NZD 235 (USD 153)/tCO2 implying a fuel price of NZD 3/litre (USD 1.95/litre) could reduce transport emissions by 44% in 2030 from the 2016 level.

- A fuel price of NZD 3/litre is comparable to fuel prices in the early 1980s, when these were at a historic high.

- A carbon price of NZD 235 (USD 153) would increase the annual domestic transport expenditure of lower income households by NZD 670 (USD 436), a 42% increase.

- A carbon tax is marginally preferred by interviewed experts to an increase in prices under the current ETS.


Curbing the car: the mitigation potential of a higher carbon price in the New Zealand transport sector,

Climate Policy, DOI: 10.1080/14693062.2020.1750334

**Effects Of Mindfulness Meditation And Physical Exercise**

Work and workplace-related issues are common sources of stress. Work-related stress is associated with a decrease in productivity, increased absenteeism, accidents and injuries, mental illness, increased errors and poor performance, conflictive relations, somatic symptom disorders and even alcohol and drug abuse.

According to the International Labour Organization (2016), stress is responsible for 30% of all work-related disorders. In the European Union, workplace stress has a negative impact on the wellbeing of 22% of the total labour force and these data are expected to rise in the future.
All this implies significant financial costs to society. Indeed, within the EU, the cost of work-related depression is estimated at €617 billion per annum, including costs to employers resulting from absenteeism and presenteeism (€272 billion), loss of productivity (€242 billion), health care costs (€63 billion) and social welfare costs due to disability benefit payments (€39 billion).

In this context, it is thus crucial to find effective solutions. Sometimes, employees seek help to develop stress management strategies through psychotherapy, training courses, effective communication techniques, social support and relaxation exercises. At other times, companies implement changes to the work process, introducing flexible schedules, effective division of tasks, or a combination of both.

Previous investigations have shown that mindfulness-based intervention and aerobic exercise could improve mental health and promote wellbeing, providing feasible and complementary alternatives to medical treatment.

Now, a new research paper analyses the effects of mindfulness meditation (MM) and physical exercise (PE), practised as daily recovery activities during lunch breaks, on perceived stress, general mental health, and immunoglobin A (IgA). Mindfulness meditation (MM) is a practice based on Buddhist traditions, which develops full attention and awareness through sitting meditation. It has rapidly gained popularity in the Western world due to its accessibility and easy practice. On the other hand, physical exercise (PE) has been recognised for decades to maintain health, prevent illness and promote rehabilitation. Its effectiveness in reducing stress and other related symptoms has been convincingly proven, and it is known to improve the state of mind and mitigate depression and anxiety, whether as part of a supervised or unsupervised programme. However, exercise is still to be fully integrated in the treatment of mental ill health.

As part of this study, a three-armed randomised controlled trial with 94 employees was conducted for five weeks including two follow-up sessions after one and six months. All participants were employed by a multinational telecommunications company specialising in the service sector, had a permanent contract and a 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. work schedule, with a maximum lunch break of one and a half hour.

During lunch breaks, 51.4% had lunch with colleagues, 13.9% ate something quickly in order to catch up with work, 12.5% ate something quickly in order to deal with personal matters, 6.9% ate something quickly in order to have time to relax, take a walk, sunbathe or read a book, and 15.3% did not have a defined pattern.

Daily practice lasted 30 min maximum. Perceived stress and general mental health questionnaires and saliva samples were used.

There were significant differences in time factor comparing pre- and post-test of Perceived Stress Questionnaire (PSQ) both for PE, and for MM. Moreover, there were significant differences of interaction factor when comparing MM vs PE in total score at pre-post, favouring PE with medium and high effect sizes. Regarding General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) variables, practicing MM showed significant effects in time factor compared to pre-Fup. No significant differences were found for IgA.

The present study provides preliminary evidence on Mindfulness Meditation and Physical Exercise as recovery strategies during lunch breaks in the workplace to reduce perceived stress after five weeks of practice, with better results for Physical Exercise compared to Mindfulness Meditation.

However, practicing Mindfulness Meditation at lunch break could improve global mental health in the workplace with effects lasting for six months. No significant results were found for IgA in saliva neither in intragroup nor between-groups comparisons.

