

Cope Safety Management - language is no barrier to safety

Cope Safety Management provides a one-stop shop for companies looking to meet statutory or best-practice requirements under health, safety and employment legislation. With the accession of ten new Member States to the European Union in 2004, an increasing number of its clients are now employing foreign workers. Delivering essential training in foreign languages is a key element in ensuring that these workers remain healthy and safe.

“We work in a number of sectors,” explains Scott Butters, Cope’s Health and Safety Services Manager, “but particularly in the manufacturing and agricultural fields, we come across large numbers of casual workers, many of whom have little or no understanding of English.” Given that this could clearly lead to difficulties with health and safety regulations, Cope took care to make sure that their important message was not lost in translation.

Translation and interpreting are key tools

Cope Safety Management’s client, Lincolnshire Field Products, grows, grades, packages and distributes vegetables for the UK’s leading supermarkets. Many of its current casual workforce are Lithuanian and Polish.

Robin Hancox, Managing Director at Lincolnshire Field Products, recognises the importance of safety within his organisation. He comments: “Safety training is as important for the foreign workers that we use as it is for our own managers and staff. Cope Safety Management has helped to provide and deliver training to our employees and to any casual labour working on our behalf. In addition, they have used translation and interpreting to ensure that everyone understands the safety message. I believe that Lincolnshire Field Products can only benefit from such a strategy.”

The in-house course that the company delivered at Lincolnshire Field Products’ factory in Spalding contained important safety messages about working with machinery and moving vehicles, and avoiding trips and falls. The course was given to around 90 foreign workers from Poland and Lithuania: they were divided into

groups according to their first language and the training was interpreted by a native speaker. In addition, all the relevant health and safety documentation was translated into both Polish and Lithuanian.

Increasing need for languages

The value of making such efforts to communicate the importance of safety is underlined by John Cope, proprietor of Cope Safety Management and Chartered Safety and Health Practitioner. He said: "A good number of our customers rely on the expertise and skills of workers from overseas, many of whom do not have English as their mother tongue. It is essential that suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training be provided for all employees in a way that they can understand and apply. We are seeing an increasing need to deliver health and safety training in foreign languages."

Cope Safety Management is keen to build on its success in this area, as Scott Butters explains: "We are currently working with bodies such as the Fresh Produce Consortium and Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce, with the aim of promoting health and safety in sectors with large numbers of foreign workers and historically higher risk."

<p>Signposting</p> <p>Cope Safety Management www.jwcope.co.uk</p>	<p>For more about RLN East Midlands go to: www.rln-eastmidlands.com</p> <p>RLN East Midlands Apex Court City Link Nottingham NG2 4LA Tel: 0115 9888 478</p> <p>BLIS Services is a one-stop shop for language and cultural expertise consultants in your area. www.blis.org.uk</p>
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