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HSE SAFETY ALERT TO THE PRINTING INDUSTRY:

Fatalities on Hand-Fed Platen Machines

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has today issued a safety alert aimed at employers in the printing industry who use hand-fed platen machines. This follows two fatal incidents in the last 13 months where machine operators have been crushed between the platens.

In both cases the machines were being operated in 'dwell' mode at the time of the intervention. HSE is concerned with this activity in that the platen may automatically stroke at the end of the dwell period and safety devices may not be activated.

This safety alert highlights the dangers of using the dwell facility on these machines, together with the steps employers need to take to ensure the machine can be used safely. The alert is on the HSE website at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/printing/alert.htm>

Notes to Editors

1. The two fatal incidents took place in April 2007 in West Drayton, London and in May 2008 in Wakefield, Yorkshire. Both incidents are currently under investigation and no further details can be given at this time.
2. The 'dwell' mode is effectively a continuous cycle with an adjustable delay to allow the completed blank to be removed and the new one inserted. Once activated, the machine will continue to cycle in this fashion until a stop button / guard is activated. The dwell can be set anywhere between 0.5 seconds and 12 seconds.
3. Hand-fed platens are versatile machines with a long history. Their design is based on old platen printing presses. They are widely used in the printing, corrugating, packaging and paper industries for a range of jobs from making cardboard packaging to manufacture of point of sale displays.

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4. HSE has written to the British Printing Industries Federation (BPIF), the Confederation of Paper Industries (CPI) and members of both the Printing Industry Advisory Committee (PIAC) and the Paper and Board Industry Advisory Committee (PABIAC) to ensure that they are aware of the alert.
5. Further information on safety in the printing industry can be found at:
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/printing/index.htm>

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HSE information and news releases can be accessed on the Internet www.hse.gov.uk/
