



Risks Newsletter



Myth of
the month

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Risks is the TUC's weekly online bulletin for safety reps and others, read each week by over 14,000 subscribers and 1,500 on the TUC website. To receive this bulletin every week, click [here](#). Past issues are [available](#). This edition contains [Useful links](#) [TUC courses for safety reps](#) [Disclaimer](#) and [Privacy statement](#).

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UNION NEWS

Obstructed safety rep gets payout

A union safety rep on London's Tube system who was prevented from fulfilling his health and safety role by London Underground has won thousands of pounds in compensation at an employment tribunal. London Underground was found to have "wilfully and deliberately" flouted health and safety law by refusing to allow Paul McCarthy, 47, to inspect four tube lines. The tribunal said it could see "little if any attempt" by London Underground to comply with health and safety law when it prevented Mr McCarthy from inspecting the Hammersmith and City, District, Metropolitan and Waterloo and City lines. As a health and safety representative it was his role to inspect the Tube network to check that it was a safe working environment for all staff. The tribunal, which awarded Mr McCarthy £11,500 plus costs, said it was surprising that senior management had not attended the employment tribunal to explain why they had decided not to comply with the law. It also found that London Underground's defence of the claim had been "misconceived and unreasonable". Mr McCarthy's union representative, ASLEF district organiser Steve Grant, commented: "ASLEF will continue to defend all our members' health, safety and welfare industrially - and if needs be, legally - regardless of where they work or what their operational grade. We will be asking the Health and Safety Executive to consider prosecutions for the people responsible for these breaches and asking LU what disciplinary action they are taking against them for compromising their employees' safety."

- [ASLEF news release](#). [Thompsons Solicitors news release](#).

Rig redundancies a safety critical threat

Safety practices at the oil giant Shell's North Sea operations should be investigated by the authorities, offshore union Unite has said. It has called on the UK's Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to probe safety standards at five North Sea energy platforms operated by Royal Dutch Shell. The union said that since Shell announced

the installations were for sale, communications between the company and the offshore workforce has deteriorated to the point it is impacting on operational safety. Morale is also at an all-time low and the departure of several key personnel has created gaps in safety critical positions, according to the union. The five platforms are Cormorant Alpha, Dunlin Alpha (CADA), Tern, Eider, and North Cormorant (TENC). Some 400 Shell workers are affected. In early August, Shell experienced a blackout at its Brent Bravo rig in the North Sea, stranding 61 workers for 48 hours. Shell said it did not want to risk a rescue at night, but the company faced questions on its slow rescue response time. In 2003, a gas leak on the same rig killed two workers, leading to Shell receiving a safety conviction and £900,000 fine ([Risks 204](#)). "Many platform areas are now not covered by trained and competent people and certain HSE safety critical roles are not fully supported," Unite said. "The gaps in these safety-critical positions could be so severe that, in the event of an emergency, staff may be unable to cope."

- [ICEM In-brief](#). [BBC News Online](#).

Genetic testing "must be regulated"

Genetic testing by employers must be regulated, unions say. The call came in a motion carried at this week's annual congress in Brighton. In 2011, the current moratorium on genetic testing by the insurance industry ends and there is an urgent need to have a clear policy on the use and storage of sensitive and personal data, the meeting heard. Gill Dolbear, vice-president of radiographers' union SOR told delegates: "Without realistic and enforceable controls, employers and insurers will rely on self-regulation." She added: "Technology has brought down the cost of screening and access to genetic testing. There is significant potential for misuse and discrimination in the workplace and the wider community." A review of current arrangements is due to take place next year and unions are calling for full public debate on what is acceptable practice. "We need robust and

mechanisms to regulate and manage genetic testing,” Gill Dolbear said. “Otherwise, there is the possibility that unscrupulous employers and insurers could use a genetic predisposition to, say, cancer, to discriminate against individuals.” The debate at the TUC comes as US legislators are seeking to ban businesses from using genetic test results to make employment decisions. The legislation also would stop insurers from requiring genetic tests, obtaining test results, and from using the results of tests to increase insurance premiums, or deny coverage ([Risks 306](#)).

