



# Risks Newsletter



Number 260 – 10 June 2006



Editor: [Rory O'Neill](#) of [Hazards](#) magazine. Comments to the TUC at [healthandsafety@tuc.org.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@tuc.org.uk)

Risks is the TUC's weekly online bulletin for safety reps and others, read each week by over 13,000 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](#).

## In this issue

- **ACTION**
- New rights – now it doesn't hurt to ask!
- **UNION NEWS**
- Football doing 'Sweet FA' to end exploitation
- Unions seek fairer deal for temps
- Safety dispute workers get jobs back
- Cabin crew are safety professionals say unions
- Rail dispute continues amid safety fears
- Brutal suppression of workers' rights worldwide
- **OTHER NEWS**

- Safety watchdog defends enforcement record
- Mobile phone culture putting lives at risk
- HSE warns firms not to fall down on safety
- EU working time law talks hit stalemate
- Fraudulent chrome cancer study downplayed risks
- Jobs cause one in 10 adult asthma cases
- Survey to probe bullying of media staff
- **RESOURCES**
- Europe and your rights at work
- Global Labour Inspection Network
- **INTERNATIONAL**
- Global: French government calls for worldwide asbestos ban
- Iraq: The deadliest media war in history
- UAE: Anger at reduced heat break plan
- USA: "Safe" construction giant done for record fraud
- **EVENTS AND COURSES**
- TUC courses for safety reps
- **USEFUL LINKS**

## **ACTION**

### **New rights – now it doesn't hurt to ask!**

The TUC has produced a handy guide to help safety reps respond to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) consultative document on how to encourage, improve and increase worker involvement in health and safety. The pack contains: The arguments for improving safety representatives' rights; an outline of the problems with the current regulations; information on what HSE has been doing to promote worker involvement; details of the consultation exercise; and advice on how to respond. The briefing pack provides question-by-question pointers to make responding quick and easy. TUC is urging safety reps to respond to the consultation. It says this "does not have to be a detailed response. It can even just be a letter. But use your own knowledge and experience." It adds that reps may want to speak to their employer about a joint response. "If your employer values worker involvement or, if you have negotiated any additional rights such as roving safety representatives, then try to get a joint response. This will count a lot towards showing that many employers actually value safety representatives." TUC adds: "The closing date for responses to the HSE is 8th September – but do not leave it too late. Please send a copy of any response to your trade union head office."

- [TUC alert](#). HSE consultation on improving worker involvement: What it means and how to respond - TUC briefing pack for safety representatives [[pdf](#)].
- [Improving worker involvement - Improving health and safety](#), Consultative Document CD207, full consultative document, summary document, print-off-and-use feedback form and online feedback form. Single printed copies of the Consultative Document and summary can be obtained from [HSE Books](#), PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA. Tel: 01787 881165, Fax: 01787 313 995. Comments should be sent to arrive by 8 September 2006 to: [Zoe Woodrow](#), Worker Involvement Programme, HSE, 5th Floor,

North Wing, Rose Court, 2 Southwark Bridge,  
London SE1 9HS

## **UNION NEWS**

### **Football doing 'Sweet FA' to end exploitation**

Days before the world's biggest football tournament kicks off in Germany, Labour Behind the Label and the TUC have called on the football associations behind the 32 competing national teams to insist their sportswear sponsors call time on the production of replica kits in exploitative conditions. In a joint report, 'Sweet FA: Football associations, workers' rights and the World Cup', the two organisations say that the football associations of the world - who are set to pocket more than £200 million in sponsorship this year - have the power to persuade sportswear companies like Nike, Adidas, Puma and Umbro to change their behaviour. 'Sweet FA' says that in many of the factories used by the sportswear companies, working weeks of 80 hours or more are not uncommon, hourly rates of pay are so low workers are reliant on excessive overtime, and working conditions for most are unsafe. Employees who try to form unions to win better terms and conditions risk dismissal, and in a workforce overwhelming made up of women, maternity leave is rare. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "With so much money being made from the beautiful game, the sportswear giants must be made to play fair with the workers who deliver their sky-high profits." The Labour Behind the Label/TUC report says that up to half the factories currently used by Nike - sponsor of the Mexican, Portuguese, Dutch and Brazilian national teams - expect a working week in excess of 60 hours. Adidas - backers of the Argentinian, German, French and Spanish national squads - could, with the £86 million it has paid to sponsor England captain David Beckham, guarantee a living wage to 100,000 of its workers in Indonesia.

