



Risks Newsletter



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Risks is the TUC's weekly online bulletin for safety reps and others, read each week by over 12,000 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

TUC warning on compensation reforms

The TUC is urging the government not to undermine the existing personal injury compensation scheme. A new TUC report, 'Personal injury claims: Proposals for change', says that the current system is working well by and large and says that recent criticisms have been from those attempting to reduce the ability of injured or ill workers to claim against negligent employers. The TUC is critical of insurers who drag their heels and fail to admit liability until just before a case goes to court, a manoeuvre that can delay settlements by years and push up costs. Despite claims that the UK is in the grips of a frenzied compensation culture, only around 10 per cent of injured or ill workers ever get any payout from their employers or from the state. The report says that every year over 850,000 people are made ill or injured as a result of their jobs, forcing 25,000 of them to give up work permanently. It says the UK has a very poor record on helping ill and injured employees back to work. The report adds that getting people back into the labour market quickly can greatly reduce the damages paid out, and the TUC is keen to work with insurers and the Department for Work and Pensions to develop effective new rehabilitation proposals. It says trade unions provide the most effective support for workers, securing over £300 million in compensation payouts every year at no cost to members or their families. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber commented: "Trade unions provide a legal service that is second to none. However just and early settlements are often frustrated by a failure to enforce agreed procedures and protocols. We want to work with the government and insurers to ensure that justice can be made speedier and cheaper for all, but that cannot be done unless all workers have access to good legal advice and support." The report says negligent employers should face higher employers' liability insurance premiums.

- [TUC news release. TUC compensation webpage.](#)
- [Hazards compensation news and resources.](#)

Stop the red tape whinge, TUC tells employers

The TUC has hit out at employers' groups that complain about the burden of "red tape" but exaggerate its cost and fail to state which regulations they would like to see abolished. It says that the deregulation campaign is based on "spin, smoke and mirrors" and a refusal to say which employment, consumer and environmental protection measures they want to abolish. Health and safety measures are some of the commonly targeted "burdens" highlighted by the business lobby. 'Slaying the red tape myths' shows that employer lobbyists deliberately confuse the administrative costs of regulations, that might legitimately be called red tape, with the costs of implementation. They also describe measures that have wide support and clear benefit such as controlling asbestos in the workplace as red tape but refuse to say whether they want them repealed. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "Employers have every right to complain about unnecessary bureaucracy or badly drafted regulations. But they lose support the moment they start saying that essential protection for people at work, such as protection from asbestos, is no more than red tape. The red tape campaign is spin, smoke and mirrors. It's time employer lobbyists put up or shut up."

- [TUC news release. The Guardian.](#)
- [Hazards arguments against safety deregulation.](#)

Flat season problems raised by union

The Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) has launched a fierce attack on the overall standard of the stalls handlers likely to be working at British racecourses when the Flat turf season begins this weekend. Chris Kaufman, the union's national secretary for the food and agriculture sector, has been representing former

stalls handlers whose contracts with the company RaceTech were terminated last October ([Risks 245](#)). Many have been replaced by new, inexperienced handlers employed on cheaper and more flexible terms. TGWU points to a recent inquiry by the local council at Wolverhampton track, prompted by a complaint under the Health and Safety at Work Act about the use of replacement workers, which “failed to give the course a clean bill of health.” He said the investigating inspector had found that not all the stalls handlers employed at Wolverhampton had been given the proper training, while others did not have the necessary accreditation from the Jockey Club. The union is demanding action by the industry before an inexperienced handler is injured or a jockey and horse are involved in an accident or that a spectator is hurt. Chris Kaufman said: “We either have the Jockey Club rules with our people properly restored to their jobs or we have a race to the bottom, free-for-all on standards.” He added: “Racing cannot wait for an avoidable accident to happen.” Jockeys have in the past boycotted meetings because of a lack of confidence in the replacement stalls handlers.