- [SOR news release. Hazards genetic screening web resources.](#)

Site unions call for gangmaster controls

The government must extend the Gangmasters Licensing Act (GLA) to the construction industry, delegates to the TUC congress have decided. Construction unions say since the GLA came into force in 2006 there has been a stream of rogue gangmasters who have moved from agriculture into the construction industry. Unions working in construction have unearthed a growing list of abuses, the vast majority involving exploitation of vulnerable migrant labour. Problems include safety abuses, excessive hours, intimidation and threats. The site unions say abuses are as likely to happen on major construction sites operated by the big construction companies, as on small construction projects. Referring to prime minister Gordon Brown’s congress pledge that “no employer should be allowed to impose unsafe or unacceptable conditions,” UCATT general secretary Alan Ritchie said: “The government must deliver on Gordon Brown’s promise and extend the Gangmasters legislation to the construction industry. The levels of abuse and exploitation that have been uncovered is truly shocking, action is needed now.” Jack Dromey, Unite deputy general secretary, said: “Rogue gangmasters are the scourge of society. They exploit and put lives at risk. It is time they were stopped once and for all. By extending the

gangmasters act to construction we will put all the bad employers on notice. They should have no place on any of our sites or in any of our workplaces.”

- [Unite news release. TUC and Hazards migrant worker webpages.](#)

OTHER NEWS

Prime minister makes safety commitment

A number of workplace safety concerns will be addressed, prime minister Gordon Brown has told unions. Speaking at this week’s TUC Congress in Brighton, the prime minister said: “No employer should be allowed to impose unsafe or unacceptable conditions,” adding “the price of a job should never be a substandard wage or a dangerous workplace.” He said: “We are taking new enforcement powers against people traffickers who buy and sell illegal migrant labour. We remember the tragedy of the cockle-pickers of Morecambe Bay and we have responded to your calls for controls on gangmasters. Let me say we are not only introducing the Gangmaster Licensing Authority, but this winter we will legislate to tighten agency regulation.” On vulnerable workers, the prime minister said “we will raise the amount of compensation paid to workers who are owed arrears, and we will in future target resources to projects aimed at the safety and security of vulnerable workers who are at risk.” Also at congress, the prime minister presented Peter Eggleston, a BT employee and branch assistant safety officer for CWU, the 2007 TUC Safety Rep Award. Peter has been an active trade unionist and safety rep since the 1970s. His proudest achievements include securing the supply of a new item of personal protective equipment to engineers employed by BT in cold weather conditions. Peter also secured lighter mobile generators for use by BT payphone engineers, as a result of complaints that existing generators were too heavy and a manual handling risk.

- [Full text of prime minister Gordon Brown's speech to the TUC.](#) [Watch Gordon Brown's speech on Congress TV.](#) [10 Downing Street news release.](#) [TUC news release.](#) [TUC Awards news release](#) and [coverage on Congress TV.](#)

Campaign tells Hain to act on site deaths

Cabinet minister Peter Hain has called for government and industry to work together to reduce fatalities in the construction industry. Speaking at the TUC's congress this week, the secretary of state for work and pensions said he was committed to produce a concrete action plan at a 17 September government-convened construction safety forum which will bring together employers, trade unions and other organisations. Peter Hain said: "This will not be a talking shop. It must deliver an urgent action plan to reverse the macabre toll of rising death and injury in construction." The minister said figures from an HSE site blitz published this week revealed "nearly one in three construction refurbishment sites inspected put the lives of workers at risk - this is completely unacceptable. The HSE closed down 244 of the sites immediately. But safety should never have been compromised in the first place. I will not tolerate a continued increase in construction deaths." HSE told Risks that 15 of these cases were likely to result in prosecution. The Construction Safety Campaign is to protest outside the 17 September forum to make known its "disgust at the government's killer cuts agenda." CSC said this is the third time the government "has politely called the construction employers and asked them to stop killing and they haven't. It's now time for the government to drop the carrot and use the big stick." Angela Bedy, who's partner Michael Alexa died in a crane collapse last year ([Risks 320](#)), said: "We want government to understand that any fatalities of workers on construction sites are completely unacceptable. Also, the increase in house building work means that members of the public will be increasingly put at risk. No member of the public should die, as my partner did, simply because they were near

a building site. Construction safety is a huge public health issue." Peter Hain's department, DWP, has been under-fire from unions and safety campaigners, as a funding shortfall has led to a haemorrhage of jobs from safety watchdog HSE and a reduction in inspection and enforcement activity, with more funding cuts and job losses expected ([Risks 317](#)). Similar concerns have been raised by safety professionals' body IOSH ([Risks 322](#)). The number of fatalities in construction in 2006/07 was 77 - the highest total for five years and up 28 per cent on the previous year ([Risks 317](#)).