- [TUC news release. Labour Behind the Label](#) webpage report summary and full report [[pdf](#)]. [The Guardian](#).

### Unions seek fairer deal for temps

Unions have called for employment rules to be made fairer for temporary workers, who often miss out on the rights enjoyed by permanent staff. TUC said in almost nine out of ten workplaces, agency staff were earning less than staff employed directly by the company because they were either paid a lower hourly rate or missed out on overtime. They also tended to receive less annual holiday pay and no sick pay. The TUC, which surveyed 85 workplaces employing more than 100,000 staff and 15,000 temps, said that although many people thought temporary workers were on short-term contracts and employed to support full-time employees, this was not always true. In almost one-third of cases (31 per cent), temps had been hired to take the place of a permanent member of staff and in many cases they were performing key roles. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: “Clearly temporary jobs are always going to be preferable for some people who have family or other commitments, but there's no reason why the thousands of individuals who opt for agency work should be getting such a raw deal.” Studies have linked “precarious” employment to higher rates of occupational accidents and ill-health and greater exposure to workplace risks ([Risks 209](#)). A European study this year said this form of insecure work was on the increase and was one of the factors leading to new types of occupational health problems at work ([Risks 242](#)). A major report last year reached similar conclusions, adding globalisation was fuelling the trend ([Risks 233](#)).

- [TUC news release. The Guardian. Personnel Today](#).

### Safety dispute workers get jobs back

Around 100 construction workers locked out for over two weeks after a safety dispute ([Risks 258](#)) have been reinstated with full continuity of service. John Philips, an officer with the workers’ union GMB, said: “GMB has secured its primary objective which was full reinstatement with full continuity of service for all those locked out on the site without exception.” Workers employed by Chicago Bridge and Iron constructing liquid natural gas tanks on the South Hook LNG site in Milford Haven walked out when they became concerned about a potential asbestos risk. Over a week after their original walk out, the Health and Safety Executive gave reassurance the site was safe and the men voted to go back to work but where refused entry to the site. Last week, GMB general secretary Paul Kenny criticised the employer for barring workers from returning after the unofficial safety dispute was resolved.

- [GMB news release. BBC News Online](#).

### Cabin crew are safety professionals say unions

A UK union has said the European Parliament is risking airline safety by omitting cabin crew from strict licensing requirements. A delegation from Amicus joined cabin crew unions from across Europe on 1 June to hand over a petition to the European Parliament in Brussels calling for Pan European Licence provisions to include cabin staff. The unions say this would ensure minimum standards throughout the civil aviation industry and recognise the increasingly important role cabin crew play in both aircraft and passenger safety. Airline pilots and engineers are required to hold licenses but under the new proposals cabin crew will be exempt. Amicus said cabin crew are no longer considered glorified serving staff, but are “safety professionals. They are the inflight active response unit who must be ready to act in any situation.” Amicus national officer Gordon White said: “Proposals to omit airline cabin crew for a Pan European Licence will be a blow to air safety and a failure to recognise the hugely important role cabin crew have to play in an environment of heightened security fears.” He

added: “Without a proper licensing system throughout Europe the chances of achieving consistently high levels of safety will continue to be reduced.” Amicus is urging support from all UK MEPs for the three amendments that will secure a meaningful licensing system which will stop discrimination against cabin crew, ensure passenger safety remains at a premium and finally recognise cabin crew as safety professionals.