- [TGWU news release. The Guardian.](#)

Union warning on lower flight safety standards

British airline pilots are urging UK Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to improve “deficient” proposals to harmonise pilot flying hours across the European Union (EU). After a meeting last week of its flight scheduling experts, BALPA said that if the current proposals are adopted, they will result in a “significant” increase in the maximum number of hours an airline pilot can fly, up to 11 hours 45 minutes at night and 14 hours in daytime. “We shall explain to MEPs that these increased flying hours compromise flight safety and must not be allowed to stand,” said BALPA chair Mervyn Granshaw. “Existing studies, for example, show that the effects of fatigue on a pilot’s performance after flying 10 hours at night is

equivalent to 0.08 per cent of alcohol in the blood – a level at which car drivers would not be allowed to drive and which is itself four times less stringent than current blood/alcohol levels for pilots. Statistical evidence also demonstrates that exposure to an accident is six times higher on aircraft whose crew has been working longer than 12 hours. The current proposal allows up to 14 hours at daytime.” Jim McAuslan, general secretary of BALPA, said: “The UK government has previously said that our standards will be maintained, but there is nothing in this EU law to confirm that. This needs to be changed, or we will see Europe eroding UK standards.” The campaign activities are being co-ordinated by the European Cockpit Association, which represents 34,000 airline pilots Europe-wide.

- [BALPA news release.](#)

Gruesome jail death inquiry call

A solicitor has called for a public inquiry into events surrounding a Hannibal Lecter-style killing of a prisoner by his cellmate. The call came after six warders, members of the prison officers’ union POA, were awarded over £1m in compensation for witnessing the aftermath of the attack. The settlement at Cardiff County Court is for both damages and costs, with the exact amount received by each warder subject to a confidentiality clause. Inmate Jason Ricketts killed and mutilated his cellmate Colin Bloomfield in Cardiff prison in 2000. The warder’s solicitor, Frank Rogers, said there were mistakes made in placing Ricketts in a shared cell. He said: “There is a broader issue of how the prison service deals with mentally disordered offenders who are known to be violent.” He said the scene the six men - Darren Godbear, 44, Nigel Thomas, 47, Michael Wakeham, 46, Gerald Williams, 58, Paul Evans, 38, and Alan Hunt, 42 - witnessed was “way beyond the experience of any prison officer.” He added: “This is not what prison officers are employed to do. They are not there, trained or expected to deal with the mentally ill.” The men are said to

be still receiving medical treatment after witnessing the aftermath of the killing.

- BBC News Online on [the inquiry call](#) and [the compensation settlement](#).

Leaked reports sounds fire safety alarm

Documents obtained by Hertfordshire's Fire Brigades Union (FBU) include confidential proposals earmarking seven additional fire stations in the county for either closure or downgrading. FBU says the document suggests current proposals, already strongly criticised by the union ([Risks 246](#)), may be the thin end of the wedge of major cuts across the fire service in future years. Herts FBU vice chair Tony Smith said: "This hit list shows that no community is safe from the threat of cuts and no fire station is safe from the threat of closure. It suggests that current proposals are the beginnings of an agenda to rip the heart out of the Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service". He added: "To continue to claim that savage cuts will 'make Hertfordshire safer' is simply unbelievable; this is simply about saving money".

- [FBU news release](#).

OTHER NEWS

Jail terms after Tebay rail track deaths

Unions have welcomed the jailing of a railway boss after the death of four workers, but have voiced concerns that it is only small companies and individual workers that need fear prison terms. Railway contractor Mark Connolly, 44, was sentenced last week to nine years imprisonment for the manslaughter of four maintenance workers who died in February 2004 near Tebay, Cumbria, when a runaway wagon ploughed into them at about 40mph ([Risks 144](#)). Connolly had deliberately

dismantled the hydraulic brakes on two of his wagons to save money. The judge said his actions had been motivated purely by greed to a "degree that beggars belief." Connolly received a nine-year sentence for each of the four counts of manslaughter, to run concurrently. No separate penalty was imposed for three counts of breaching health and safety laws. He had denied all charges. His co-accused, employee Roy Kennett, 29, was jailed for two years for manslaughter and breaching health and safety laws. Commenting on the convictions, TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "Although a welcome decision, the success in this case must be contrasted with the failure to successfully prosecute the directors of large companies such as Transco ([Risks 222](#)), Balfour Beatty ([Risks 223](#)), and various rail companies following other recent deaths." He added that while crane driver Roy Kennett was jailed "no directors were jailed after the rail crashes at Hatfield or Paddington. This illustrates the urgent need for both a new offence of corporate killing and new duties on individual directors. The government must introduce both as soon as possible." RMT general secretary Bob Crow said the deaths were the result of the privatisation and fragmentation of the railway system. He said that two years after Tebay "we still have a confusion of contractors, subcontractors, one-man-and-a-dog owner-operator plant-hire outfits, and a host of labour-only agencies. That means there is no consistent application of safety standards and no central line of command and communication." He added: "We are still seeing too many corporate killers let off the hook, and we still need the government to keep its promise to change the law so that profit-hungry bosses responsible for workers' deaths end up behind bars where they belong." No boss of a large or medium-sized UK firm has ever been jailed for workplace safety offences.