Díaz-Silveira, C.; Alcover, C.-M.; Burgos, F.; Marcos, A.; Santed, M.A.
Mindfulness versus Physical Exercise: Effects of Two Recovery Strategies on Mental Health, Stress and Immunoglobulin A during Lunch Breaks. A Randomized Controlled Trial.


Updated COVID-19 PPE Guidance From Public Health England

The updated guidance reflects that COVID-19 is now widespread in the UK community, meaning health workers are more likely to see patients with the virus, some of whom may have minimal or no symptoms. The guidance recommends the safest level of PPE to protect NHS healthcare workers and specifies the type of PPE that should be worn in various healthcare and non-healthcare settings. It will protect stock levels from unnecessary use while supporting staff to use the right equipment.

The guidance is based on the best scientific evidence and the World Health Organization (WHO) has confirmed it is consistent with its recommendations in circumstances and settings with the highest risk of transmission.

The guidance:

- advises that any clinician working in a hospital, primary care or community care setting, within 2 metres of a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patient, should wear an apron, gloves, surgical mask and eye protection, based on the risk
- advises that, in some circumstances, PPE, particularly masks and eye protection intended to protect a health or care worker, can be worn for an entire session and does not need to be changed between patients, as long as it is safe to do so
- provides more detail on PPE use in various clinical scenarios, in community settings, such as care homes, and where individuals are cared for in their own homes
- advises that clinicians should wear a higher level of protective equipment (listed in the guidance) when carrying out aerosol generating procedures (AGPs)
- advises the use of aprons, rather than gowns, for non-AGPs, as well as thorough washing of forearms where there is a risk of exposure to droplets – advice that is consistent with the UK policy of ‘bare-below-the-elbows’ and evidence reviews of the risks of healthcare-acquired infections
- recommends the use of FFP3 masks, a more rigorous requirement than recommended by WHO (which recommends FFP2 masks); however, FFP2 masks may be used safely if necessary


Direct links to PPE guidance are:

COVID-19: PPE use for aerosol generating procedures:

COVID-19: PPE use for non aerosol generating procedures:

Managing Unauthorised Occupation Of Non-Residential Premises
Published by the Fire Protection Association (FPA) in 2017 and recently reissued to help businesses with implementing their COVID-19 crisis plans, the guidance: Unauthorised occupation of non-residential premises explores what measures can be applied to help manage the risk of fire, criminal activity and malicious damage in buildings which lie vacant, particularly during the current pandemic.

Insurance companies have previously reported that there is often a significant increase in the frequency and severity of claims for damage and clear up costs arising from unauthorised occupations of vacant properties.

The key points are:

- the growing challenge of unauthorised occupations - Insurers report that there has been a significant increase in the frequency and severity of claims for damage and clear up costs arising from unauthorised occupations of vacant properties.

- evolution of the problem - Frequently reported are occupations by large numbers of well organised groups making use of empty buildings for dumping by fly tippers in return for cash payment.

- vigorous action required - In the light of how this problem is developing, managers and owners would be well advised to revise their risk assessment and, if necessary, take rigorous action to reinforce the physical resistance of their vacant building.

- importance of planning - Advance planning covering the preparations that need to be made in advance of an occupation, the actions required should an occupation occur and those needed to protect the operation and assets going forward, is just as important as physical preparations.

- the law and policing - As part of the advanced planning, managers and owners should acquaint themselves with the legal and policing environment they will find themselves in should the worst happen and trespasses need to be ejected.

- help and support - The advice and support of professionals, consultants and specialist services can be invaluable before, during and following an unauthorised occupation.

To some degree, the information and recommendations given in this document overlap with the content of RISC Authority document BDM10: Code of practice for the protection of empty buildings - Fire safety and security but the approach is brought up to date by taking into account the new phenomena of the brazen and co-ordinated ‘swamping’ of target premises.

Being prepared is a key factor in avoiding or limiting the duration/effect of unauthorised occupation, and different levels of preparation will be appropriate according to the type of premises and circumstances.

