

The government joins the fight against cyber crime

Cyber-crime is on the increase, with hardly a day going by without a story in the news of a large company falling victim to a cyber breach. The UK is one of the most digitally dependent economies in the world and is estimated to be worth over £118bn per year*. In response to the growing threat of cyber-crime the government has launched its' strongest initiative yet.

The queen recently opened The National Cyber Security Centre in Victoria, Central London which has been created to protect the UK from cyber-attacks. The Centre is part of intelligence agency GCHQ and started work in October as part of a £1.9bn five year strategy. The government has enlisted the help of experts from the private sector to try to identify the threats, with NCSC Chief Ciaran Martin claiming "We want to make the UK the hardest target"* There were 188 cyber-attacks in the UK classed by the NCSC as Category Two or Three during the last three months. Even though the UK has not experienced a Category One attack - the highest level, an example of which would have been the theft of confidential details of millions of Americans from the Office of Personnel Management - there is no air of complacency at the NCSC's new headquarters.

As well as the tangible losses faced by businesses in the UK and the threat to infrastructures, there is also the worry that consumers will lose confidence in the digital economy as criminals exploit online vulnerabilities. As small business owners we all need to play our part to protect ourselves and the wider business community.

What can I do to protect my business and clients?

The important thing is to engage with us, we can carry out a full review of your current arrangements and help you assess your current cyber risk.

Insurers are investing heavily in training and technology to keep pace with the changing risks and are providing a wealth of useful help and guidance on how to minimise cyber risk. We have access to these resources and can help you to create and implement a plan within your business.

What risks do I need to consider?

It is easy to focus on the obvious areas of cyber vulnerability such as client data held on servers, or data collected during online payments. One area of increasing worry is mobile phones.

With mobile phones having advanced capabilities and peoples relatively lax approach to security they are becoming an attractive target for attackers.



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What steps can I take to protect my mobile phone?

There are a large number of things that can help. Here are just a few;

- When choosing a mobile phone consider its security features. Can it encrypt? Can the provider remotely wipe the device? Can you remotely delete apps? What authentication features does it have such as passwords?
- Limit exposure of your mobile phone number; think carefully before posting your mobile phone number to a public website. Attackers can use software to collect mobile phone numbers from the web and then use those numbers to target attacks.
- Carefully consider what information you want stored on the device. Remember that with enough time, sophistication, and access to the device, any attacker could obtain your stored information.
- Set Bluetooth-enabled devices to non-discoverable. When in discoverable mode, your Bluetooth-enabled devices are visible to other nearby devices, which may alert an attacker or infected device to target you. When in non-discoverable mode, your Bluetooth-enabled devices are invisible to other unauthenticated devices.

Our advice to you is to make sure you are fully aware of the risks that a cyber-attack could present to your business. We can help you to carry out a full risk assessment. Contact us today for this or any help or advice regarding your cyber-insurance arrangements.

www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38964996

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Ditch the duvet day

February saw the arrival of “National Sickie Day”. The first Monday in February is statistically the day that people are most likely to call in sick * with cold, flu or food poisoning being the most popular excuses. Whilst the odd “duvet day” might not seem like too much of an issue for a single employee, combined they can make a huge impact on the bottom line of a business and on the UK economy as a whole. According to Occupational Business Management (OHBM) in 2013, 131 million working days were lost due to sickness – an average of 4.4 per employee. In 2014 the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development reported that the total annual UK cost of sickness absence was in the region of £29 billion. **

What is the answer?

