

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 82/2007

8 August 2007

The Opposition understands that following the accident last month in the construction area in New Harbours where a number of heavy metal sheets plunged 150 feet from a sloping roof and narrowly missed a local man, no further action has been taken by the Government to address the issues raised by this incident and to increase the resources available to the health and safety inspectorate.

It is incomprehensible that the principal health and safety inspector should have retired over a year ago and that the post should remain unfilled, whilst in the same period the number of building sites has been on the increase creating a requirement for manpower if the inspectorate is to keep under review the adequacy of the safety measures being applied in such sites.

It must be obvious that with two inspectors it is impossible to provide adequate cover for all the building sites, and in fact it needs to be remembered that although building sites and the shipyard have in the past proved to be the work environments which have tended to have a higher incidence of accidents at work, the introduction of safe working practices applies across the board in all the industries and in the private and the public sector.

Given that in this year's budget provision was being made to increase manning levels in different areas of the Government, there is no justification of overlooking the requirements in this particular sector, and it is to be hoped that we do not have to wait for an accident to happen before action is taken. The whole concept of health and safety is that prevention is better than cure.

ENDS