S31: Unauthorised occupation of non-residential premises — guide to managing the risk is available on completion of a form:
http://fpacampaign.thefpa.co.uk/linkapp/cmahp.aspx?LinkID=pageid986790jkkzfhh9r@f@f@fnnznzr@z@f@f@fnnznzr@f@f
COVID-19 And Waste Management Activities Guidance

The UK’s Waste Industry Safety and Health Forum (WISH) has published its finalised COVID-19 and Waste Management Activities document. The drafting has been undertaken with input, advice and support from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

WISH said it recognises the urgency of the need of the industry for information about how to deal with the risks associated with COVID-19.

To limit the spread of the disease it is important that individuals self-isolate if they, or their family, have symptoms, or if they are vulnerable. This could result in significant absence from work.

Estimates of the impact vary, but at a low-end 15% of waste industry workers may be absent, and at a high-end some estimates range to in excess of 50%. Such levels of absence would very likely have a significant effect on the delivery of essential waste management activities.

The guide acknowledges that obeying the recommended 2-metre Social Distancing may be not be reasonably practicable for personnel who work together in the cabs of some waste collection vehicles. However, as an essential service it is important waste collection operations continue. What it is reasonably practicable will depend on the specific circumstances of each collection methodology and type and each collection area.

However, cabs should have alcohol or soap-based cleansing and/or wipes available for all surfaces, which should be cleaned periodically throughout the day and especially at the end of each shift.

Particular attention should be paid to door-handles, hand holds/rails, dashboards, steering wheels, hand-brake levers, gearbox and other controls and indicator stalks etc.

Where a vehicle may have been used by someone displaying the symptoms of COVID-19, or a confirmed case, then the vehicle should either be decontaminated thoroughly.

WISH Information Document: COVID-19 and Waste Management Activities


New Control Material To Avoid Coronavirus Test Failures

Scientists have designed a new control material to enable laboratories check the correct functioning of their tests for COVID-19, thereby avoiding the potential for false negatives.

Timely and accurate laboratory testing is an essential part of tackling the COVID-19 pandemic, but a recent EU survey identified the lack of positive control materials as one of the top three challenges faced by laboratories for the reliable implementation of coronavirus tests.

Responding to this need, scientists have designed a positive control material to facilitate the quality control of the detection of SARS-CoV-2 in testing laboratories. This positive control material guarantees that laboratory tests are working correctly and are harmonised.

In practice, the control material is a synthetic, non-infectious part of the virus, which allows companies producing coronavirus tests and testing laboratories to check their testing kits. If their test does not detect the control material, it will not detect the real virus either.

The control material will enable the harmonisation of coronavirus tests in Europe, ensuring their high quality to avoid false negatives.

The SARS-CoV-2 virus mutates rapidly. The control material is based on the part of the virus that has remained stable after the virus has mutated and is fully compatible with the official WHO recommended methods applied in the EU, Asia and the USA to detect the presence of SARS-CoV-2.
The material can also be used to benchmark and validate the numerous test kits currently developed worldwide.

https://ec.europa.eu

**Guidance On Eating Healthily During Self-Quarantine**

The World Health Organization (WHO)/Europe has published a new guide on how to eat healthily during the COVID-19 self-quarantine. It contains valuable information about nutrition to help keep the immune system strong.

The guidelines give advice for a diet that supports good health while many of us are advised to stay at home and may have less opportunities to consume fresh foods and be physically active.

The WHO European Office for Prevention and Control of Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) has thus developed a set of general tips, a list of ‘best food buys’, and a few examples of recipes for inspiration.

The guidance explains how to be strategic while buying and using ingredients, and how to follow safe food handling practices whilst also limiting salt, sugar and fat intake. The publication also includes a list of food items, including canned products, with high nutritional value which are generally affordable, accessible and have a long shelf-life.

The WHO experts also suggest avoiding alcohol or at least reducing its consumption as it weakens the immune system. Thus, alcohol use and especially heavy use undermines the body’s ability to cope with infectious disease, including COVID-19, according to the guidance.