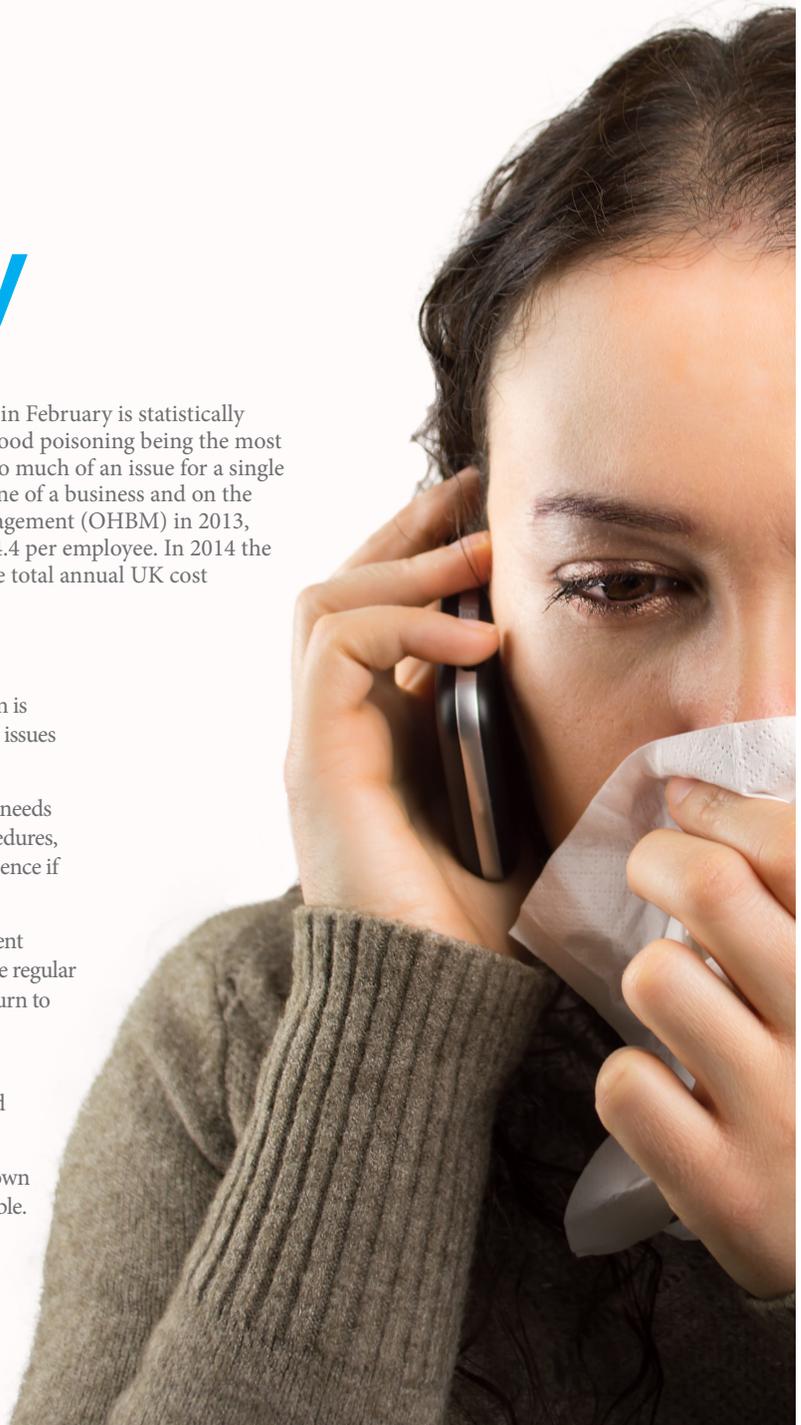
It is possible to manage sickness absence effectively, and often prevention is better than cure. Putting the right policies in place will allow you to spot issues and offer support. Consider the following:

- In the first instance, a robust sickness absence management policy needs to be in place. This includes absence reporting and recording procedures, applied equally to all of your staff. You cannot manage sickness absence if you do not record it.
- The frequency and methods of contact between you and your absent employee should be agreed between all parties. You should propose regular reviews to discuss the individual’s progress, problems and their return to work plans.
- Return to work interviews are a really good practice, talk to your employee about any concerns they may have about recurrence, and steps you can take to help prevent this.
- Help to support your staff and encourage them to look after their own health and wellbeing by promoting a healthier lifestyle when possible.

By having a fair, transparent and robust policy for dealing with sickness absence and encouraging good communication across your company you should find that the National Sickie Day doesn’t leave you yearning for your bed!

* www.itv.com/news/central/2016-02-01/employers-braced-for-national-sickie-day/

** www.hr magazine.co.uk/article-details/how-to-manage-recurring-sickness-absence#sthash.e5MOQEwY.dpuf



Ogden Rate Change

There has been a lot in the press recently about the change in the Personal Injury Discount Rate, sometimes known as the Ogden rate; this has been reduced from 2.5% to - 0.75% with effect from March 2017.

What is the Ogden Rate?

The discount rate has been traditionally applied to lump-sum payments made by insurance companies to claimants following injuries sustained in motor accidents, accidents suffered at work or on another’s premises. The thinking behind this is that the claimant is receiving a large lump sum payment which they could invest to receive future investment earnings. There is a concern that this leads to victims being overcompensated.

Because investment returns in recent years have been low, the reduction in the discount rate reflects the fact that claimants will receive less on their invested lump sum. As the rate has changed to a negative figure insurers will have to top-up their settlements.

How will this affect insurance customers?

As it stands, it’s unclear exactly how much the cost of some insurance might be affected by this change. The Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond will be meeting with representatives of the insurance industry to assess the impact of the rate change and there will be a consultation before Easter to consider options for reform.

If you would like to talk to us in more detail about how these changes might affect you and your insurances then please contact us today.

Drones – Soaring in popularity



The skies over Britain are already very busy with helicopters, birds and planes, but there is a relatively new sight, small craft zipping about; not UFO's ...but UAV's or drones. These unmanned devices are everywhere and they can do everything - from saving lives to delivering pizza. But as they have taken off in popularity, the number of problems associated with drones is also on the rise.