- [TUC news release](#). [RMT news release](#). [The Guardian](#). [BBC News Online](#). [Preston Today](#). [News and Star](#).
- [TUC/Hazards deadly business campaign](#).

Deaths trim bonus of UK's best paid boss

Britain's best paid boss has seen his annual bonus trimmed back to just £1.75m as a result of workplace fatalities at the firm reaching a six year high. The performance bonus of Lord John Browne, chief executive of London-based BP, has been cut as a result of the tragedy last year at the BP Texas City refinery in the USA when a catastrophic explosion killed 15 workers and injured 170. Twelve other workers died in incidents at BP facilities worldwide. The company is facing a criminal investigation as a result of the incident ([Risks 242](#)). "Bonuses fell across the board," a London-based BP spokesperson, David Nicholas, said. The bonus cut did not reduce Lord Browne's overall package, which increased to £6.49 million, up from £5.7 million a year earlier. The remuneration committee at BP considered "both positive and negative" events during the year when setting bonuses, its annual report said. "Safety performance was impaired by the incident at Texas City", it said. The pay deal has been criticised in some quarters, with suggestions that criminal penalties would be more appropriate. "Why is he receiving any bonus?," said Jordan Barab, editor of online safety new service *Confined Space*. "Time off for good behaviour or a cushy job in the prison library, maybe, but a bonus?" The BP annual report notes: "In total, there were 27 workforce fatalities in the course of BP operations during 2005. We deeply regret the loss of these lives. This was the worst year for BP's safety record since 1999, when there were 30 workforce fatalities." BP is featured on HSE's corporate responsibility webpages as an example of "director leadership" on health and safety.

- BP Annual Report 2005 [[pdf](#)]. [Confined Space. International Herald Tribune.](#)
- [BP's safety record.](#)

Unsafe firms will "feel the heat" says minister

Unsafe firms will "feel the heat" of robust Health and Safety Executive enforcement, the safety minister has warned. Lord Hunt, speaking at the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health's 2006 conference, said: "Safeguarding the welfare of workers is not just morally right. Many of our more progressive organisations have long recognised the wider benefits of good health and safety management. Managing health and safety risks looks after the bottom line." The minister added: "The Health and Safety Executive's strong messages about risks are backed up by equally robust enforcement when those risks are wilfully ignored – those who don't see the light will feel the heat."

Conservative shadow minister for health and safety, Tim Boswell MP, told the conference: "I don't know many companies who like it when a member of their workforce is killed, but there has to be a regulator who deals with those who don't even try. If you go around killing your workforce and having a high level of accidents you are damaging your productivity and your reputation. It's a very bad business for business, and not good for the people involved either."

- [IOSH news release.](#)

Support group pushes for Stockline inquiry

On 11 May 2004 the worst workplace health and safety disaster in Scotland since Piper Alpha in 1988 occurred at the ICL/Stockline factory in Glasgow. Nine people lost their lives and more than 40 others were seriously injured. An STUC-backed support group is now pressing the case for a public inquiry. It says that "only through an open public inquiry will the victims, and relatives of the victims, be provided with a full explanation of the causes of the deaths and injuries. Further, only a public inquiry can reveal the full facts surrounding the disaster and bring about the changes that can prevent the recurrence of such a tragedy." The campaigners are seeking support for a petition "to ensure the families of the victims are granted a full public inquiry into the incident that caused the deaths of their loved ones." The petition will be

presented later this year to justice minister Cathy Jamieson and Colin Boyd, the Lord Advocate, after the second anniversary of the tragedy. Last month it was announced that the owners of the factory are to be prosecuted ([Risks 245](#)).

- [ICL Stockline Support Group petition. Sign the petition.](#)

Company fined £35k after worker is killed by spike

A construction company has been fined £35,000 after one of its workers died when he was impaled on a spike. Supervisor Willie Hume, 60, died in hospital after falling on to the metal spike while working at an old hospital site in Edinburgh in July last year. This week his employer RJ McLeod pleaded guilty at Edinburgh Sheriff Court to breaching health and safety regulations and admitted the area where the accident happened should have been properly fenced off. The court also heard the company had ordered safety caps to be placed on top of any exposed reinforcement bars a year earlier, but these instructions were ignored. Prosecutor Laura Thomson said: “Had robust fencing been in situ and or had the bars been capped, the accident would not have cost Mr Hume his life.” Passing sentence, Sheriff Gordon Liddle said: “This has been a time of tragic suffering for the family and nothing I can do today will make any difference to that. This was a local failure rather than a failure at a higher level and the company has to accept that responsibility.”