The guidance: Food and nutrition tips during self-quarantine may be downloaded free of charge from:


**HSE Speed Up Production Of Hand Sanitisers**

The UK Government and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have relaxed rules over the manufacture of hand sanitisers to help increase production during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Biocidal hand sanitiser products containing Propan-2-ol (also known as isopropanol or isopropyl alcohol/IPA), will not be required to obtain a product authorisation if they meet the relevant WHO formulation (see below).

HSE’s primary concern is that safe and effective biocidal hand sanitisers are available in the UK to help protect people during the coronavirus outbreak. The Agency has said it will adopt a pragmatic and proportionate approach to regulatory requirements that relate to supply chain obligations during this period. The focus of any HSE activity by inspectors will be to ensure that products on the market are effective in combating the coronavirus and do not pose an unacceptable risk to people or the environment.

The moves follow a spike in demand for sanitiser to help prevent the spread of coronavirus. HSE is allowing manufacturers to sell hand sanitisers containing isopropanol without first obtaining product authorisation, as long as the product meets the relevant specifications provided by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Article 55 (1) of the Biocidal Products Regulation (BPR) enables HSE, in cases of danger to public health, animal health or the environment which cannot be contained by other means, to provide short term derogations from the requirements for product authorisation.
Manufacturers wishing to place products that meet the WHO specified formulation onto the UK Market must contact HSE via biocidesenquiries@hse.gov.uk using ‘Propan-2-ol Article 55’ as the subject title of the email. HSE will respond quickly to request details about the products being manufactured and once provided, issue a derogation certificate.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is continuing its commitment to increasing the availability of surface disinfectants for use against SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19. List N: Disinfectants for use against SARS-CoV-2 (List N www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2) now contains over 360 products and has enhanced functionality to allow users to sort these products by surface type and use site. EPA is also continuing to expedite the review process for new disinfectants. In addition, EPA has updated List N to include the types of surfaces products can be used on (e.g., hard or soft) and use sites (e.g., hospital, institutional or residential).

Information on the manufacture and supply of biocidal hand sanitiser products during the outbreak: coronavirus (COVID-19) is available at: www.hse.gov.uk/news/hand-sanitiser-manufacture-supply-coronavirus.htm

WHO has published guidance on how to formulate sanitiser: www.who.int/gpsc/5may/Guide_to_Local_Production.pdf

Funding Available To Tackle Food Waste During COVID-19
Food redistribution organisations across England will benefit from £3.25 million of Government funding to help them cut food waste and redistribute up to 14,000 tonnes of surplus stock during the COVID-19 outbreak. Grants will be available to redistributors working hard to ensure food supplies do not go to waste.

All food redistribution businesses and charities are encouraged to bid for grants over the coming month, including those whose volunteer programmes have been affected by social distancing measures or those unable to access their usual commercial support network.

The Defra-funded grant scheme will be managed by sustainability not-for-profit Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), which works closely with governments, businesses, and redistribution organisations to minimise food waste.

The COVID-19 Emergency Surplus Food Grant will be delivered in three phases.

Phase 1 support involves WRAP approaching a target list of small redistribution organisations who have applied previously to the fund to ascertain their immediate need for potential funding support, followed by Phases 2 and 3 which were launched on Thursday 9 April. Phase 2 will provide funding opportunities for small surplus food redistributors, and WRAP is also launching funding support aimed at medium to larger operators (phase 3).

Applications are invited by emailing: resourceactionfund@wrap.org.uk

COVID-19 Emergency Surplus Food Grant https://wrap.org.uk/content/covid-19-emergency-surplus-food-grant

Fangcang Shelter Hospitals - A Novel Concept for Responding to Public Health Emergencies?
Fangcang shelter hospitals are a novel public health concept and were implemented for the first time in China in February 2020, to tackle the COVID-19 outbreak.

The term Fangcang, which sounds similar to Noah’s Ark in Chinese, was borrowed from military field hospitals, but it refers to large, temporary hospitals built by converting public venues, such as
stadiums and exhibition centres, into health-care facilities to isolate patients with mild to moderate symptoms of an infectious disease from their families and communities, while providing medical care, disease monitoring, food, shelter, and social activities.

