

Forensic and Expert Witness Services

Services Directory 2023

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finch-consulting.com



Welcome to the Finch Forensic and Expert Witness Services Directory.

Here you will find information about our forensic and expert areas practice, as well as about our experts.



Dr Richard Brown
Head of Service

We have repeatedly shown that we have the intellectual rigour and approach needed to confidently opine on contentious civil, commercial and regulatory matters. Our experts (pp. 04–13) are not only trained to the highest levels to deal with complexity and apply analytical methods, but frequently they practice as consultants in industry – our people really do experience what “*current*”, “*normal*” or “*typical*” is.

We provide outstanding expert witness services to clients in the legal, insurance, industrial and financial sectors. Our reputation as leading providers of litigation support has grown and developed over almost three decades. We employ and work with outstanding scientists, engineers, health and safety specialists and ex-regulators.

Not all specialisms are detailed here, and we would be happy to discuss your specific needs with you. To give a flavour of our range of expertise, we have selected a few case studies of the more unusual or challenging matters we have dealt with (pp. 14–20).

Do please get in touch about anything you feel we may be able to help with. Our talented support team (p. 5) will assist you and identify the Finch expert that will be an ideal fit.

Dr Richard Brown

Our expert offering

Workplace Health & Safety

Industrial Injury & Diseases

- Machinery and workplace transport injuries
- Hazardous substances & biological exposures (e.g. Asbestos, lead, silica, solvents, welding fume, mould, wood dust, etc)
- Falls and falling object injuries
- Musculoskeletal Disorders
- Noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL)
- Vibration injury (HAVS, CTS, Whole body)
- Acoustic Injury

Safety Management & Compliance

- Health and safety management systems
- Health, safety and risk management
- Major hazards (COMAH)
- Construction safety (CDM)

Engineering

- Mechanical engineering
- Electrical engineering & electrical safety
- Control/instrumentation engineering
- Process safety engineering
- Civil / structural engineering
- Construction and engineering arbitration and dispute

Recent Instructions which illustrate the breadth of expertise include:

- Leisure & entertainment
- Agriculture
- Healthcare
- Pharmaceutical
- Education
- Vulnerable persons
- Assault, stress & bullying
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Our highly experienced Finch Experts and Support Team



Expert Service Support Team



Liz Aitken

Liz joined the company in 1997 and has previous administrative experience in the health, banking and mining industries. She provides administrative support for Experts Morag McWilliam, Stephen Cowley, Simon Hardy and Martin Stear.



Jade Carter

Jade joined the company in 2008 supporting Finch in an administration role. Jade expanded her skills to work with the Noise and Vibration team, organising their work schedules and providing administrative support on the production of expert witness reports.



Sylvie Wright

Sylvie joined Finch in 2021 and provides administrative support for Experts, Dom Barraclough, Steve Bennett, Richard Brown, Richard Hoyle, Tristan Pulford, Angelica Rutherford-Hacon, Paul Wood, Martin White and Amanda Trimble.



Glenis Wykes

Glenis joined the company in 1994 and has previous experience in the mining industry. She is semi-retired and now works with the Noise and Vibration team, transcribing dictation and formatting expert witness reports.



Eur Ing Dom Barraclough

BEng(Hons) MSc CEng FIMechE FIMMM MIET FIAgrE AWES

Expertise

- Industrial and commercial product design
- Machinery, plant and equipment safety and use
- Agricultural and construction plant and equipment design and identification
- Domestic/Industrial/Commercial Electrical & Plumbing Systems
- Appliance and Electrical Fires/Faults
- Electro-mechanical engineering

Profile:

A Chartered Engineer with European Registration with some 30 years industrial experience in engineering design, manufacture, application, fault finding, commissioning and installation. Dom won the WT Parker prize for electronics, has an honours degree in Agricultural Engineering, and a Masters degree in Mechatronics. He has wide practical experience of consumer goods design, M&E (plumbing and electrical systems), plant and equipment design, materials handling, physical and fire security products, in sectors including agriculture, automotive, manufacturing, mining, and construction. Dom is also trained to the Wiring Regulations for Inspection, Test and Certification. He has wide experience of investigations into product failures, including electrical fires, plumbing systems, large and small plant and equipment. He has been instructed as an expert witness over 200 times, including in police actions, HSE prosecutions, and technical and personal injury civil matters. Dom has given evidence and receives regular training, including Bond Solon courses in Civil Law and Procedure, Excellence in Report Writing and Courtroom Skills.