- [The Scotsman.](#)

KFC fined £60,000 after oil spill scarred staff

The Kentucky Fried Chicken chain has been fined £60,000 after two workers were scarred for life by boiling oil. Ahsan Rauf and Yuan Shi suffered injuries following an accident in the KFC branch at Northenden, Greater

Manchester, in May 2004. They were cleaning up when Mr Rauf slipped and knocked over a deep fat fryer. He was covered in up to 35 litres of boiling oil and suffered 15 per cent burns to chest, arms, thighs and ankles. Ms Shi was hit by the oil as it splashed on the floor. At Manchester crown court KFC pleaded guilty to two breaches of health and safety law. Judge David Hernandez said: “It was a significant breach of the Act but I do not find there was any deliberate risk-taking to save money. There was poor management and a poor system in place and the company has now taken a significant health and safety review.” KFC was fined £60,000 and £16,000 costs at Manchester Crown Court. The incident occurred at the same KFC branch where 18-year-old Hannah Kirkham worked before killing herself over alleged workplace bullying ([Risks 237](#)). She took an overdose in December 2003 after claiming colleagues had squirted mayonnaise in her shoes and set her uniform on fire. Two people were later sacked.

- [Manchester Evening News. The Guardian.](#)

Companies pay for site falls

Working at heights is one of the most obvious and preventable risks at work, but companies continue to ignore the risks. The end result is that falls remain the single largest cause of workplace fatalities. Last week, London construction firm Henderson General Services Ltd was fined £18,000 and ordered to pay costs of £4,296 at the Old Bailey. The prosecution, brought by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), followed its investigation into the death of James Grimes, 63, who died when he fell from a ladder while he attempted to access a scaffold. Speaking after the case, HSE investigating inspector Simon Hester said: “This death could easily have been avoided if the company had ensured safe ladder access to the scaffold. A simple and cheap action, such as installing a gantry for example, would have prevented the death of Mr Grimes and the grief suffered by his family and friends. Any contractor or site foreman reading about this case should be sure

to check that proper ladder access is in place for the scaffold on their site.” This week, Herefordshire building firm Mitchell and Son Homes Ltd was ordered to pay £4,000 in fines and £1,278 costs after a worker fell off a barn roof. Thomas Macklin suffered multiple fractures and damaged his wrist in the accident near Ross-on-Wye last April. His ladder was balanced on scaffolding which was not adequately fitted with toe boards, which would have prevented it slipping.

- [HSE news release. BBC News Online.](#)
- HSE [construction](#) and [falls](#) webpages. [New HSE case studies.](#)

Builder fined £45,000 after steel collapses

Pellikaan Construction was fined £45,000 last week for breaching health and safety rules during the building of a £5.5m leisure centre. The company admitted breaking regulations which led to a worker being seriously injured while working on the site last November. Colin Straker, chair of the bench, told the company when it appeared at Stevenage Magistrates' Court that the incident at the Royston site was “a serious breach of its duties and responsibilities”. Magistrates heard that steel framework had collapsed under the weight of concrete on to 36-year-old labourer Calum Redman. Robin Cooper, representing the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), said the metal decking used was not strong enough to hold the concrete. “It's amazing Mr Redman survived,” he said, adding the injuries - which included a dislocated ankle, fractured ribs, and scratches to his eyes from cement and cement in his ears - were “likely to affect his employment for the rest of his life.” The HSE inspector warned: “Contractors working on temporary structures should conduct suitable risk assessments and take steps to prevent danger from their collapse. For example, by ensuring that temporary support is suitably designed and erected under the supervision of a competent person. An appropriate assessment of the loading forces, and

load bearing capacity of the supports, is fundamental.” Mr Redman had to be dug out by others working on the site. It was the second collapse on the site that day but no review of safety followed the initial collapse, the court heard. Pellikaan was fined a total of £45,000 and order to pay £7,034 costs.

