

# ICL INQUIRY STATEMENT

of

**GEOFFREY PODGER CB**

**Chief Executive**

**Health and Safety Executive**

## **Career History**

1. My full name is Geoffrey John Freeman Podger. I graduated from Oxford University in 1974 and joined the Civil Service. During my career I have worked with three Government Departments, two international organisations and three British agencies. Most recently, I worked with the Department of Health, and the then Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for a period of 18 years, including a period heading the health promotion work carried out by that Department. I became the Chief Executive of the Food Standards Agency at its inception in Britain in 2000 and in 2003 I became the first Director of the European Food Safety Authority. In late 2005 I joined the Health and Safety Executive as Chief Executive. I am currently an Honorary Vice President of the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) and an Honorary Fellow of the International Institute of Risk and Safety Management (IIRSM).

## **Current position and role**

2. My responsibilities as Chief Executive of HSE are noted in paragraph 32 of the HSE Phase 2 submission (HSE 5)
3. I adopt the answers in HSE's Phase 2 submission to the ICL Inquiry (HSE 5), together with the information provided in all other HSE submissions to the Inquiry as being the evidence of HSE generally. I

have been aware of the provision of information throughout the period of the Inquiry, and at the request of the Inquiry team. That information to which I will personally speak is contained in Chapters 1 and 7 of HSE 5.

### **ICL Inquiry**

4. We, at HSE, are quite clear that the duty holder in this case, ICL, bears the responsibility for the incident and was properly charged and convicted under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 [ICL/04628-04691] at the High Court in Glasgow. Nevertheless I would like to make it clear that it is a matter of infinite regret that our own interventions in this matter were not more successful.
5. As has been stated in HSE 5, Capita Group plc are contracted to provide a replacement registration scheme for gas installers from April 2009. I note that Calor wish to raise with the Inquiry a question directed towards HSE being reluctant to seek an extension of the regulations due to a commercial consideration namely the renegotiation of the contract. I can state that such a consideration played no part in HSE's view of the extension of the GSIUR. [ICL/04473-04500]

### **Great Britain's performance in health and safety**

6. In Britain we have one of the best records for occupational health and safety in the world. This is illustrated in the HSE submission by tables 3 and 4 of appendix 1 (page 4) which show that:
  - within the EU, GB has the lowest rate of work related fatal injuries. Comparison with data from other EU countries over a number of years reveals that the fatal injury rate in GB is consistently one of the lowest in Europe. The most recent comparative data is for

2005 and shows that amongst the five largest EU countries GB had the lowest fatal injury rate for a five year period.

- GB also had the third lowest rate among EU member states of non-fatal injuries resulting in three or more lost working days; only Sweden and Ireland had a lower rate than GB. In 2005, the most recent year for which data are available across the European Union, the over 3 day injuries rate in the EU was estimated by EC statisticians to be 3,098 per 100000 workers while the British rate was 1,271.

7. It is important therefore to recognise the overall merits of the current GB health and safety system, notwithstanding the very sad circumstances of the ICL Plastics explosion. HSE is always ready to consider proposals for further improvement but this has to be done in terms of the extent to which they will bring real practical benefit.
8. I very much wish to add that HSE will proffer any further assistance possible to the Inquiry, whilst recognising that it is a matter for the Inquiry to write and produce the recommendations for Ministers. HSE does see that it has a key role to play in taking any recommendations forward and ensuring that there is parity between all parties in the future management of LPG. We are willing to consider all conceivable ways in which a solution might be found.

I confirm the contents of this statement are true.

Witness signature.....

Date.....