The Fangcang shelter hospitals in China served to isolate patients with mild to moderate COVID-19 from their families and communities, while providing medical care, disease monitoring, food, shelter, and social activities.

A new research study documents the development of Fangcang shelter hospitals during the COVID-19 outbreak in China and explains their three key characteristics (rapid construction, massive scale, and low cost) and five essential functions (isolation, triage, basic medical care, frequent monitoring and rapid referral, and essential living and social engagement).

Wuhan, the capital city of Hubei province in China, was the epicentre of the pandemic. The surge of infections placed huge pressure on the city's medical system. Thousands of patients with mild to moderate COVID-19 had to be sent home for isolation and observation. With a shortage of hospital beds, Wuhan needed an approach to rapidly and massively scale its capacity to isolate and care for patients with mild to moderate COVID-19. As the outbreak in Wuhan reached its most severe point, with thousands of new infections per day, the city opened three Fangcang shelter hospitals on 5 Feb 2020, by converting exhibition centres and stadiums.

Over the following weeks, Wuhan opened an additional 13 Fangcang shelter hospitals.

As the pandemic spreads globally, countries other than China are experiencing shortages of beds in traditional hospitals caring for the rapidly growing numbers of patients with the disease.

China has now started to support other countries in formulating policies to control the COVID-19 pandemic and conceiving and constructing Fangcang shelter hospitals for their national contexts. As part of this international cooperation, China has translated all policies, management manuals, and clinical guidelines related to Fangcang shelter hospitals into the languages of other countries facing rapidly growing COVID-19 outbreaks. China has also sent experts with direct experience in constructing and running Fangcang shelter hospitals to other countries to provide consultancy services to national and local governments.

Iran, the USA, the UK, and Spain are currently implementing measures that are similar to Fangcang shelter hospitals.

Early descriptive evidence suggests that the Fangcang shelter hospitals were a major reason for the successful control of the pandemic in China, but future research should establish the causal impact of Fangcang shelter hospitals on COVID-19 incidence and population health outcomes.

The research recommends that the future design and construction of large public venues (e.g., stadiums, convention centres, exhibition centres, gymnasiums, factories, and warehouses) should integrate features facilitating the conversion of these infrastructures to Fangcang shelter hospitals, to include interior equipment that can be rapidly removed, entrances large enough for hospital beds, and ventilation systems that reduce the risk of cross-infection.

The researchers acknowledge that by embracing Fangcang shelter hospitals, many countries and communities worldwide could boost their response to the current COVID-19 pandemic as well as future epidemics and disasters.

Simiao Chen et al:

Fangcang shelter hospitals: a novel concept for responding to public health emergencies.

Published The Lancet Online April 2, 2020: https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30744-3
**Link Between Air Pollution And COVID-19 Mortality In Italy**

A team of environmental researchers has studied whether there could be a link between the high mortality rate seen in northern Italy, and the level of air pollution in the same region during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The factors affecting the course of the disease and the possibilities to combat it remain unclear, given there is no medical treatment or vaccine and researchers all over the world are therefore working to find new insights into the global pandemic.

At Aarhus University, environmental scientist Dario Caro and colleagues prof. Bruno Frediani and Dr. Edoardo Conticini, from the University of Siena in Italy have found yet another small piece in the puzzle of understanding the deadly disease. They have focused on examining why the mortality rate is up to 12% in the northern part of Italy, while it is only approx. 4.5% in the rest of the country.

Their research demonstrates a probable correlation between air pollution and mortality in two of the worst affected regions in northern Italy: Lombardy and Emilia Romagna, which are also among the most air-polluted regions in Europe.

The recently published article took its outset in data from the NASA Aura satellite, which has demonstrated very high levels of air pollution across the two regions. The group compared these data with the so-called Air Quality Index; a measurement of air quality developed by the European Environment Agency. The index gathers data from several thousand measuring stations all over Europe, providing a geographical insight into the prevalence of a number of pollutant sources in the EU.

The figures speak for themselves. The population of the northern Italian regions lives in a higher level of air pollution, and this may lead to a number of complications for patients with COVID-19 in the regions, simply because their bodies may have already been weakened by the accumulated exposure to air pollution when they contract the disease.

