

MUTA, the trade association for the marquee and temporary structure industry, has called on the



government to lift red tape on marquee hire companies who face having to pay thousands of pounds for unnecessary training for workmen who drive their kit to and from worksites. The Association is strongly opposing any changes to an existing exemption for small businesses and has made its case clear in response to a government consultation on the Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (Driver CPC).

The Driver CPC is a requirement for drivers of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) and involves attending 35 hours of training over five years. There is currently an exemption for workmen who drive HGVs but not as the main part of their job. Many marquee erectors, particularly those who work for small businesses, will drive the frames and covers to site and then build the structures, and may therefore qualify for this exemption from compulsory training. In the Government consultation, the Driving Standards Agency suggests reforming the system of exemptions which has the potential to affect a greater number of small marquee hirers.

Tony Marsh, President of MUTA, said: “For many of our members, their vehicle drivers will spend most of their work erecting marquees with the rest of the crew. They already undertake separate training to ensure safe working practices in marquee erection. If all employees of a small company who drive an HGV were required to undertake Driver CPC, the cost of this would be disproportionately expensive and could severely impede the company’s economic viability.” John Bett, of Betts Marquees in Lincolnshire, said: “We work locally and on a seasonal basis and rarely go further than 30 miles from our base. Our three HGV licence holders have driven lorries for nearly 30 years, so being asked to fork out for five days of training is such a waste of time and money. It’s just more red tape from a government who are supposed to be cutting it!”

Meanwhile, MUTA held a marquee and inflatable safety seminar hosted by Coventry City Council recently. The seminar followed on from a similar event held in Durham in August, and was aimed primarily at local authority event organisers. 30 delegates representing 15 different local authorities attended the half day event. Attendees listened to a presentation from MUTA’s Health & Safety Officer, Chris O’Neil, who outlined MUTA and its nationally recognised safety schemes. MUTA member Kingsmead Marquees explained how a marquee is correctly installed,

referencing the onsite 9m frame tent and how event organisers can use the MUTA checklist to approve the structure on handover. Finally, using their demonstration bouncy castle, KLC Castles explained the safety aspects to look out for in the correct installation and operation of inflatable play equipment. All the presenters participated in animated question and answer sessions, and attendees received certificates which can be used towards Continuing Professional Development - MUTA has appointed two new members to the Executive Committee.

Keith Bishop of GL Snowdens and Lucy Henman of Henman Marquees were both elected at the MUTA AGM held at the end of June. Keith and Lucy replace Cameron Stewart of Field & Lawn and Ian Dawson of Kayospruce, who both stepped down. Commenting on the appointments, Tony Marsh, President of MUTA, said: "I am delighted to welcome Keith and Lucy to the MUTA Executive Committee. "They bring with them a great deal of experience and insight about the industry which will be invaluable as MUTA moves forward and continues to promote the highest standards and regulations across the industry. "Keith and Lucy's appointments allow us to keep the balance of large and small hirer representation on the Exec, something we see as crucial in ensuring we offer the best possible service to all MUTA members."