- [DWP news release.](#) [HSE news release on construction blitz.](#) [Construction Safety Campaign news release.](#) [Battersea Crane Disaster Action Group \(BCDAG\) news release.](#) [Contract Journal.](#) [Hazards health and safety enforcement news and resources.](#)

Firms fined after site worker is paralysed

Two construction companies have been fined over £180,000 for serious health and safety offences, following an incident which left a worker a paraplegic. Exeter firm Rokbuild Ltd was fined £175,000 plus £26,733 costs at Winchester Crown Court. RB Contractors of Winchester was fined £5,000 and £1,000 costs at the same hearing. The prosecutions were brought by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) following an investigation into an incident in March 2004 in which labourer Christopher Feeley was severely injured on a Rokbuild Ltd site in Winchester. He was working for Robert Blackmore, trading as RB Contractors, who were sub-contracted by Rokbuild Ltd to build an office extension and a new respirator testing chamber. On 16 March 2004, Mr Feeley was driving a dumper on the site when the front wheels slipped into a small trench. Another worker used the bucket of a mini excavator to try to pull the dumper out of the trench. The bucket slipped down and hit Mr Feeley in the back, causing damage to his spinal cord and vertebrae, and leaving him a paraplegic. Speaking after the hearing, Richard Boland,

HSE's construction operations manager for the London and East/South East Regions said: "Rokbuild's 'hands off' approach at this project meant that they appointed an inexperienced and untrained contracts manager and site manager. They took on a sub-contractor without checking their competence, and then failed to properly supervise the work. Eight days before the incident in which Mr Feeley was so seriously injured, the dumper was overturned, but because of the lack of supervision, RB Contractors were able to keep this from the Rokbuild Ltd site managers." He added: "The judge felt that Rokbuild's failings were the principle causes of this incident, and that if Rokbuild had properly assessed the competence of their sub-contractor and then arranged for competent supervision, it would have been inconceivable that this incident would have happened."

- [HSE news release](#) and webpage on the [Construction Design and Management Regulations 2007](#).

Three gassed trying to keep warm

Three men found dead in a storage container at a Kennet Island development could have been gassed to death in just 18 minutes, an inquest heard. Tilers Kirpal Singh, 30, his cousin Manjit Singh, 35, and 21-year-old Gurdeep Singh Deo died on 21 December 2006. The men, who were found at 8am on 22 December, had all inhaled fatal levels of carbon monoxide. Pictures taken at the scene of their death in a metal storage container, showed the men lying on the floor with their work boots off. At an inquest last week, Reading coroner Peter Bedford guessed the three workers may have been resting or napping. A petrol-run generator was being used inside the container to fuel two lamps, probably for heat and light. The days leading up to their deaths had been very cold but it was very dangerous to use a generator in such an enclosed space, Mr Bedford said. When forensic experts examined the generator, which was in fine working order, they found it had not run out of petrol, but was no longer running. Karen Morris, from the

Health and Safety Executive (HSE), said: "The reason it stopped was because the atmosphere was starved of oxygen." Tests were carried out on the generator following the deaths. In an area the same dimension as the container – six-metres high, 2.4-metres wide and 2.4-metres deep – a generator took just 80 minutes to burn out. But the inquest heard it took just 18 minutes for dangerous levels of carbon monoxide to engulf the atmosphere. The jury returned a misadventure verdict.

- [Reading Evening Post](#). [Reading Chronicle](#).

