Observing the Future with an Eye on the Past

February 2015

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What we are about

- The UK’s health & safety laboratory
- Helps businesses succeed
- Supports HSE
- Saves and improves the lives of workers
Predictions

- “I think there is a world market for maybe five computers”
- “Next Christmas the iPod will be dead, finished, gone, kaput”
- “It will be years --not in my time-- before a woman will become Prime Minister”
Foreseeable events: Foot and Mouth 2001

• 2000 cases
• 10 million sheep and cattle slaughtered
• Estimated cost to UK £8billion
Changing Priorities

1970’s

Flixborough

Early 2000

musculoskeletal

2020 -2030?

3D printing – cottage industries
Horizon Scanning in HSL

‘A systematic examination of information to identify potential threats, risks, emerging issues and opportunities, beyond the Parliamentary term, allowing for better preparedness and the incorporation of mitigation and exploitation into the policy making process.

*Definition from UK Government Cabinet Office 2013*
Three horizons to scan

Horizon 1: the current and near future
Horizon 2: looking towards a further out future
Horizon 3: The distant future
Driver Analysis

- Social
- Technological
- Economic
- Environmental
- Political
Horizon Scanning Top Ten

- Demographics
- Working Patterns & Precarious Working
- Recycling
- Pervasive Computing
- Sustainability
- Robotics
- Hydrogen Economy
- Human Performance Enhancement
- Nanotechnology
- Advance Manufacturing
Demographics

- Blue collar declining, white collar increasing
- Growth in part-time and flexible working, zero hour contracts
- More women in work
- Older workers
- Migration
- More Small and Medium Enterprises
Working Patterns and Precarious Working

- Homeworking, teleworking, part-time working, short-term, outsourcing
- Fragmented workforce – monitoring H&S
- Management methods
- Knowledge management
- Training of part-time and temporary staff
Recycling

- Significant expansion anticipated
- Cars, plastics, electronic equipment (WEEE)
- Increase in new jobs?
- Potential for exposure to toxic substances
- Potential for manual handling incidents
Green Jobs’ futures research for EU-OSHA

Foresight of new and emerging risks to occupational safety and health associated with new technologies in green jobs by 2020
One we did earlier: Hydrogen Economy

- Combustion or fuel cells
- Vehicular and stationary applications (combined heat and power)
- Flammability
- Storage (high pressure, other methods)
- Distribution
- Public Perception
What can go wrong?
The incredible can occur
How we know
The Foresight Centre - a new way of working
Closing thought

Those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future

J F Kennedy

Thank you