Stephen Bennett

BEng (Hons) CEng MIET FS Eng (TÜV Rheinland)

Expertise

- Domestic & Industrial
- Electrical wiring
- Industrial Engineering
- Electrical Engineering
- Machinery Safety
- Control Systems
- Electrical Fires (Domestic & Industrial)
- Appliance Fires/Faults
- Electric Shock
- Risk Assessments
- Low voltage electrical distribution
- Electrical Inspection & Testing
- Control & Automation
- PUWER
- CE Machinery Directive
- Electricity at Work Regulations
- IET 18th Edition Wiring Regulations

Profile:

A Chartered Electrical Engineer with over 30 years' experience in electrical distribution, machinery control and safety applications. This includes the design, installation, commissioning, inspection and testing of LV electrical distribution systems in industrial and domestic applications.

Stephen has extensive experience in the design of machinery control and safety systems using: programmable logic controllers (PLC's); variable speed inverter and servo drives; and human machine interfaces (HMI's). He is also experienced in the compliance assessment and application of the CE Machinery Directive, PUWER and electrical statutory compliance legislation, and the application of EU harmonised machinery standards.

Steve has over 25 years experience as an electrical engineer in industry, having acted as electrical chargehand and UK Electrical Engineering Manager (Principal duty holder). Immediately prior to joining Finch, Steve held the role of Head of the Electrical Department at Abacus Lighting with wide ranging responsibilities for multimillion pound floodlighting systems. This role involved world wide travel and included extremely prestigious projects such as: Lords MCC cricket ground London; hockey and tennis courts at the London 2012 Olympic games; Faldo Golf Course Dubai and the Manuka Oval in Canberra Australia.

Steve has also authored expert reports on behalf of both Claimant and Defendant in more than 40 instructions, in matters involving electrical fires, electric shock and electrical flash-over injury, machinery safety and faulty goods. He has also undertaken Bond Solon courses in Civil Law and Procedure, which cover Excellence in Report Writing and Courtroom Skills.



Dr Richard Brown

PhD MSc PgCert FS Eng C. Build E CMABE CMIOSH EurOSHM MIET FEWI

Expertise

- Human Factors (Culture and Behavioural Safety)
- Work at Height and Falling Objects
- Workplace Transport
- Construction Safety (inc. CDM)
- Safety Management Systems
- Incident investigation

Profile:

A Chartered Health and Safety Practitioner, and Chartered Building Engineer with over 25 years' experience in health and safety. Richard has particular experience in heavy manufacturing (metals and paper), power generation (coal and gas), construction and logistics. He has been awarded a PhD for research into the efficacy of safety culture and behavioural safety programmes in industry and regularly provides expert opinion, having acted for both prosecution and defence in criminal matters, defendant and claimant in civil matters and acts as an expert in construction arbitration. He holds the Cardiff University Bond Solon Certificates in both criminal and civil law.

Richard provides consulting advice to a range of clients and advises on occupational safety and process safety issues. Richard is an experienced and qualified HAZOP chair and scribe. He has completed his Post Graduate Certificate in Process Engineering.

Richard has appeared in a number of high profile health and safety prosecutions recently. These include being instructed as: an expert for the prosecution by Reading Borough Council in the successful prosecution of Arcadia/Topman/Topshop and Stoneforce; appearing as an expert for the three defendants (D) in the matter of R v Hawkins, Dixon & MPM North West Ltd. D1 and D2 being prosecuted for Gross Negligence Manslaughter (GNM). On the charge of GNM, the judge ruled that there was no case to answer.



Dr Stephen Cowley

PhD, BSc (Hons) (OHS) MSc (Occ Hyg) GCert(Ed) CMIOSH AFOH

Expertise

- Health and Safety Management Systems
- Incident Investigation
- Training & Education
- Workplace Traffic Management
- Machinery Safety
- Manual Handling & Musculoskeletal Disorders
- Asbestos and Other Substances Hazardous to Health
- Occupational Hygiene & PPE

Profile:

For over 30 years, Stephen has provided health and safety advice in sectors ranging from mining and heavy manufacturing to food, electronics, pharmaceuticals, service industries and government. He regularly provides expert opinion on both civil and criminal matters including both traumatic injury events and occupational disease, and also provides advice as a consultant on a wide range of safety and occupational hygiene matters.

