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IAEM Publishes *Health and Safety Standards for Irish Emergency Departments*

Consultants in Emergency Medicine have, for a number of years, been highlighting the inadequate environment in which patients are treated and staff obliged to work in Irish Emergency Departments (EDs). In March and April of 2005 the *Health and Safety Authority* undertook a risk assessment of Irish EDs and found glaring deficiencies. The recently published *Emergency Department Task Force Report* also confirms what the IAEM has been saying for a very long time, namely that the majority of Irish EDs are infrastructurally very deficient and many are not fit for purpose. Even where departments are fit for purpose the ongoing overcrowding of such departments is a source of very serious concern and has resulted in increased risks to both patients in EDs and medical, nursing and ancillary staff working in them.

In developing *Health and Safety Standards for Irish Emergency Departments* the IAEM has used international best practice and also consulted with the *Health and Safety Authority* and senior personnel within the Fire Service to ensure that such standards are appropriate and enforceable. Now that these standards exist, we expect the HSE to act quickly to ensure that deficiencies are addressed in a timely fashion. Where deficiencies continue, then the statutory enforcement agencies will need to take firm action up to and including prohibition orders. It is not acceptable that patients and staff continue to be exposed to unnecessary risks due to a lack of concerted action by the HSE. It is likewise unacceptable that ED staff should bear the brunt of public or legal criticism for circumstances that are, in the main, outside their control.