Air pollution represents one of the most well-known causes of prolonged inflammation, eventually leading to an innate immune system hyper-activation. Among the other more common pollutants, ozone (O3) and sulphur dioxide (SO2) have also a prominent role in inducing systemic and respiratory system inflammation.

The situation in the Italian regions has presented a challenge for several years, with high levels of air pollution that have accumulated over a long period of time in the population.

Among the elderly living in such a region and affected by other comorbidities, the cilia and upper Airways defences could have been weakened both by age and chronic exposure to air pollution, which, in turn, could facilitate virus invasion by allowing virus reaching lower Airways. Subsequently, a weak immune system, triggered by chronic air pollution exposure may lead to acute respiratory distress syndrome and eventually death, particularly in case of severe respiratory and cardiovascular comorbidities.

In conclusion, it is well known that pollution impairs the first line of defence of upper Airways, thus a subject living in an area with high levels of pollutant is more prone to develop chronic respiratory conditions and will be susceptible to any infective agent. Moreover, a prolonged exposure to air pollution leads to a chronic inflammatory stimulus, even in young and healthy subjects.

It is the opinion of the researchers that this may partly explain a higher prevalence and lethality of a novel, very contagious, viral agent such as SARS-CoV-2, among a population living in areas with a higher level of air pollution, particularly taking into consideration the relatively high average age of this population.

Moreover, since the prolonged exposure to atmospheric pollution could induce persistent modifications of the immune system, short-term changes in the air quality may not be sufficient to
break this vicious circle. This might be supported by the persistent high fatality rate, despite the dramatic reduction of air pollution levels in Lombardy since the start of the outbreak.

Important factors such as the age structure of the affected population, the wide differences among Italian regional health systems, capacity of the intensive care units in the region, and the prevention policies taken by the Government have had a paramount role in the spreading of SARS-CoV-2, presumably more than the air pollution itself.

At the same time, the paper evaluated fatality rate only in two Italian regions: given the pandemic dimension of COVID-19, it will be interesting to evaluate if, similarly, a higher lethality will be also recorded in the most polluted regions worldwide.

The researchers conclude that experimental and epidemiological studies are urgently needed to evaluate the role of the atmospheric pollution in certain populations: the assessment of bronchial and serological levels of inflammatory cytokines represents the cornerstone for a deeper comprehension of the mechanisms leading to a poorer prognosis.

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Can atmospheric pollution be considered a co-factor in extremely high level of SARS-CoV-2 lethality in Northern Italy?

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Pesticide Residues In Food
The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has published its annual report on pesticide residues found in food in the European Union. The report is based on data from the official national control activities carried out by EU Member States, Iceland and Norway and includes both targeted and random sampling.

A total of 91,015 samples were analysed in 2018, 95.5% of which fell within legally permitted levels. For the subset of 11,679 samples analysed as part of the EU-coordinated control programme (random collection), 98.6% of samples were within legal limits.

The report gives a snapshot of the presence of pesticide residues in food in the EU and any possible risk to consumer health. It also provides risk managers with important information on which to base decisions regarding future control measures.

Of the 11,679 samples analysed:

- 6,770 or 58% were found to be without quantifiable levels of residues (residues < LOQ).
- 4,743 or 40.6% contained one or more pesticide residues in concentrations above the LOQ and below or equal to the maximum residue levels (MRLs).
- 166 or 1.4% contained residue concentrations exceeding the MRLs. Of these, 101 or 0.9% of the total samples were considered non-compliant, when the measurement uncertainty is taken into account.

Randomly collected data offered in the report is highlighted by ESFA as particularly useful, as it covers the same products on a three-year rotation, which means that upward or downward trends can be identified for specific goods.

For instance, between 2015 and 2018 the proportion of samples with residue exceedances increased in bananas (from 0.5% to 1.7%), sweet peppers (1.2% to 2.4%), aubergines (0.6% to 1.6%) and table...
grapes (1.8% to 2.6%). On the other hand, exceedances fell in 2018 compared to 2015 for broccoli (from 3.7% to 2%), virgin olive oil (0.9% to 0.6%) and chicken eggs (0.2% to 0.1%).