Stephen's PhD research focussed on the marketing of health and safety solutions to decision-makers, linking a special interest in occupation disease to broader health and safety management. His research has also been funded and undertaken in industries ranging from mining to manufacturing, health, farming, thoroughbred horse racing and the emergency services.

Stephen's input to undergraduate and postgraduate OHS programs was previously through academic appointment, but continues by through acting as a visiting lecturer in both the UK and Australia.



Simon Alexander-Hardy

Domestic / Commercial / Industrial Gas Engineer

Expertise

- CPA1 Combustion Performance Analysis
- CCN1 Domestic Natural Gas Safety
- CKR1 Gas Cookers
- HTR1 Gas Fires and Heaters
- WAT1 Instantaneous Water Heaters
- CEN1 Central Heating Boilers <70 kw
- ICPN1 Commercial Pipework >35 mm
- TPCP1A Test and Purge – UP/1A & UP/1
- CIGA1 Indirect Fired Heating Appliances
- CORT1 Overhead Radiant Heaters
- CODC1 Changeover Domestic – Catering
- CODATA1 Changeover Domestic to Commercial Catering
- CODNCO1 Changeover Domestic – Commercial Heating
- COMCAT1 Catering Appliance Group 1
- COMCAT2 Catering Appliance Group 2
- CDGA1 Direct Fired Heating Appliances
- Worcester Bosch Ground Source and Air to Water Pumps Accredited
- Ferrnox System Analysis Trained Engineer
- Ferroli Service Engineer
- Worcester Bosch Accredited Installer

Profile:

A Gas Safe registered gas engineer with 26 years' experience in domestic, commercial, and industrial gas engineering and maintenance. Simon studied at Basford Hall, Nottingham, gaining level 1,2,3,4 NVQ in gas engineering. He regularly provides expert opinion, having acted for both claimant and defendants in civil matters.

Simon has worked for and alongside industry leading manufacturers and is currently studying to become an assessor of gas engineers within the industry. He also continues to run his own successful gas engineering company, which provides installation, maintenance, and servicing of all types of gas appliances and systems.



Paul Wood

MEng (Hons) CEng MIMechE MIAM

Expertise

- Asset Management
- Mechanical Engineering
- Marine Engineering
- Plant and workshop machinery design, installation, operation and failure investigation.

Profile:

Paul is a Chartered Mechanical Engineer with over 15 years of experience as a leader in heavy industry. Having worked in the steel and maritime sectors he has a broad range of experience which includes plant maintenance, asset management, project management, hazardous environments, budget control, people management and leading a group-wide SAP EAM implementation. Paul's key expertise lies in plant maintenance and asset management, having excelled in a range of related roles in this area. With experience in all areas of the asset lifecycle, from concept design through to installation, commissioning, operation, maintenance (including failure investigation) and refurbishment activities.

Paul applies this wealth of knowledge and experience in his consultancy role but also during expert instructions when undertaking inspection or producing reports to explain complex situations in an easy-to-understand format.

Responsibility for multimillion pound OPEX and CAPEX budgets has given Paul an excellent financial grounding and Paul is adept at working with executive leadership team.

A professional yet approachable person, Paul is always happy to help understand a problem, identify root cause and to develop practical solutions to get things back on track.

Having led multi-disciplined engineering teams he is able to adapt his approach to suit any situation.



Richard Hoyle

BEng(Hons) IEng MSOE MBES MIMMM

Expertise

- Product Liability/Mechanical/Materials Failures
- Incident Investigation & Reconstruction
- Mechanical Engineering & General Health & Safety
- Lifting Equipment, Operations, Machinery, Accessories
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Risk Assessments
- General Health and Safety
- PUWER, PSSR and Associated Statutory Inspections
- Forensic Incident Investigation and Failure Analysis
- CE marking and Risk Assessment for Machinery Safety, Design Considerations and Testing

Profile:

A consultant incorporated engineer with approximately 15 years of forensic engineering experience, ranging from collision and incident reconstruction, mechanical/materials failures of domestic items to large lifting machines, investigations into product liability and safety across the leisure, manufacturing and distribution industry, as well as design and testing review under the Machinery Directive (CE marking).

Richard has 8 years' experience of conducting Statutory Inspections under LOLER, PUWER and PSSR including, 1000 tonne cranes, air pressure plants, onshore wind turbines (2.3 MW) – associated lifting, access/rescue equipment and pressure plant, forklift trucks, theatre equipment, and hydraulic and traction passenger/goods lifts. He has conducted expert witness work across all levels of Court in the UK, Northern Ireland, Eire and Bermuda.