- [Amicus news release.](#) [ETF news release.](#)

**Rail dispute continues amid safety fears**

Strikebreaking activity by South West Trains (SWT) could place safety at risk, rail union ASLEF has warned. Delegates at the union’s conference in Scarborough this week resolved to ballot all members who work for the company for industrial action. ASLEF says the dispute concerns the breaking of a local agreement about the use of taxis to get drivers to work. The escalation of the dispute comes because of union anger at trainers and managers taking out trains to break the strike, which conference delegated condemned as “blatant... strikebreaking”. ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman commented: “There are clear rules for times managers will drive trains – and they have been broken.” He added that delegates had “expressed real safety concerns. Certain managers have been seen to drive excessively long shifts without proper breaks. One manager who has not driven a train in a decade has been identified as strikebreaking in this dispute.” Ballot papers will be issued over the coming weeks, and the escalation is likely to disrupt rail journeys into London in July.

- [ASLEF news release.](#)

**Brutal suppression of workers' rights worldwide**

Workers worldwide are facing murder, assaults and arrest for defending basic workplace rights, a global survey has found. The ‘Annual survey of trade union rights violations’, published this week by global union confederation ICFTU, reported that 115 trade unionists were murdered for defending workers' rights in 2005, while more than 1,600 were subjected to violent assaults and some 9,000 arrested. Nearly 10,000 workers were sacked for their trade union involvement, and almost 1,700 detained. Colombia once again topping the list for killings, intimidation and death threats, with 70 Colombian unionists paying the ultimate price for standing up for fundamental rights at work. ICFTU general secretary Guy Ryder said: “The death toll was slightly lower in 2005 than the previous year, but we are nevertheless witnessing increasingly severe violence and hostility against working people who stand up for their rights.” TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: “All around the world, trade unionists stand up for people at work. So when authoritarian governments 'round up the usual suspects', or when bullying employers want to ride roughshod over employees and communities, trade unionists are always in the firing line. In the European Union where such human rights abuses are thankfully rare, we have a duty to draw the world's attention to the worst excesses of dictators and the free market, and the EU governments we elect have a responsibility to help unions to show solidarity for working people across the world.”

- [TUC news release.](#) [ICFTU news release.](#) [Annual survey of trade union rights violations.](#) Related ICFTU news releases on [Europe](#), [Africa](#), [the Americas](#), [Asia and Pacific](#), [Middle East](#) and [China](#).
- [Related video and audio clips.](#)

**OTHER NEWS**

**Safety watchdog defends enforcement record**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) had defended a recent enforcement record which has seen inspections, regulatory contacts, prosecutions, convictions and enforcement notices all drop dramatically ([Risks 257](#)). Questioned last month by the House of Commons Work and Pensions select committee, HSE chief executive Geoffrey Podger said “our data show that the actual contact we have with employers is in fact consistent. It is not the case that we have reduced it, although... it is true that we now actually spend more time with fewer people, which we believe to be justified on the basis of the nature of the risk.” Health and Safety Commission (HSC) chair Bill Callaghan told the committee: “HSE does a lot of things, including inspection, but there are many other activities which contribute to the effort. I agree with you, however, that deterrence is a key issue and one area where I think the deterrence value could be improved, of course, would be if there were higher penalties in the courts and we are certainly looking for the limit in magistrates' courts to be raised.” Questioned on the HSE’s three-month-old Workplace Health Connect occupational health scheme for small businesses ([Risks 259](#)), HSE boss Geoffrey Podger admitted “we have had a problem in relation to take up.” The £20m pilot scheme ([Risks 246](#)), run by an external company, had in its first eight weeks “managed to get to around 25 per cent of our expected take-up.” Mr Podger added: “We have now, in the last two weeks, because we have actually altered our way of publicising the service - and there is clearly a lesson in that - managed to get the telephone service advice line up to around 50 per cent of expected calls, the visits up to around 90 per cent.”

- Uncorrected transcript of oral evidence, [minutes of evidence taken before the Work and Pensions Committee](#), The Health and Safety Commission and Executive, 24 May 2006. [CIEH news report](#).