- In April 2016 the police launched an investigation after a drone crashed into a British Airways jet over Heathrow in what is believed to be the first case of its kind. The pilot of the BA727 flight from Geneva, carrying 132 passengers and five crew members, reported to police that the front of the aircraft had been struck by the unmanned object shortly before it landed, the aircraft landed intact without any permanent damage.*
- The number of reported near-misses between drones and planes is on the rise. In the first four months of 2016, there were 15 reported near-misses, according to a Freedom of Information request.*

However it is not all bad news, drones have the potential to transform the world for the better. In the UK, the emergency services have started to use them to help people in danger, insurance companies are using them to assist in assessing claims and the defence industry is exploring how drones can improve security.

Around the world, wildlife conservationists are embracing the technology to monitor animals and any potential threats against them by using drones.

Drones are so popular now that the Civil Aviation Authority has developed a drone code; here are some of the main pointers;

The Drone Code

- Keep your drone within your line of sight and at a maximum height of 400ft (122m)
- Make sure your drone is within 500m from you horizontally
- Always fly your drone well away from aircraft, helicopters, airports and airfields
- If fitted with a camera, a drone must be flown at least 50m away from a person, vehicle, building or structure not owned or controlled by the pilot.
- Camera-equipped drones must not be flown within 150m of a congested area or large group of people, such as a sporting event or concert

Contact us today for help and advice on arranging insurance for your drone.

www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2016/04/18/drone-laws-in-the-uk--what-are-the-rules

News In Brief

Harsher penalties for drivers using mobile phones

Don't forget the new penalties for using a mobile phone whilst driving. On 1st March this year the government introduced new, harsher penalties for those caught using a handheld phone in a car, the fixed penalty has doubled to a £200 fine and six points on your licence. First-time offenders will not be able to take a remedial training course. Recently-qualified motorists' licences are revoked when they accumulate six points, and HGV drivers can face the same sanction.

If you have employees who drive as part of their role, then ensure that they are fully aware of the law, more information can be found here www.gov.uk/using-mobile-phones-when-driving-the-law.



“ Some people in football see talented European footballers making the move to China for big wages as a lack of ambition.”

China Crisis – A threat to Premier League dominance?

It can sometimes feel like China is taking over the world, one industry at a time and football is no exception. Chinese President Xi Jinping has a golden vision for football in his country which is driving the Super League revolution. He has set out a ten-year plan, running from 2015 – 2025, to double the size of the Chinese sports economy to more than £600 billion. His plan is to turn China into a superpower in the sport, capable of qualifying for, hosting and then winning the World Cup (China are currently 86th in the Fifa world rankings between Armenia and Gabon*) This may have seemed to the rest of the world at the time like an outrageous goal, but fast forward two years and suddenly it doesn't seem so far -fetched.

Big money signings

The world started to pay serious attention to the Chinese Super League during last January's transfer window after the Chinese transfer record was broken three times in the space of ten days when Jiangsu Suning paid Shakhtar Donetsk £38.4m for Alex Teixeira, having signed Ramires from Chelsea for £25m and seen Guangzhou up the ante with a £31m deal for Jackson Martinez from Atletico Madrid.

The trend continued with Shanghai SIPG's £52m acquisition of Oscar from Chelsea and Carlos Tevez's £71m move to Shanghai Shenhua.

Super investments for the Super Clubs

Because of the President Jinping's ambition to become a super power the companies who own the 16 clubs in the Chinese super league see investment as a way to gain favour with the government. Although China's plan to become the world's best footballing nation has many flaws, it is attracting fans in large numbers and large scale investment in academies will improve Chinese football at the grass roots level.

There has been much hype recently in the British media that China will steal all of Europe's brightest talent, luring players away with outrageous pay deals. But before we panic that our premier league squads will be picked over and left barren we should remember the recent rule change regarding the number of foreign players allowed. Previously the rule was 4+1, four foreigners of any nationality plus one Asian player in a matchday squad.

Teams will now also be required to name two Chinese players aged under 23 in their matchday squads, with at least one in the starting eleven. This of course has a major impact on the value of domestic players and it will take a few years before such market imperfections are ironed out.

Some people in football see talented European footballers making the move to China for big wages as a lack of ambition, but these moves to "retirement leagues" are not the career enders they once might have been. Football scouting systems and media is now a global business, players do not drop off the radar, and in fact the attention the Chinese super league is attracting right now is increasingly putting them in the spotlight.

So while none of us really expects China to be hosting or winning the World Cup anytime soon, they are proving that in football as in business and industry when they turn their attention, and wealth to something their impact on it is difficult to ignore.

www.fifa.com/fifa-world-ranking/ranking-table/men/index.html



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