This year EFSA has translated the results of the coordinated programme into browsable charts and graphs, to make the data more accessible to non-specialists: www.efsa.europa.eu/en/annual-pesticides-report-2018

EFSA carried out a dietary risk assessment as part of its analysis of the results. This suggested that the food commodities analysed in 2018 are unlikely to pose a concern for consumer health. However, a number of recommendations are proposed to increase the efficiency of European control systems, thereby continuing to ensure a high level of consumer protection.

The 2018 European Union report on pesticide residues in food


EFSA Consults On Micro-Organisms Obtained Through Synthetic Biology

The European Food Safety Authority’s (EFSA’s) Scientific Committee has launched an open consultation on its draft opinion: Evaluation of existing guidelines for their adequacy for the microbial characterisation and environmental risk assessment of micro-organisms obtained through synthetic biology.

This document proposes answers to the request from the European Commission, to consider synthetic biology developments for agri-food use in the near future and if the use of this technology is expected to constitute potential risks and hazards for the environment.

The adequacy of existing guidelines for risk assessment has been evaluated by this draft Opinion, which is endorsed by the Scientific Committee for public consultation. Also updated guidance is suggested where needed. The scope of this draft Opinion is limited to living synthetic biology micro-organisms (SynBioM) expected to be deliberately released into the environment.

Written comments should be submitted by 26 May 2020.

A summary will be prepared after the public consultation.

Public consultation on the draft EFSA Scientific Committee opinion: Evaluation of existing guidelines for their adequacy for the microbial characterisation and environmental risk assessment of micro-organisms obtained through synthetic biology.


New Rules On Labelling Origin Of Primary Ingredients In Food

New EU rules requiring food businesses to label foods with the country of origin or place of provenance of primary ingredients are now in force. These requirements, set out in Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/775, apply alongside existing rules in the EU Food Information Regulation No 1169/2011 (FIC).

This means that if the origin or provenance of a product’s primary ingredient is different to the origin or provenance currently indicated on the label of a food, food businesses may now have to provide additional information on packaging regarding the origin of the primary ingredient or ingredients. The purpose of the rules is to ensure that consumers are not misled about the origin of a product’s ingredients.
The legislation is applicable where food packaging already shows the country of origin or place of provenance of a product and that origin or provenance is not the same as that of the primary ingredient.

However, the new rules are not triggered if packaging doesn’t expressly state or imply a product’s country of origin or place of provenance, the origin or provenance of the primary ingredient is the same as the product, or if a product doesn’t have a primary ingredient.

The new rules will apply where an indication of origin or provenance is given in any form, including in words, pictures and symbols such as monuments or flags. They also apply where products show statements such as ‘made in’, ‘manufactured in’ and ‘produced in’.

EU guidance on the rules emphasises the importance of compliance with the general requirement within the food information to consumers (FIC) to ensure that food information is not misleading. This means that products should be assessed on a case by case basis, taking into account information on the packaging as a whole, rather than applying blanket rules.

Where the country of origin or place of provenance of a primary ingredient is not the same as the country of origin or place of provenance currently shown on packaging, food businesses must either show the origin or place of provenance of the primary ingredient, or indicate that the origin of the primary ingredient is different to the food.

This can be done by either stating on packaging where a primary ingredient comes from e.g. EU, non-EU or a Member state or stating that the primary ingredient does not originate from the country of origin/place of provenance of the food. The presentation of this information must comply with the technical requirements in both FIC and the new rules and it must be shown in the same field of vision as the indication of the country of origin of the product. This may mean packaging becomes quite crowded. Food businesses may choose to remove or change statements regarding origin or provenance if they have been made voluntarily, where the inclusion of the new information detracts from the packaging aesthetic or the marketing benefit of including origin claims.

Further information on the new legislation is available at: https://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/labelling_nutrition/labelling_legislation/origin-labelling_en

Salmonella Food Poisoning In China Linked To Food Ordered Online
In July 2018, an outbreak of 10 cases of Salmonella enterica serovar Enteritidis infection occurred in Shenzhen, China. Outbreak investigation complemented by whole-genome sequencing traced the source to food ordered online. This investigation highlights the role of online food delivery platforms and questions whether any unique features make this a new mode of foodborne disease transmission.