HSE warns contractors to protect road workers

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has warned road contractors about the importance of providing workers with adequate instructions, training and supervision regarding safe systems of working on open roads. The warning follows an incident in August 2005 where road worker Graham Yule was knocked down and seriously injured while painting road lines in Hammersmith, London. Stephen Jordan, trading as Central Linemarkings, was fined £5,000 at the City of London Magistrates Court for safety offences. He was also ordered to pay £10,000 costs. Employee Mr Yule, who was 58 at the time of the incident, was painting 'Keep Clear' lines in an ambulance bay. As the work was considered to be of short duration, the workers did not lay out any cones or signs to warn oncoming traffic that they were working in the road. A taxi that was undertaking a van hit Mr Yule as he was painting the lines in the bus lane. He was badly injured, leaving his left arm permanently incapacitated. He also lost teeth and needed facial reconstruction surgery. HSE inspector Lisa Chappell said: "This unfortunate accident shows how important it is for road contractors to provide appropriate instructions, training and supervision to safeguard their workers. Regardless of the duration of the work, roads are clearly hazardous places, and workers must understand the measures they should take to protect themselves and warn other road users of their presence."

- [HSE news release.](#)

First minister supports a Stockline inquiry

Scotland's first minister Alex Salmond has given his support for the "fullest possible" inquiry into the circumstances of Scotland's worst industrial accident in a generation. He also pledged to meet the families of the victims of the May 2004 ICL/Stockline factory blast, in which nine people were killed and 33 injured. Elish Angiolini, the Lord Advocate, met family representatives last week and has promised to make an announcement on an inquiry by the end of this month. The first minister was responding to a question in the Scottish parliament from Patricia Ferguson, the Labour MSP for Glasgow Maryhill, who pointed out that because the companies had both pled guilty in court, many of the circumstances surrounding the explosion had not been aired in public. The first minister responded: "I think given the nature of the criminal proceedings, which was a successful prosecution, but obviously meant that some of the evidence was not required to surface in the course of the proceedings, all are agreed that an inquiry in public is necessary." Ian Tasker, safety officer with the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC), said: "The fullest kind of inquiry would have to involve ministers from the Westminster government and that would be something we would be raising with the first minister when we meet." Bill Wilson, MSP for the West of Scotland region, last week lodged a parliamentary motion congratulating the authors of the independent Stirling and Strathclyde universities report on the disaster, which was strongly critical of both the company and the Health and Safety Executive ([Risks 322](#)). The motion also called for the Scottish government to adopt legislation to ensure that those responsible for industrial accidents and other serious health and safety offences be effectively punished. With reference to the same report, HSE said it "will not comment on this report in detail, but rejects the generalities of the accusations against HSE and its staff." It added: "The verdict of court

recognised the well-established principle in health and safety law that responsibility for the management of workplace risks rests with those who create the hazards."

- [Scottish parliament debate on 'Scockline Factory \(Judicial Public Inquiry\). Parliamentary motion from Bill Wilson MSP, congratulating the Stirling/Strathclyde universities report. HSE statement. The Herald. BBC News Online.](#)
- [ICL/Stockline report and news updates.](#)

Back to work push could be "dangerous"

Unions and health campaigners have warned that pushing injured workers back into work too soon or without the necessary support could exacerbate their problems. The warning comes after a new report said people with conditions such as back pain and arthritis need to stay in work as much as possible. The Work Foundation report said the evidence suggests that being able to work helps sufferers of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) recover more quickly, and claims many GPs and employers wrongly believe a sufferer must be "100 per cent well" before any return to work. Report co-author Michelle Mahdon said: "Work can be both cause and cure. It may cause or aggravate symptoms, but evidence is amassing that with the right support arrangements, work can also be part of the recovery by contributing to a person's self-esteem and sense of being productive. What urgently needs to change is the attitude of many GPs and employers that a sufferer must be 100 per cent well before any return to work can be contemplated." TUC general secretary Brendan Barber commented: "Although for some lower back conditions there is evidence that continued activity can be a useful part of rehabilitation, there is no such evidence for other musculoskeletal disorders. In most cases, continuing the activity that caused the injury will just make things worse, and no one should be expected to continue working unless a doctor advises otherwise. This advice is at best simplistic

- and at worst dangerous. What we need is more access to rehabilitation for MSDs with further research into what interventions work and at what stage.” Hilda Palmer of the Greater Manchester Hazards Centre, which runs an RSI support group, said the report “is simplistic, unsubstantiated and dangerous for sufferers and those at risk.” She added many affected workers had “enormous difficulties” getting their employer, doctor or the health service to recognise the problem is caused or exacerbated by work or to provide workplace improvements or rehabilitation. Professor Alan Silman, medical director of the Arthritis Research Campaign, said each person needed to be assessed individually to evaluate whether the workplace environment could be modified to encourage return to work. The Work Foundation report does call for better job design, saying managers can change the ways work is organised, from adjusting working time, altering task allocation, to improving ergonomics.