Richard has also undertaken the Bond Solon courtroom skills course in Civil Law and Procedure, which cover Excellence in Report Writing and Courtroom Skills..



Morag McWilliam

BSc (Hons) CMFOH Dip Occ Hyg CMIOSH DipHE

Expertise

- Exposure assessment and control of chemical, physical and biological agents.
- Selection, use and management of Personal Protective Equipment.
- Health and safety regulation and enforcement.
- Occupational hygiene, health and safety management system development and implementation.
- Training development and delivery

Profile:

Morag McWilliam holds the Diploma of Professional Competence in Occupational Hygiene, and is a Chartered Member of both the Faculty of Occupational Hygiene (CMFOH) and the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (CMIOSH).

She has over 30 years of practical experience in occupational hygiene and workplace health and safety gathered through working in a diverse range of UK public and global private sector industries. Morag has significant experience in the pharmaceutical industry where she worked at Corporate level establishing and maintaining occupational hygiene programmes at sites in the Europe, the Middle East and Africa regions (EMEA).

She has developed and implemented occupational hygiene management systems for a number of different Blue Chip companies at different locations in both the UK and EMEA regions. She has also developed and implemented novel and potent compound handling programmes, and been the subject matter expert for pre and post-acquisition, Corporate and regulatory compliance audits.

More recently, Morag has worked as one of HM Specialist Inspectors in occupational hygiene for HSE where she provided occupational hygiene support to colleagues in the wider HSE and other government departments. She also undertook regulatory and enforcement activities. Morag has provided expert witness opinion in a number of asbestos-related claims. She has completed the training and assessments necessary to be awarded the Cardiff University Bond Solon Expert Witness Certificate (Civil Law).



Tristan Pulford

CEng MEng (Hons) FS Eng (TÜV) MIMechE

Expertise

- Incident Investigation
- Pressure Systems and Pressure Vessels
- Explosive Atmospheres and Explosions
- Work at Height and Falling Objects
- Workplace Transport
- Construction Safety (inc. CDM)
- Safety Management Systems
- Workshop and Powered Tooling

Profile:

A Chartered Mechanical Engineer with over 9 years' experience in Engineering compliance and health and safety in oil and gas, heavy manufacturing (metals and glass), power generation, construction and workplace transport. Tristan regularly provides expert opinions and reports, in both criminal and civil matters. He is an active consultant, providing advice to a range of industries and sectors, from process safety to machinery safety issues. As such, he has a wide knowledge of many regulations and standards that cover a wide array of industries.

Tristan has also undertaken Bond Solon courses in Civil Law and Procedure, which cover Excellence in Report Writing and Courtroom Skills.



Angelica Rutherford-Hacon

BEng(Hons) MSc PgD CEng MICE CMIOSH MInstLM MWES

Expertise

- Incident Investigation
- Work at Height and Falling Objects
- Workplace Transport
- Construction Safety (including CDM)
- Temporary Works Management
- Safety Management Systems
- Work Place Stress
- Culture and Behavioural Safety
- H&S Regulation and Enforcement

Profile:

Angelica is a Chartered Civil Engineer and Chartered Health and Safety Practitioner with over 25 years' experience in health and safety. Angelica has particular experience in the construction industry having previously worked as a Civil Engineer for Tier 1 Principal Contractors managing construction works dealing with working at height, safety management systems, workplace transport etc all of these topics applicable to all other industries. She previously worked as a HM Specialist Inspector of Health and Safety for the UK Regulator. Undertaking forensic analysis of fatal and serious accidents in construction and other industries, providing expert evidence for prosecutions in Magistrates, Crown, Coroners and Tribunal Courts on behalf of the Crown and others. She has previously successfully taken and delivered her own prosecution in Magistrates Court for a fall from a fragile roof.

At Finch Consulting Angelica assists in defence criminal matters and claimants in civil matters. In addition to Expert work Angelica provides consulting advice to clients on a wide range of Health and Safety issues and holds a BSI 45001 Internal auditors certification to audit Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems.

Angelica has a very detailed knowledge of technical publications, guidance, codes of practice, regulations and standards relating to a wide range of industries.

Angelica received Expert Witness training on report writing and courtroom skills having followed a Health and Safety Executive Regulatory course at the University of Warwick .