In China, the use of online food delivery services is said to have gained substantial popularity because of the ease of smartphone mobile applications and the development of online food delivery platforms, particularly in light of the recent COVID-19 outbreak.

Researchers from the Shenzhen Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Shenzhen CDC) investigated the outbreak complemented by the use of whole-genome sequencing (WGS) to identify and delineate outbreak and sporadic cases to confirm the source of a Salmonella Enteritidis outbreak linked to food ordered through an online food delivery platform in Shenzhen, China.

During 30 June to 3 July 2018, a total of 10 cases of diarrhoea disease were reported at two hospitals in the Nanshan District of Shenzhen, China – suspected to be foodborne illness, but not notified to Shenzhen CDC.

A total of 21 samples were collected during laboratory and environmental investigations, comprising anal swab specimens from seven case-patients and 14 samples from the implicated restaurant (six from chicken legs, four from restaurant staff, two from kitchenware items, and two from other foods).
All 10 case-patients were university students who had diarrhoea fever and seven case-patients also reported nausea and vomiting. Case-patients attended the same university but lived in different dormitories and did not know each other. However, on the afternoon of 30 June, all had eaten food delivery (chicken leg with rice) from the same restaurant near the university, ordered through an online delivery platform.

From the 21 samples, nine were positive for Salmonella Enteritidis, which was isolated from five chicken legs and from four case-patients. Routine surveillance further identified five additional sporadic isolates with the same PFGE pattern within one month after the outbreak. However, no clear epidemiologic links were found between any of the 10 sporadic cases and the outbreak.

The online food delivery industry has resulted in a landscape of change in food consumption behaviour and lifestyle in China and elsewhere. In contrast to traditional restaurant dining, online food delivery can send contaminated food throughout a city within a short time to cause widespread outbreaks. Online food delivery also poses additional food safety risks, including improper handling and storage temperature during transport. As illustrated in this outbreak, the total time elapsed was 2 hours from food preparation to delivery at ambient temperature, potentially enabling Salmonella Enteritidis to sufficiently multiply and cause illnesses.

Given the continued rapid growth anticipated for the online food delivery industry, in-depth risk assessments should be a research priority to inform appropriate food safety strategies.


Whole-genome analysis of Salmonella enterica serovar Enteritidis isolates in outbreak linked to online food delivery, Shenzhen, China, 2018.

Emerg Infect Dis. 2020 Apr [date cited]. https://doi.org/10.3201/eid2604.191446

Lucy’s Law Aims to End Puppy Farming
The Government has introduced new legislation to tackle the low-welfare, high volume supply of puppies and kittens, by banning commercial third-party sale in England.

Lucy’s Law is the short-hand for the amendment to The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 brought about by The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2019, which makes unlawful the sales of puppies and kittens (under six months in both cases) by third party sellers/anyone other than the breeder.

The legislation means that anyone wanting to get a new puppy or kitten in England must now buy direct from a breeder, or consider adopting from a rescue centre instead. Licensed dog breeders are required to show puppies interacting with their mothers in their place of birth. If a business sells puppies or kittens without a licence, they could receive an unlimited fine or be sent to prison for up to six months.

The law is named after Lucy, a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel who was rescued from a puppy farm where she was subjected to terrible conditions. Puppy farms are located across the UK with most depending on third-party sellers or ‘dealers’ to distribute often sick, traumatised, unsocialised puppies which have been taken away from their mother at just a few weeks old.

This often involves long-distance transportation, with the puppy or kitten suffering life-threatening medical, surgical, or behavioural problems which are passed on to unsuspecting new owners. Lucy’s Law effectively removes the third-party dealer chain, resulting in all dog and cat breeders becoming accountable for the first time.
As well as Lucy’s Law, the Government has committed to supporting tougher sentences for animal cruelty, raising maximum prison sentences from six months to five years, and has pledged to bring in new laws on animal sentience and to end excessively long journeys for live animals.

https://getyourpetsafely.campaign.gov.uk