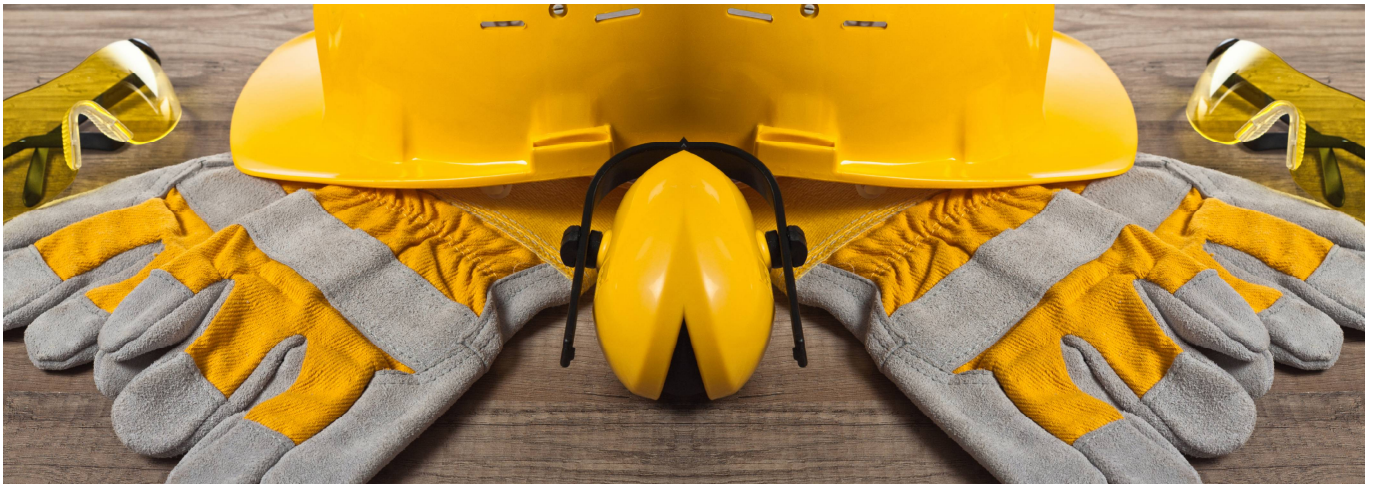




## Should robots have legal status?



- ▶ MEPs are currently debating laws on the use of robots in civilian settings following a draft report submitted to the European Parliament regarding the legal status of robots and the requirement for more extensive legislation in this area.
- ▶ The use of robots for military purposes and in factory production lines is now fairly common place. More recently, we have witnessed the next phase of robot technology in the form of Cobots; collaborative, lighter weight robots which work interactively alongside humans.
- ▶ One major advantage of robotics is that robots are able to enter situations which would put the health and safety of their human counterparts at risk. Police departments regularly employ robots to disarm bombs and enter unsafe buildings and the Liwa Sports Festival in Abu Dhabi has even utilised robots within the tradition of camel racing by using them as jockeys after the use of child jockeys was outlawed due to high injury rates.
- ▶ Although the use of robots has advantages in terms of efficiency and work rate, it also has notable health & safety implications in terms of how these machines can interact safely with humans. The risks that robots pose to the human workforce is an area which employers need to consider after robots were implicated in two deaths in car plants. In July 2015, a Volkswagen worker was killed by a robot in Germany after being struck in the chest during its installation. The following month another worker was killed by a robot at a car parts factory in India, the robot was welding a metal sheet when it struck a nearby worker with its welding sticks.
- ▶ The recent MEP debate identified issues including whether or not robots should be given legal status as 'electronic persons'; whether robots should be manufactured with a kill switch and the requirement for owners and manufacturers to take out insurance and retain liability over their robot.
- ▶ As we begin to accept the possibility that the robots of the future may develop the ability to become self-aware and think independently, the sci-fi construct developed by Isaac Asimov regarding the rules of robotics may become more than just fiction. The draft report references Asimov's rules suggesting they should be applicable to robot designers, producers and operators rather than to the robots themselves.
- ▶ In light of the reference to Asimov's rules it therefore seems justified to look to sci-fi for instances of robotics going wrong. In the 2004 film *I Robot*, the primary AI system which was programmed to follow Asimov's laws, started to interpret the laws independently due to its own learning ability and it ultimately violated its programming, causing harm to humans. If we are to develop robots which possess an unlimited learning capacity then similar violations must be considered when legislating.

- ▶ AI developments could mean that the potential for robots to become sentient beings is just around the corner. Leading retailers such as Amazon already use Kiva robots in their warehouses to pick items quickly and deliver them to their human colleagues. With the use of robots only set to grow, this invites the important question; should robots have rights? If

robots become self-aware should there also be laws protecting the robots as well as protecting humans?

- ▶ MEP's must now vote on proposed legislation but the classification of robots as legal entities with legal rights is no longer set to be a concept limited to the realms of sci-fi and film, but an imminent reality.

*"AG's health and safety offering 'sits at the top of the tree', and combines 'meticulous preparation with first-class client handling'."*

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## How we can help

PROACTIVE ADVICE	IF THINGS DO GO WRONG...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Legislation, regulations and policies</li> <li>▶ Strategy and proactive audits</li> <li>▶ Criminal and civil liability</li> <li>▶ Policies and risk exposure</li> <li>▶ Corporate due diligence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 24/7 crisis support for major incidents and investigations by the relevant regulatory authority</li> <li>▶ We mount our own legally privileged investigations on behalf of clients in order to protect their position with regard to anticipated civil and criminal proceedings</li> <li>▶ Representation from initial dealings with regulatory authorities through to trial</li> </ul>
TRAINING YOUR TEAM	REDUCING COSTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Training for all levels of your business</li> <li>▶ Crisis management and the Health &amp; Safety (Offences) Act 2008</li> <li>▶ New sentencing guidelines for health and safety and food crime matters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Competitive fee proposals</li> <li>▶ Embedded Transaction Services Team of paralegals</li> <li>▶ Development of standard precedents and approaches</li> <li>▶ Sharing industry know-how, market practice and horizon scanning updates</li> </ul>

## Who we have helped

Having been entrusted with the work of the **Health and Safety Executive** for over 25 years, we have considerable experience in this area combining both prosecution and defence work. We voluntarily handed back this contract to concentrate on defence work. This almost unique and unrivalled offering within the UK's legal market provides us with a platform to give our clients balanced, incisive and commercial advice on any health and safety issues arising out of their business activities. It also enables us to provide practical insight when assessing clients with pro-active audits – we can look at a client's systems with the "eyes" of the regulator.

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