- [HSE news release. Royston Crow.](#)

Firm fined after over a ton falls on worker

A West Midlands company has had to payout over £25,000 in fines and costs after a worker was seriously injured when over a ton of metal fell on him. CMK (Treatments) Ltd was prosecuted at West Bromwich Magistrates' Court following an investigation into the incident where incorrectly stacked aluminium blocks fell on Peter Finan. He was pinned underneath and suffered multiple fractures to leg and feet and bruising to the back. Highlighting new Health and Safety Executive guidelines, HSE inspector Gareth Langston said: “People working with metal stock must assess their storage arrangements, decide on safe stacking heights, and communicate this to the warehouse operatives. This material was stacked boxed 12 feet high, with the smallest base dimension being only 3 feet wide. This stack weighed over a ton and was inherently unstable.” He added: “People have been killed in similar stacking collapses in the past in the Midlands, and it is only luck which prevented death here, because the stack fell partly onto the forklift and not completely on to the worker.” CMK (Treatments) Ltd was fined £10,000 and ordered to pay costs of £15,035.50.

- [HSE news release.](#)

Study identifies badly managed worker syndrome

Workers are suffering an array of common health ailments caused by poor management, job stress and lack of control at work, a study has found. Researchers asked 4,000 civil servants from 44 buildings in London about their environment and job pressures and about symptoms such as coughs and tiredness. They found dry air and hot offices increased symptoms slightly but the most important factor was stress. The research, published the April edition of the journal *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, suggests many of the symptoms of “sick building syndrome” could in fact be linked to work-related stress. The study found high job demands and low levels of support were linked with high symptom rates, especially for those with little decision-making power. It found that the 10 symptoms commonly associated with the sick building syndrome, which was identified by the World Health Organisation more than 20 years ago, were linked to long hours and lack of support at work. Workers who could control their immediate environment by turning down heating or opening windows also reported fewer symptoms. The study authors said: “Sick building syndrome may be wrongly named - raised symptoms reporting appears to be due less to poor physical conditions than to a working environment characterised by poor psychosocial conditions.” Co-author Dr Mai Stafford of the Epidemiology and Public Health department of University College London, said: “We are not making claims that buildings don't matter for anybody. But for the general workforce job stress and job demands seem to have a bigger impact.” She added: “Psychological factors of work - stress brought on by lack of control, long hours and unsupportive managers - were far more important.” The study authors say when sick building syndrome symptoms come to light, managers should “consider causes beyond the physical design and operation of the workplace... to include the organisation of work roles and the autonomy of the workforce.”

- AF Marmot, J Eley, M Stafford and others. Building health: An epidemiological study of “sick building syndrome” in the Whitehall II study, [Occupational and Environmental](#)

[Medicine](#), volume 63, pages 283-289, 2006. [The Telegraph](#). [The Times](#). [BBC News Online](#).

Asbestos dangers “being ignored”

A Health and Safety Executive official has said there is still a “worrying” lack of awareness of asbestos risks. Bill McKay, principal inspector for construction and asbestos licensing at HSE’s Newcastle office, said he is shocked by the way materials containing dangerous asbestos fibres are being handled. “Things are better now, but people still abuse asbestos,” he said. “I find it hard to believe, but they do.” And he stressed that the removal of asbestos from buildings must be handled by properly equipped and licensed specialists. Mr McKay, who was speaking at a seminar organised by a local mesothelioma charity, gave examples of poorly equipped building workers tackling old buildings filled with asbestos. “There is still insufficient assessment and management of risks from asbestos in premises,” said Mr McKay. “Contractors are often unaware that they are working with materials containing asbestos. It is this lack of knowledge and an attitude that 'it will be all right' which is worrying.” Mr McKay said it was vital to raise awareness of the potential hazards of working with materials containing asbestos. Contractors should establish whether asbestos was present in a building and manage it appropriately, he said. At least 10 people a day die in the UK as a result of an asbestos cancer.

- [Northern Echo](#).
- [TUC asbestos webpages](#). [Hazards asbestos news and resources](#).

Pizza delivery has evens chance of robbery

A pizza delivery worker suffered a vicious attack after he was lured to a bogus address. The manager of the Domino's Pizza outlet in south west London said there is a “50-50 chance” a

new customer was a robber. The injured worker went to make the late night delivery but quickly realised that the house number he had been given did not exist. He was about to leave when two youths approached the car and started banging on the window saying “give us the pizza”. When he refused to hand over the food one of the youths smashed the car's window with a baseball bat. The assailants then smashed the windscreen with baseball bats leaving the delivery worker with cuts to his face and a seriously injured left eye. He is receiving ongoing hospital treatment and has temporarily lost the sight in one eye. Shop manager Bruce Zarnani said it was the second time the driver had been attacked while working for the company. “We call new customers VIPs as we have to be extra vigilant because before leaving the store there is a 50-50 chance they may be a customer or they may be a robber,” he said. “Drivers go through a three-day training workshop and are told to look out for anything suspicious, and if there are a lot of kids around or anything out of the ordinary we tell them your safety is more important than the pizzas being delivered and they should return to the shop. But we can't say to customers that we won't go to a particular area, we just can't do that.”

