



# Press Release

For immediate release  
Thursday 3 March 2005

## **Health and Safety Bill Misses the Point, says Business**

The Institute of Directors (IoD) today voiced its concern at proposals to create new health and safety rules. The Health and Safety (Directors' Duties) Bill, promoted by Stephen Hepburn MP, is due for its Second Reading in the House of Commons tomorrow (Friday 4<sup>th</sup> March). Amongst other things, the Bill aims to force large companies to appoint a named health and safety director.

Geraint Day, Head of Health and Safety Policy at the IoD, said,

"Such an approach seems to miss an important point. The crucial issue is that boards receive adequate information on which to base their monitoring and decision making. That includes health and safety as much as the many other aspects of corporate performance."

The IoD has in recent years been in close contact with the Health and Safety Commission (HSC) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on the topic of directors' duties over health and safety.

"When we helped the HSC draft its guidance to directors we stressed that it was important for boards to be in a position to take decisions collectively on the basis of adequate management information," Geraint Day said.

The IoD said that although the Bill contains a number of points that could be useful in helping boards scrutinise health and safety issues, the intentions of the Bill are misplaced.

Geraint Day, said,

"By placing a number of really quite prescriptive requirements revolving around the notion of a named individual the Bill runs the risk of actually moving away from good standards of collective board responsibility and creating a culture of scapegoating.

"We have no problem with firms that already have a person at board level whose job includes health and safety, but the emphasis has to be on ensuring that the board as a whole is on top of the issues."

The Bill also only addresses large private sector companies, the IoD pointed out. Thereby ignoring many, very large enterprises in the public sector.

The IoD has also been working with the HSE to help promote good examples of health and safety performance and leadership.