- [The Work Foundation news release. BBC News Online.](#) GMHC news release [[word](#)].
- Fit for work: Musculoskeletal disorders and labour market participation, Stephen Bevan and others, The Work Foundation [[pdf](#)]. [TUC back strain webpages](#).

Docs pressed to send sick to work

The government has given another push to its contentious “work is good for you” campaign. Unions and health campaigners have warned that pressure on GPs to get patients back into work fails to take into account that it is good work and not just any work that can be good for you. The debate was rekindled this week after a survey for the DWP of 1,500 GPs “found that two-thirds (64 per cent) are unaware of the evidence that work is beneficial for physical and mental health. However, nearly 90 per cent said that if they knew of this evidence it would affect the advice they give to their patients.” The findings were presented by safety minister Lord McKenzie at a British Medical Association

conference. The minister cited government “evidence”, which attracted wide criticism last year ([Risks 274](#)), and which it now claims proves “conclusively” that work is good for you. “The recognition that there is evidence that work is good for people’s health is, I believe, that powerful. Because it means staying in work or returning to work could actually be part of the solution to ill-health - no longer be seen as part of the problem.” Jawad Qasrawi of the trade union safety reps’ journal *Hazards* commented: “GPs are virtually uneducated in occupational health, rarely ask what job a person does and will scarcely ever understand the risks posed by the job. Without better access to occupational health services, rehabilitation support and better designed, good jobs, work can be anything but good for you, especially if you are already injured or ill.” Critics also say that the government might be promoting work as good for you, but it has conceded it still doesn’t know what constitutes a good job ([Risks 296](#)). Health minister Ivan Lewis last week announced this year’s second £10 million of capital funding to finance new NHS Plus demonstration sites, intended to improve the occupational healthcare services offered to small and medium sized businesses.

- [DWP news release. DH news release.](#)
- [Why bad work is not a good idea. HSE on the levels and costs of work-related ill-health. Safety reps’ guide to occupational health services.](#)

Injured jockey gets £85k compensation

Jockey Andrew Ball has won an £85,000 payout for an injury that put an end to his career. Mr Ball was awarded the compensation from the insurers for Lockeridge trainer Heidi Sweeting. He was working at her 20-horse yard when he was kicked by one of the horses. It caught him on his lower leg fracturing his tibia. Despite extensive surgery the injury brought Mr Ball's racing career to a premature end. Recurring weakness in his leg has prevented him from

riding again. Solicitor Richard Brooks, who pressed his compensation claim, said: “His settlement takes into account the fact that he has a permanent disability which means he can't continue with his chosen career. It also reflects the impact the injury has had on his likely future earnings.” The specialist racing and bloodstock lawyer added: “The law concerning animal accidents means that, luckily, he did not have to point the finger of blame at the trainer of the horse, who in this case, was very generous following the accident. This is a large compensation award, but Mr Ball is significantly out of pocket as a result of his injury and it was right that he received compensation.” Mr Ball, 40, who is currently retraining as a chef, said: “My family and I have been through hell but now have some security for the future.”

- [Wiltshire Gazette and Herald](#).

