

On the Horizon

EC

Peter Skinner MEP and spokesperson on health and safety for the Commission spoke at a conference in Bilbao 27th November 2000.

Apart from flagging up an intention for the Commission to focus more on outcomes rather than checking each nations legislative compliance with Directives he also pointed to the key risk areas he wanted to see addressed this coming year. Risks from sunlight, stress and poor ergonomics were at the top of his list.

In particular he made reference to, and praised, new laws to protect against musculoskeletal disorders (MSD) in the USA. These are due to come into force in January 2001.

A detailed report of these will be made in the *State of Knowledge*. However, as a brief introduction it is interesting to note that the method relies heavily on health surveillance. It uses a definition of an occupational MSD incident as follows: "a work related MSD that requires medical treatment beyond first aid, assignment to light duty or temporary removal from work to recover, or work related signs or MSD symptoms that last for seven or more consecutive days". This definition warrants careful scrutiny.

Reports from the USA suggest several legal challenges to this law have been filed.