Martin Stear

BSc DipOH FFOH

Expertise

- Asbestos Disease/Exposure
- Occupational Safety & Environmental Hygiene

Profile:

Martin is a fully qualified occupational hygienist (Diploma of Professional Competence), with over 30 years' experience. He spent 10 years with the National Occupational Hygiene Services Ltd (NOHS), based in Manchester, where he gained experience of all areas of occupational hygiene with regards to the assessment and control of exposure to hazardous substances. This included extensive experience of all practical areas of asbestos from sampling to the management of major removal contracts.

In 1993, He joined HSE as a Specialist Inspector (Occupational Hygiene) and was promoted to Principal Specialist Inspector in 1997. He headed the Organic Chemicals and Asbestos section and gained extensive experience developing national risk management strategies aimed at reducing risks to health in various industry sectors. Throughout this work Martin has represented HSE nationally and internationally, developing workable and often innovative solutions, aimed at reducing workplace risks. Key areas of work have included solvents, coating powders, metalworking fluids in the engineering industry, cytotoxic drugs and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, amongst many others. With regards to asbestos he provided technical expertise to all parts of HSE, other government departments and ministers, as well as sitting on various joint industry liaison groups and committees.

He provided technical expertise to the development of legislation and has authored various guidance documents on asbestos. He left HSE in 2004 and has since provided expertise to companies on all areas of occupational hygiene, including advising clients on asbestos management and compliance with Regulation 4 of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006. He has acted as an expert for the Court with regards to asbestos incidents, surveying practice and cases of asbestos related diseases.



Amanda Trimble

BA (Hons) PG Dip (Occupational Health and Safety)

Expertise

- Incident Investigation
- Violence and Aggression
- Stress at Work
- Risk Assessment and Management of Challenging Behaviour
- Health and Safety with Vulnerable Clients in Schools, Charities and Healthcare
- Safety Management Systems

Profile:

An ex. HSE Inspector with over 25 years' experience in health and safety, Amanda's particular specialisms are public sector employees, charities, and healthcare. She has provided expert opinion on local authority stress cases and cases of assault on healthcare workers.

Amanda is a rounded professional with experience in schools, special education settings, and elderly care, as well as a range of local authority provision, including Estates, Leisure and Grounds Maintenance.

Amanda has undertaken Bond Solon courses in Civil Law and Procedure, which cover Excellence in Report Writing and Courtroom Skills. She also provides consultancy services within her specialist areas..



Timothy Ward

BSc (Hons) FIOA

Expertise

- Engineering evidence on;
 - Noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL)
 - Hand arm vibration syndrome (HAVS)
 - Vibration related Carpal Tunnel Syndrome
 - Whole body vibration injuries
 - Acoustic Injury
- Machinery safety and compliance (noise, vibration)
- Occupational noise risk management
- Occupational vibration risk management
- Safety signs and warning signals (acoustic signals)

Profile:

A Consultant with over 30 years' of professional experience in noise, vibration and other health and safety matters. Timothy is a former HM Principal Specialist Inspector (Noise and Vibration) with the Health and Safety Executive (1999 to 2012). His employment experience includes technical specialist, regulatory, research and consultancy roles.

Timothy has extensive knowledge and experience of assessment, control and management of risks from occupational noise and vibration, as well as the development and interpretation of regulations, guidance and benchmarks for good practice. He also has a wealth of experience in the measurement and assessment of noise, hand-arm vibration and whole-body vibration exposures. He works as a specialist investigator and provider of specialist opinion.

Timothy has also undertaken Bond Solon courses in Civil Law and Procedure, which cover Excellence in Report Writing and Courtroom Skills.



Martin White

MIET FSEng (TÜV SÜD) Assoc CIPD

Expertise

- Electrical Engineering
- Machinery Directive and PUWER Conformity
- Control Systems
- Training design and delivery
- Health and Safety
- Functional Safety

Profile:

Martin has worked as an electrical and automation engineer for over 20 years and held a variety of roles in commissioning, design and maintenance of automated systems, high level language programming and technical support. These roles have taken Martin all around the world and helped him develop a practical problem-solving approach, to complement his in-depth regulatory and compliance knowledge. He began working in machinery safety full time in 2015.