Scots smoke ban has 'improved health'

The Scottish smoking ban has led to a significant advance in public health, the most detailed scientific study of the measure so far has suggested. Comparisons at nine hospitals revealed that there was a 17 per cent year-on-year drop in heart attack admissions since the ban was introduced in March 2006. The impact on heart health is similar to that observed when bans were introduced in Italian and US communities ([Risks 277](#)). Exposure to second-hand smoke north of the border is down by 40 per cent among adults and children, the study added. Another report in a suite of related studies compared the exposure of barworkers to second-hand smoke before and after the ban and found a dramatic reduction in their exposures. The paper reports that the salivary concentration of cotinine, a metabolite of nicotine, fell in non-smoking bar workers by 89 per cent, and even in smokers it fell by 12 per cent. Report co-author Dr Sean Semple said: “This large study was carried out in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow and shows that smoke-free legislation has almost completely removed occupational exposure to second-hand smoke among workers in the

hospitality sector.” He added: “Before the legislation non-smoking bar workers were breathing in very high levels of second-hand smoke during their work-shift. Non-smoking bar workers had nicotine intakes approximately seven times higher than non-smokers in the general population with some analyses suggesting that this was equivalent to smoking about 160 cigarettes per year. Our study shows that this has been successfully reduced to a level comparable to most Scottish non-smokers. The study also shows very high compliance with the legislation in almost all the bars that took part in our research. Bar workers reported that compliance increased from immediately post-ban through to the end of the study in early 2007 and this was supported by the falling levels of a nicotine metabolite in their saliva.”

- [IOM news release](#). [BBC News Online](#). Sean Semple and others. Bar workers' exposure to second-hand smoke: The effect of Scottish smoke-free legislation on occupational exposure, [Annals of Occupational Hygiene](#), advance publication, 12 September 2007.

Safety professionals need to be regulated

The UK's health and safety profession should be officially regulated, according to the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH). It said regulating the profession was important for raising standards and helping eliminate some of the “crazy” stories that appear in the media. IOSH president-elect Ray Hurst said: “Currently, anyone can set up as a health and safety consultant or adviser with no qualifications or verifiable competence. This is something that needs to change. The advice health and safety professionals give can be the difference between life and death.” He added that proper regulation would mean only those able to demonstrate the necessary competence would be allowed to practice. “In the event that a health and safety professional does fall below the standard, they can be disciplined and in serious cases, 'struck off'. So, we see regulation as an important safeguard against 'rogue' operators and poor

practice, potentially benefiting workers, employers and the general public alike.” IOSH recently launched a ‘Get the Best’ campaign to ensure business gets the best quality health and safety advice and the government and others demonstrate ongoing commitment to improving the health and safety of the UK’s working-age population. It also aims to encourage the media to get the views of the profession in their stories.

- [IOSH news release](#) and Get the best campaign guide [[pdf](#)].

Farm workers get new qualification

A groundbreaking set of health and safety qualifications has been designed for agricultural and horticultural workers, union reps, supervisors and managers. Members can sign up for them through agricultural and other colleges from this month, but study at home with materials and online back-up. The courses have the full backing of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and will be administered by Lantra, the land-based skills body, and the National Proficiency Training Council. A major input in developing the course came from Charlie Clutterbuck, a training specialist and member of Unite’s TGWU section rural and agricultural national committee. “The key to these qualifications was the strategic agreement between employers, unions and the HSE in 2002,” he said. “It has taken us since then to thrash out the details but it has been worth it.” Dr Clutterbuck added: “We were concerned about making the industry safer for our members - it still has the highest death rate in the country - and the employers were keen to fulfil their legal obligations to appoint ‘competent’ persons to carry out risk assessments. We have now sorted out who is responsible for making policies, supervising them and carrying them out - with different courses for each of them but all related to each other.” He concluded: “It is important to stress that these qualifications are not an alternative to safety inspections and safety reps but in addition to them.”

- [Landworker, August/Sept 2007](#). More details on the [Health and Safety Practices website](#). [Lantra](#).

