



## *Press Release*

### **Billy Kelleher opens new Blackpool offices for HSS**

Minister for Labour Affairs Billy Kelleher T.D. has strongly cautioned employers not to cut back on safety to achieve cost savings in the current economic slowdown.

Speaking at the opening of new offices for Health and Safety Services, Training and Consultancy Ltd. (HSS) at Blackpool Retail Park in Cork, Minister Kelleher said that while it might be tempting for employers to cut back on safety measures, this would represent a “very false” economy and more importantly could put the lives and health of workers at risk.

Minister Kelleher added that while employer and employee consciousness of safety issues has improved in recent years, there was no room for complacency. “Unfortunately, safety consciousness takes a long time to build up but can be dissipated very quickly. In the current economic climate and particularly in sectors like construction, there may be a pressure to cut corners. This should be resisted very strongly. While there will continue to be strong regulation of safety standards from the State, fundamentally safety at work must be a priority for all those in the workplace in the first instance”.

Recent figures from the HSA (Health and Safety Authority) report that 67 people were involved in fatal accidents in the workplace in 2007. This year sees the figures for fatal accidents in the workplace at 31 with 10 of those fatalities taking place in the construction sector. If these figures are to be reduced, health and safety training and measures will have to be strictly adhered to.

HSS, which has headquarters in Newmarket Co. Cork, is one of the biggest health and safety consultancies in Ireland. The company currently employs thirty staff in the largest training facility in the country in North Cork. The complex on a ten acre site at Newmarket includes training facilities for forklifts, excavators and other equipment and enables a huge range of work simulation exercises to take place.

The opening of further offices in Cork city arises from the changing profile of services being offered, according to HSS Business Development Manager, Matthew Browne.

“We find that there is an increasing demand for our services from retail, customer and financial service sectors and the move Blackpool Retail Park puts us within easy reach of these customers and new clients. Our new offices allow us to cater for training sessions, lectures and other exercises,” said Mr Browne

Mr Browne said that Minister Kelleher's warning was timely. "HSS has observed safety being compromised in many areas of late particularly in the under-pressure construction sector. We have seen the reduction in the amount of safe scaffolding used, a reduction in the maintenance of machinery on site, increased use of unsafe and uncertified machinery such as teleporters, M.E.W.P's, excavators and cranes, and in the use of unqualified workers to carry out electrical work and the lack of security fencing on sites to keep the public and children out."

"In light of this, I would like to announce today the decision by Health & Safety Services, Training and Consultancy Ltd to hold a series of information seminars and open evenings, in conjunction with FAS. The purpose of the Health & Safety Services / FAS information seminars and open evenings is to advise employers and employees of the various training courses that are available to them. At a time when redundancies are on the increase, Health & Safety Services feel it is all the more critical for people on the live register to upskill themselves, so as to prepare themselves for a return to the workforce.

Equally as critical, is the upskilling of existing staff by employers, so as to ensure they have the competitive advantage in today's markets and they can offer their clients the best possible service."

Health & Safety Services in conjunction with FAS, initially plan on holding these free information seminars in Cork and Dublin, and over time at various other locations around the country.

Minister Kelleher welcomed the initiative by Health & Safety Services in conjunction with FAS, and encouraged people to explore the opportunities that they could avail of.

"Health & Safety Services, have always been a forward thinking organisation. This can be seen by the opening of their Training Centre in November 2007 by Minister Michael Martin. This state-of-the-art training centre is the largest and first of its kind in the country. This was recognised recently as they have been nominated for The National Green Awards, for The Green Building Award, Finalist," said Minister Kelleher.

"Not only are Health & Safety Services expanding in Ireland, with the opening of this additional Cork branch as evidence, but they are expanding by adding an international dimension to their operations. Earlier this year, they secured a contract with a large pharmaceutical organisation to act as their Safety Consultants, which will involve working in 15 different countries around the world. This, together with their other ambitious plans to expand internationally, with the assistance of Enterprise Ireland, has led to them being recognised by the highly regarded Ulster Bank Business Achiever Awards in The Business Going International Category, something which I know Matthew Browne is to forefront of and I wish them continued success with this," he concluded.

Ends

For further information contact:

Kevin Mills, Casey Communications Consultants: 021-4272224,  
[info@caseycommunications.ie](mailto:info@caseycommunications.ie) .