His recent professional experience includes international delivery of machinery safety training courses of various complexity levels, from the shop floor up to board level. He has also carried out assessments of conformity with the requirements of the Machinery Directive 2006/42/EU, Low Voltage Directive 2014/35/EU and the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER) for single machines, as well as large complex assemblies of machinery. Martin has also written several articles on machinery safety and in 2018 became involved in the development of British and EN standards through BSI by joining the BSI MCE/3 committee which oversees safeguarding of machinery and in 2021 was appointed to the technical committee of the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) which develops the main electrical safety standard IEC 60204-1.

Martin qualified as a trainer with awards from the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development in 2001 and City & Guilds in 2002. Since that time Martin has delivered training to a variety of groups such as police, local authority, charities and clients.



Jon Ruddock

MBA CEng MIET

Expertise

- Engineering management across critical national defence infrastructure in peace and conflict.
- Safety policy, process and management systems.
- The application and interpretation of health and safety legislation and guidance in leisure parks and on fairgrounds as well as in other parts of the industry.

Profile:

Jon Ruddock is a chartered engineer with over 6 years' experience of creating, reviewing and managing leisure industry safety schemes relating to the competence of people and the physical safety of equipment.

He has written national policy guidelines and procedures based upon the health and safety legislation, guidance and best practice in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. He is currently responsible for the vetting, selection, auditing and continual monitoring of leisure industry inspection bodies and their inspectors involved in the annual technical inspection of some of the most significant leisure equipment in the UK.

He is a standing member of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) chaired Fairgrounds Joint Advisory Committee (FJAC) and the British Association of Leisure Parks, Piers and Attractions (BALPPA) Health & Safety Committee. He has been invited to contribute to the imminent review of the HSE guidance document Health and Safety Guidance (HSG) 175 - 'Fairgrounds and amusement parks: guidance on safe practice'.

Prior to his involvement with leisure safety, for 26 years he was an engineering manager and leader in the Royal Air Force (RAF). At various times throughout his RAF career, he was responsible for the H&S and engineering management of over 100 personnel. His final appointment in the RAF was as the Chief Air Engineers (CAE) Warrant Officer responsible for advising on the risk management, H&S and engineering management of all military aircraft and engineering personnel (c15,000).

**Read a selection
of case studies
from our
diverse offering**



Noise-Induced Hearing Loss and Morticians

Finch consultants visit a diverse range of business premises in the course of their work. Frequently this is to gather information, or to see an accident site for the preparation of an expert report. On one occasion, our expert would have been happy to forego the visit and just write a desktop report.

The Claimant, in this particular case, had previously worked in a mortuary, where he operated a small surgical drill. Through examination, a doctor confirmed that he was suffering from NIHL and he alleged that this was due to the noise exposure from the surgical drill, which he had used for many hours every day over the course of several years, cutting through the skulls and bones of corpses in various stages of decay.



Engaging Finch at an Early Stage

Finch was involved with a large food and beverage company in Europe, which were expanding their manufacturing capacity by adding an additional two lines and modifying a further line. This was done with the aim of allowing increased output, as well as some flexibility in terms of ingredient mix. Finch was involved from the Design review stage and helped to identify key risks, specifically during the integration between different manufacturers, and potential process hazards.

This allowed the company to communicate back to the manufacturer the changes required, which meant that when the machinery was installed on-site, they had fewer changes to make. Finch undertook an assessment on-site and found the installation was to a good standard and the functional safety, and guarding recommended had been added. Engaging Finch at an early stage saved the company thousands of pounds as well as allowing the machinery to operate a lot sooner than it otherwise would have.



Falling Koalas

A small national park in Australia had become surrounded by farmland, thereby preventing a growing population of koalas from moving on to other areas of forest. Researchers had identified that there would be insufficient food if numbers were not managed and so koalas had to be captured and relocated through human intervention. Koala catching was certainly a more unusual assignment for one of our Finch Senior Consultants, who travelled to the other side of the world to conduct a risk assessment and develop a safety management system for this important conservation project.

The project, lasting several weeks each year, involved a team of people moving through the park to identify koalas hidden in the trees, then coax them down and into large carry crates that could be lifted onto the back of pick-up trucks and transported to other locations. It goes without saying that the hazards and risk controls were unusual and largely unique. For example, walking while looking up at the trees was a hazard in itself – the park surrounds a volcano that had recently, in geological terms, become extinct, so the landscape was strewn with rough, sharp volcanic rock that could easily be tripped over, resulting in injury. Leeches were also prevalent in the undergrowth, as well as venomous

snakes. As if that wasn't enough, Koalas have sharp claws, which they use to grip while climbing and to defend themselves when threatened, and can become very aggressive when agitated.

