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News release

11 January 2009 NR 01/10

Health and safety body calls for good neighbourliness

The leading body for health and safety professionals is urging businesses and communities to do the right thing by clearing snow and ice from public areas.

This call from the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) to promote good neighbourliness and care for employees' safety comes in the wake of inaccurate reporting in yesterday's Sunday Telegraph and Mail on Sunday. Both newspapers ran stories, yesterday (Sunday 10 January), claiming IOSH was warning businesses not to grit public paths because this could lead to legal action.

The *Sunday Telegraph* stated that, "in guidance to its members", IOSH said:

"When clearing snow and ice, it is probably worth stopping at the boundaries of the property under your control" and that clearing a public path "can lead to an action for damages against the company, eg if members of the public, assuming that the area is still clear of ice and thus safe to walk on, slip and injure themselves."

This is not the IOSH position on gritting public areas. Neither has IOSH issued this as guidance. The words are, in fact, taken from a Croner contribution to the "Just Ask" column of SHP magazine, in February of last year.

IOSH was contacted by *The Sunday Telegraph* about the story on Friday 8 January and offered the following comment from its Policy & Technical Director Richard Jones:

"Deciding whether to grit beyond the boundaries of their property needs to be carefully considered by companies. If access to the premises is covered in ice, companies may choose to grit the access to help their staff and visitors arrive and leave safely, even though it's not their property. However, in this instance, if they failed to grit the surface properly and someone had an accident as a result, then they could incur some liability.

"As a general rule, though, it's sensible for firms to consider the risks and take reasonable steps to prevent accidents from happening. If this means gritting outside the boundaries of your workplace, then it's better to do that than to have people slipping over or involved in car crashes on your doorstep."

In other words, the IOSH position is to encourage businesses to be a good employer and neighbour by gritting beyond property boundaries and to make sure that the task is carried out thoroughly.

This comment was ignored by *The Sunday Telegraph* and the wording from the Croner article used instead and attributed to IOSH. This was done without the knowledge of the IOSH Media team, with no follow up check being made.

Communications Director Ruth Doyle was dismayed by the *Telegraph's* approach:

"To lift this wording from an outside contribution to SHP magazine, published nearly a year ago, and pass it off as 'IOSH guidance' is completely irresponsible.

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