

Time To Switch On

Charlie Devine discusses the important role of the Scottish Waste Industry Training Competency and Health (SWITCH) Forum in providing leadership to raise standards of health and safety, training, learning and development, and competence and to make the resource management industry an attractive career choice and a safe and healthy place to work...

The SWITCH Forum is made up of a broad spectrum of representatives from over 30 organisations, including professional associations, national and local government bodies, private waste management companies, trade associations, the Scottish Trades Union Congress, third sector representatives and education and skills development organisations. The Scottish Government and the Health and Safety Executive also provide advisory support.

The Forum has adopted an action-focused and peer-led approach, aimed at encouraging and enabling change to take place.

These partners are working collaboratively to provide leadership and lend their support, advice, expertise, knowledge and practical experience to create a resource management industry that:

- is safe and healthy to work in
- actively supports education, training, learning and development
- increases workforce capacity and competence
- develops and shares good practice
- creates an industry that is attractive as a career choice
- creates clear career and learner pathways. ➔



Soundbites From SWITCH Ambassadors

"Keenan Recycling has benefitted greatly from being involved with SWITCH, it has been an opportunity to share best practice and hear what other responsible companies are doing. I feel that the recycling industry is potentially a very dangerous place to operate, as there is large plant and heavy machinery involved. Inherently our industry has not had the best track record but I believe this is improving as the years go on. SWITCH offers a platform to pull everything together and will help to raise the standard across the board. Health and Safety should be at the top of the agenda and it's great to see so many different people of varying occupations coming together to make it happen."

Grant Keenan – Keenan Recycling



"The development of the Competency Framework by SWITCH will be of particular use to APSE's membership in the waste and recycling industry, as we seek to ratify the standards required for workers within this sector. APSE and their membership recognise the value of the information provision and fully support the ongoing work being undertaken by SWITCH."

Andy Malcolm, Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Scotland Waste & Recycling Group National Secretary & SWITCH Forum Executive Steering Group member.



"Fife Council's Waste Operations use the SWITCH competency framework as a yardstick against which we can measure the effectiveness of our front line employee induction and ongoing coaching and training programmes. While the framework rightly focuses on competencies needed to make our work as safe as it can be, other key employee development areas relating to; for example, customer service and compliance with legislation are also included."

Martin Kingham, Service Manager (Waste Operations) – Fife Council

"The ambition of having a waste management industry with a competent, healthy and safe workforce is only achievable if we work together and share our knowledge and experience. SWITCH provides the forum to allow the Scottish Waste Industry to do just that; and to promote best practice in health & safety and education & training. SEPA are happy to be supporting SWITCH in its ambitions."

Adrian Bond, National Operations Waste Unit Manager, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)



"Being part of the SWITCH forum allows CRNS to work collectively with the Scottish Resource Management industry to raise standards of health and safety, training and development and crucially to promote the range of careers within the sector."

David Wood, Chief Executive Officer, Community Resources Network Scotland (CRNS)



"SWITCH provides a useful forum for health and safety representatives to exchange information and to help improve standards across the waste management industry."

Stephen Freeland, Policy Advisor, Scottish Environmental Services Association (SESA)



"SWITCH will provide a hub for discussion around topical issues linked to the Waste industry in Scotland. We will be able to discuss these issues within a Scottish context and through partnership working to improve health and safety related performance to the benefit of the industry and reduce the burden of injury on Scotland's economy."

Karen McDonnell, Head of The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) in Scotland



Competence Framework

- Comply with waste legislation
- Comply with emergency procedures
- Comply with environmental legislation
- Maintain healthy & safe environment
- Receiving and processing waste
- Work with other people
- Manual handling and lifting
- Provide customer service
- Working at height
- Manual collection of waste
- Mechanically handle waste
- Manual street cleansing
- Load a waste transport vehicle
- Transport waste
- Operation of plant & machinery
- Controlling vehicle movement
- Reporting and recording of information
- Supervision of operations
- Mentoring and coaching
- Risk assessment

SWITCH consists of an Executive Steering Group, which I currently chair, and two Working Groups for Health & Safety (H&S) and Education, Training and Competence (ETC). The Executive Steering group provides strategic direction to both working groups, agrees new work streams and plans, coordinates and evaluates events. The H&S group aims to support continual improvements in health and safety, while the ETC group aims to create training, learning and development opportunities relevant for a zero waste Scotland.

SWITCH works closely with the Waste Industry Safety and Health (WISH) Forum and has representation on each of its five working groups covering leadership/employee engagement; build competence; creating healthier work places; creating safer work places; and support for SMEs.

One of the first priorities for SWITCH, taking place early in 2016, is to promote any new and existing WISH guidance, which you can find either on either www.hse.gov.uk/waste/wish or www.ciwm.org.uk/wish.

The Context

SWITCH HAS been established to support the industry to enhance the safety, training and competence of the people who work within it. The latest HSE "Health and Safety Statistics Annual Report", published in October, shows that although over the last 20 years there has been a general downward trend in the rate of fatal injuries, the provisional figures for 2014/2015 indicate that 142 workers were fatally injured; equivalent to a rate of 0.46 per 100,000. Our industry has the third highest fatality rate in the UK, accounting for five fatalities.

The report also highlights 76,054 non-fatal injuries reported by employers under RIDDOR across the UK, with the most common kinds of accident caused by slips and trips, handling, lifting or carrying, and being struck by moving objects.

In addition to the impact on workers and their families, the economic costs due to loss of working days and the resultant losses in production are also obvious. There are still many hazards and risks associated with the resource management and recycling industry, and health and safety must remain the utmost priority.

SWITCH On The Action

FEBRUARY 2016 will see the formal launch of a new Competency Framework developed by SWITCH. As well as explaining more, the event will include presentations by several organisations that volunteered to be early adopters

of the Framework and will showcase how they are putting it into practice and embedding it within their organisations.

The Framework has been developed through an inclusive and consultative process. An initial draft was created based on previous research and studies and further shaped using sample job roles and descriptions provided by various employers and the results of a short employers' survey. Following on from this, SWITCH created a Competency Framework Reference Group with broad industry representation and this, along with further wider stakeholder workshops, helped to guide and finalise the Framework.

Since it was finalised, the Framework has been well received across the industry. A self-assessment questionnaire and a guide will be available shortly to help employers, supervisors and managers to use and embed the Framework. It focuses on six key entry level roles/disciplines and provides core competencies for all frontline roles:

- Household Waste & Recycling (HWRC)
- Street Cleaning
- Collection
- Driving
- Plant and Machinery
- Materials Recovery.

Other key actions for SWITCH in the forthcoming year will see the delivery of webinars with supporting guidance, training and case studies, which focus on some of the industry's key priority areas including reducing fire risks at waste management sites, occupational health and transport.

The success and longevity of SWITCH will ultimately be determined by the industry taking ownership and coming forward to help embed the aims and objectives of SWITCH within their own organisations. Each of the priority areas for SWITCH need buy-in, whether through adoption of the new competency framework, or by providing information and resources to help support the promotion of SWITCH.

Support could also involve sharing examples of good practice that can be used as case studies and communicated via seminars and webinars. So this is a call to action to get involved and help to raise standards of health and safety, training, learning and development and competence across the industry. ■

If you would like to find out further information and get actively SWITCHED on visit <http://www.ciwm.co.uk/CIWM/RegionalCentres/Scotland/ScotlandGroups/SWITCHForum.aspx> or email switch@zerowastescotland.org.uk