

Outstanding questions from the debate

APPG Debate Question

I hope that the Minister will tell us what the existing staffing levels are at the HSE, because I would be concerned had the numbers reduced over the past 10 years. Clearly, we should not be cutting jobs at the Health and Safety Executive.

Response

The current HSE staffing levels at 31 March 2019 (as per HSE's Annual Report and Accounts) shows 2,426 Full Time Equivalent staff. HSE has successfully delivered efficiencies and economies over the last 10 years to live within reduced funding which has led to reduced staffing numbers.

Debate question

Companies can be prosecuted under the UK Government's Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007. We support the Act but have concerns about the lack of prosecutions under it. Will the Minister talk a bit about that when he responds to the debate?

Response

The number of prosecutions and convictions for Corporate Manslaughter does not support the perception that there is a lack of prosecutions.

Cases of Corporate Manslaughter are extremely serious and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) will robustly prosecute all such cases in which there is sufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction and where it is in the public interest to do so. Each case is carefully considered on its individual facts in accordance with the Code and the published CPS policy.

Debate question

What assessment has the Minister's Department made of the impact of funding cuts on the number of inspections that HSE undertakes? The Government have so far failed to respond to the tailored review of the HSE, which was published in November last year. When do they intend to do so?

Response

HSE's effectiveness in delivering improved health and safety outcomes should not be measured by inspection numbers alone. HSE's position as a regulator is strengthened when it brings all the regulatory tools in the box into play. We are far from being a one-trick pony. Our core strength is our ability to match what we see to an effective regulator response, whether that is through a well-targeted information campaign, focused inspections, a prosecution or, sometimes all three alongside working with stakeholders and agreeing standards.

HSE has responded to the recommendations of the Tailored Review through its Minister.

The HSE is happy to assist the APPG going forward in its efforts to reduce injuries and fatal accidents caused by working at height and would like to be involved in any future inquiries or hearings.