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Global: Corporations not that socially responsible

Fifteen years after blistering anti-sweatshop campaigns against transnational corporations like Nike sparked the booming corporate social responsibility (CSR) industry, there have been small improvements in workplace health and safety in factories in the developing world. But, according to a report by global safety rights expert Garrett Brown, even the “modest gains” have been “undermined by fatal flaws caused by conflicting demands of transnationals on their global supply chains.” Writing in the US safety journal Occupational Hazards, he says “the actual impact of all this CSR activity on working conditions on the factory floors of suppliers in some of the poorest countries in the world has been marginal. There has been a flood of reports, both about particular factories and CSR programmes in general, indicating that not much has changed, despite the millions of dollars spent in the CSR industry.” He adds “unfortunately, occupational health and safety (OHS) is not one of the ILO’s fundamental rights at work. Ironically, however, OHS is the one area where the brands and contract factories have made efforts to improve conditions because OHS is ‘less political’ than wages, hours or the right to form unions. But even these gains are undermined by the inherent contradictions in the transnationals’ schizophrenic approach to supply chain management.” He reports that while there have been some improvements in health and safety down the supply chain, there are still major problems, notably when it comes of prevention of work-related ill-health. He adds: “Perhaps the most glaring problem is the near-total lack of involvement of workers in the development, implementation and evaluation of

factory health and safety programmes. Small, management-only factory safety committees – with managers who have many other, more pressing production responsibilities – cannot possibly conduct adequate site safety inspections, accident investigations and corrective actions or/and worker training.” The paper concludes: “Occupational safety and health has been one of the few areas that has benefited from the CSR craze over the last decade. However, the OHS benefits – let alone the ILO’s other fundamental labour rights – have not been widely distributed nor deeply implanted in the global supply chain. If the partisans of CSR want it to be anything other than a relatively small cottage industry, then much more work remains to be done.”

- [Occupational Hazards. Maquiladora Health and Safety Support Network.](#)

Somalia: Unions campaign for media safety

Violence in Somalia has been escalating, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has said, warning this has put enormous pressure on journalists reporting on the conflict for both Somali news organisations and international media. “Journalists themselves have become targets,” said IFJ general secretary Aidan White in a letter to Ban Ki-moon, secretary-general of the United Nations. “This year alone seven journalists and news professionals have been killed in Somalia, four of them in Mogadishu. I am writing to urge you to take immediate action to improve journalist safety in Somalia, where media workers are being threatened and killed with impunity.” The IFJ is calling on its member unions to also send letters of protest to Mr Ban, calling on him and other members of the international community to intervene to end violence and targeting of journalists. According to the National Union of Somali Journalists, the IFJ affiliate in Somalia, four journalists have been tortured. Five news media outlets have been attacked: one was burned down while another was destroyed by missiles. Three other media institutions have been forced to shut down at some point this year. “The press freedom

situation has deteriorated tremendously as there is no free reporting and... violence against journalists is rising day after day,” said National Union of Somali Journalists secretary general Omar Faruk Osman in the union’s special report on attacks on journalists. The United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1738 in December 2006, which says that in armed conflict situations journalists and media workers are considered civilians and that violence against them may be considered a war crime ([Risks 287](#)).

- [IFJ news release.](#)

South Africa: Mining union may strike over deaths

South Africa's biggest mining union said this week it may strike to force mining companies to focus on the safety of workers, following a spate of recent deaths at mines. Some 200 miners are killed in accidents at South African mines every year, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) general secretary Frans Baleni said. “The fatalities and deaths at mines cannot be tolerated any longer,” Baleni said. “We can go on strike if it means it is the only way to stop these needless deaths, but we have not taken this decision yet.” Baleni said the 300,000-strong NUM would be holding meetings to discuss the issue of safety and accidents. He said among other things companies needed to invest in seismic detection technology to warn miners of impending tremors, and reinforce loose ground inside mines after blasting. In the most recent fatality a miner was found dead and operations were briefly halted at No.5 shaft at Driefontein mine, Gold Fields' biggest mine, last week. The miner had been working 3,000 metres below the surface when a tremor measuring 1.5 on the Richter scale occurred.

- [Reuters Africa.](#)

EVENTS AND COURSES

TUC courses for safety reps

COURSES FOR SEPTEMBER TO NOVEMBER 2007

- [Northern](#), [North West](#), [Southern & Eastern](#), [Yorkshire & Humber](#), [South West](#), [Midlands](#), [Scotland](#), [Wales](#)

USEFUL LINKS

- **Visit** the TUC http://www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/ website pages on health and safety. See what's on offer from [TUC Publications](#) and [What's On in health and safety](#).
- **Subscribe** to [Hazards](#) magazine, supported by the TUC as a key source of information for union safety reps.
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