Overall, the method was to attempt to persuade each koala to come down from a tree by annoying it with a little flag attached to a long pole, which was shaken in front of its face. However, sometimes that didn't work and someone would need to climb the tree to engage the koala up-close. The problem was that, not only did this create a fall risk for the climber, but it also created a fall risk for the koala, and so the remainder of the team needed to hold out a stretched sheet of canvas, ready to catch the animal if it fell. Falling koalas presented a risk in themselves!

During the first day of our consultant being on-site, the project had to be abandoned owing to the outbreak of bushfire. However, once the fire had been safely extinguished the work was able to be completed, the risk management strategies and work procedures proved successful and, most importantly, no animals were harmed in the making of the safety management system.



Polar Safety

Many countries send teams of scientists to their respective territories in the Antarctic to undertake a wide range of research programmes. Some travel to and from the continent within a single season, but others “over-winter” and head for home during the following summer.

The scientists not only require accommodation, but also fixed and mobile laboratories, over-snow transport, boats, ice drills and all manner of camping equipment. To meet the diverse needs of an operational research base, large numbers of support personnel are also required, ranging from chefs, plumbers and electricians to diesel mechanics, forklift truck drivers and communication technicians. All equipment and personnel – known as “expeditioners”, have to be transported to the continent and brought back, along with all their waste, most often by ship.

One Finch Senior Consultant and a colleague were asked to undertake a root and branches review of the health and safety management of one nation’s Antarctic operations. Having reviewed the written H&S Management System at head office, they joined a voyage south and headed out onto the ice to observe the system in operation, first-hand.

The two-week voyage through the Roaring Forties over the Christmas period ended with a scramble down a ladder into an amphibious vehicle and through the pack ice to a narrow stretch of rock where landing was possible.

An intense week of immersion in research station activities, including trips onto the ice cap – measuring whole-body vibration in the tracked vehicle on the way, participating with the piping of diesel fuel from ship to shore, observing laboratory practices, collecting asbestos samples from redundant buildings, and even washing dishes in the kitchen all provided a great insight to operations. The voyage home was also useful, as it provided opportunity for the Finch consultants to interview returning expeditioners, to verify and augment their observations.

There is no doubt that first-hand experience of the work and activities was invaluable and the health and safety management system was improved as a result. While it was an unusual assignment, with the work needing to be undertaken in such a unique environment, the hazards and the risk management strategies required were not entirely different from those in more conventional workplaces. Perhaps the risk of hitting an iceberg or falling into a crevasse being the only exceptions.



Hollywood Stunts

A Hollywood actor was injured on set whilst filming a stunt. The scene involved kicking through a pre-weakened wood wall to effect entry to a burning building.

A Finch safety expert provided expert opinion on instruction from the Claimant's legal team. The opinion indicated that the pre-weakening techniques utilised by the defendant were unsuitable and this had significantly contributed to the serious injury sustained by the actor. In addition to the serious injury, the actor lost significant income because of his incapacity and required many months of physical rehabilitation.



Fire Investigation

Finch was instructed to investigate the cause and origin of a fire on a Komatsu dump truck at a mine in Africa.

A Senior Consultant from Finch Consulting was instructed upon the request of the instructing Loss Adjuster.

Our Consultant made arrangements with the Insured for the site visit and identified critical people for witness statements and conducted a site visit on arriving into the country. The site visit was conducted in conjunction with the Insured's engineers to facilitate access and to progress the claim in a timely manner.

Finch conducted a thorough inspection of the incident dump truck and reviewed a similar truck to verify findings as main sections of the incident truck were damaged and many parts disintegrated.

On-board computer records and video evidence was also reviewed for completeness. The video evidence

showed that the fire started very slowly and then almost instantaneously spread, leading to the damage to the driver's cab located at the top of the dump truck.

Maintenance and operations check records were also verified with manufacturers recommendations to identify any issues. No issues were found.

The inspection and three witness statements were collated and completed within 1.5 days. The witness statement of the cab driver verified the findings further. One of the witness statements was taken from the dump truck driver, who's close proximity assisted in informing Finch's findings.

Cause of Failure

Finch discovered that the probable cause and origin of the failure was as a result of a rupture to the hydraulic brake hose that released under a pressure of 2500psi over the low-pressure exhaust pipes leading to the ignition of the brake hose fluid.



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