

Health and Safety Expert of the Year

Vincent Theobald-Vega - FIIRSM, FRSPH, CMIOSH, MISTR, EurOSHM, BSc, MSc, PgDip, Cert Ed (LLS)



About Vincent Theobald-Vega

Vincent is an expert witness and health and safety professional with over 27 years of experience. He started at the HSE, where he spent 10 years as a prosecuting inspector. Then he worked for another decade as a senior manager at a Russell Group University. He was head of health and safety, leading a team at Newcastle university and also providing services to several other universities. Now he is a free-lance safety professional, offering training, inspection, and expert witness advice to a host of different clients.

Vincent's experience spans a very wide range of health and safety specialisms. This includes research issues (including dealing with the unknown), construction (including building design), safety management, biological and chemical agents and laboratory safety, through to more normal production and maintenance matters.

Vincent's analytical acumen and field experience mean that he can determine the ultimate root causes of almost any kind of incident. And he has 'seen it all', finding the causes when others had given up, whether it was a trace amount of a by-product or an architectural mistake in the original plan of a building three refurbishments ago.

However, his problem solving approach is to look not only at what happened, but also what alternatives were actually possible. "Only when the whole range of options are appreciated can issues like 'reasonably practicable' be fully appreciated".

As an Inspector, Vincent prosecuted numerous times (including cases that ended in Crown Court), and was involved in the first case to lead to imprisonment for a health and safety offence. As a manager and consultant, Vincent has been involved in Civil and Criminal defence, including at Crown Court. Fortunately, most matters do not get to Court and the Expert role can be used to support dispute resolution, or proactively prepare for foreseeable eventualities, both by prevention and mitigation.

Case work

Significant cases covered in the last months have included:

- An examination of the risks from reversing vehicles in a high hazard environment where there had previously been fatalities.
- A fall from height case, involving the fall of a contractor who was not complying with the safe systems of work and acted in an unforeseen manner.
- A case where a member of the public was seriously injured having entered a construction site and fallen down a manhole.

Areas of work:

- Agriculture and Forestry
- Biological Safety and Laboratory Design
- Construction and Demolition
- Dangerous and Hazardous Chemicals
- Education and Research
- Fire prevention and Risk Assessment
- Genetically Modified Organisms
- Heights, Slips, Trips and Falls
- Industry and Manual Handling

Contact Details

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In each case the issues were made complex by the interaction of several superficially conflicting pieces of health and safety legislation. The key issues revolved about the reasonableness of risk assessments undertaken, and the foreseeability of the incidents involved.

Qualifications and Memberships

- Fellow of the International Institute of Risk and Safety Management
- Fellow of the Royal Society for Public Health
- Chartered Member of the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health
- Member of the Institute for Safety in Technology and Research
- European Occupational Safety and Health Manager
- Member of the Health and Safety Lawyers Association
- Associate Member of the Institute of Ergonomics