- [Wimbledon News](#).

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Asia: Workers ignored as bird flu advances

Efforts to stop the spread of bird flu across Asia are being compromised because official strategies are ignoring the risks to workers, a global union body has said. The international foodworkers' union federation IUF says in India, where hundreds of thousands of chickens have been culled in the western Indian state of Maharashtra following the appearance of the H5N1 virus in February, farmer are being offered “ludicrously insufficient” sums in compensation for their dead birds, while there has been nothing at all the thousands of workers who have lost their

jobs. India is the world's second largest producer of eggs and fifth largest broiler producer. Indian press reports indicate that proper procedures to protect public health and poultry workers are not being employed in the culling operations, and workers on the affected farms are not being systematically screened for exposure. After an initial news blackout, Burmese state media have now conceded that 10,000 chickens and quail have died of the H5N1 strain of bird flu in the centre of the country, where over 41,000 animals have been culled on chicken and quail farms and bans on egg and poultry sales have been imposed. Afghanistan, Malaysia and Pakistan have now confirmed outbreaks of the H5N1 virus in poultry. Recent reports have also pointed to a possible outbreak in Iraq.

- [IUF news release](#).
- [Hazards infections webpages](#).

Australia: Scabby government attacks fleapit protesters

Outback workers who refused to share digs with rats, feral cats and sewage are being hunted by city lawyers bankrolled by the Australia's anti-union government. Corporate law firm, Freehills, has been contracted to track down blue collar workers who objected to the “fleapit” conditions and prosecute them in court. Workplace relations minister, Kevin Andrews, has endorsed the campaign to use anti-union laws to secure up to Aus\$1.5 million (£616,000) in fines against members of the union AMWU who took strike action to improve outback living conditions. A spokesperson for the minister endorsed the prosecutions and promised similar actions “would be pursued across the country”. Around 70 “bushies” took action last year over inhabitable living conditions in Moranbah, central Queensland. The AMWU members stopped work for three days but returned, after securing improvements, to complete maintenance on a dragline for a nearby coal mine. AMWU state secretary, Andrew Dettmer, said the prosecutions are political, and are not being

pursued by the Gladstone-based contractor that employed the maintenance crew, Eagles Engineering. Dettmer accused Australian prime minister John Howard of a “war on workers gone mad.” He added: “Now he is telling Australians that if they refuse to live in vermin-infested accommodation, they will be pursued and taken to court. The place was fleapit.” It is understood the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations is seeking fines of up to Aus\$18,000 (£7,400) against individuals and Aus\$100,000 (£41,000) against their union, if prosecutions are successful.

- [AMWU news release](#).

China: New payouts policy covers migrant workers

China is to extend to migrant workers the right to benefits including compensation for industrial diseases, the government has said. A report from the official news agency Xinhua said reform of the social security system will expand coverage to about 200 million of the farmers-turned-industrial workers. Labour and social security minister Tian Chengping said as well as insurance schemes covering industrial injuries, medical insurance will also help cover the costs of treatment for serious diseases among the migrant workers. The new policy was announced at the 2006 China Development Forum, which opened this week in Beijing. The government says an aging population and accelerating urbanisation will lead to larger numbers of migrants coming from the countryside to cities, as well as a shortage of young workers in urban areas. “It has become an important task for the central government to balance the workforce market and to link up the social security system in urban and rural areas,” said the minister.

- [Xinhua](#).

TUC courses for safety reps

COURSES FOR JANUARY TO MARCH 2006

- [Northern](#), [North West](#) [South East](#), [Yorkshire and the Humber](#), [South West](#), [Midlands](#), [Scotland](#)

COURSES FOR APRIL TO JULY 2006

- [North West](#), [South East](#), [Yorkshire and the Humber](#), [South West](#), [Midlands](#), [Scotland](#)

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.
- **What’s new** in the [HSC/E](#) and the [European Agency](#).
- [HSE Books](#), PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA. Tel: 01787 881165; fax: 01787 313995

EVENTS AND COURSES