**Mobile phone culture putting lives at risk**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is warning that everyday actions like reaching for a mobile phone, or a cup of tea, could be risking the safety of trades people working at height, with falls from below head height injuring thousands every year at work. TV DIY expert Tommy Walsh joined forces with HSE last month to launch Height Aware, a campaign raising awareness of the dangers faced by people who operate at relatively low heights. A survey of 150 trade people, who were questioned on behalf of the HSE at a recent building exhibition, revealed that one in three admitted to putting their safety at risk by answering their mobile phones while working below head height. The same proportion of people routinely overreached to avoid moving their ladders during low-level work, and one in seven of those surveyed even admitted to reaching dangerously to pick up a cup of tea on the job. Tommy Walsh said: “Reaching down from a ladder to answer a phone is asking for trouble. My advice would be to stop putting yourself in danger for the sake of a phone call. Even if you’re not that high off the ground, a simple fall could see you ending up in plaster or worse.” HSE chief executive Geoffrey Podger said: “Nearly half of those questioned in the recent survey of trades people claimed to have nearly slipped or fallen in the past three months, highlighting the scale of the dangers facing people working at height.”

- [HSE news release](#), [HSE falls from height webpages](#) and [Height Aware campaign](#).

**HSE warns firms not to fall down on safety**

A construction firm has been fined £50,000 and costs of £23,000 after a trainee roofer suffered serious injuries in a fall. Letchworth Roofing Company from Hertfordshire pleaded guilty at Birmingham Magistrates Court to safety offences which resulted in employee Paul Lee Jarman, who was 23 at the time of the incident, suffering a fractured jaw and soft tissue injuries. He fell approximately eight metres through a rooflight at an electrical goods store. Prosecuting HSE inspector Mike Ford said: “It is unfortunate that

on this occasion simple and cost effective measures were not put in place which would have prevented the fall that injured Paul Jarman. Companies need to realise the necessity of implementing appropriate safety measures to provide a safe working environment, preventing falls and avoiding injuries such as these.” He added: “Preventing such injuries is the focus of the current Height Aware campaign, where we are asking people 'to take a moment and not a fall'. The campaign highlights that falls from height are the most common cause of work-related deaths. Every year, around 80 people are killed and more than 5,500 seriously injured as a result of falling from height.”

- [HSE news release](#), [HSE work at heights webpages](#) and [Height Aware campaign](#).

#### Inquiry into chemical plant blasts

Investigations are under way after an explosion at a Teesside chemical plant. The explosion happened on a pipe at the Terra Nitrogen (UK) Limited site in Billingham in the early hours of Thursday morning, 1 June. Emergency services declared a major emergency after a fire started involving mixed gases including hydrogen, nitrogen and ammonia. Two people working at the site were treated for minor cuts and shock. The company said it had started a full investigation. The Health and Safety Executive and Environment Agency will also be investigating. Firefighters’ union FBU said the incident should lead to a rethink on cutbacks in fire cover in the area. The union says planned changes to their service would mean 66 fewer frontline response posts and should be dropped. FBU Cleveland secretary Steve Watson said: “Next time an incident of this type occurs there may be delays in response and fewer fire crew and engines responding. Lives could be put at risk.” Cleveland Fire Brigade said no jobs would be lost, but said “resources are being focussed on prevention and protection and will ensure that community safety is improved.” The blast came just hours after an explosion at a gas plant in

Bristol injured two workers. The incident occurred at BOC Gases in Brislington. Two employees were taken to Frenchay Hospital by ambulance. One needed to be treated for burns and the other for shock.

- BBC News Online on the [inquiry](#) and the [FBU safety concerns](#). [HSE statement](#). [Bristol Evening Post](#).

#### EU working time law talks hit stalemate

Talks which could have resulted in the end of the UK’s opt out from the European Union’s 48-hour working week have hit a stalemate. The government wants to maintain a clause unique to the UK which allows workers to break the weekly working hours ceiling if they wish to do so. Unions have argued that UK workers are already working excessive hours compared to their European equivalents, and say many workers have been coerced into opting out. Austria had hoped to resolve the working time issue under its presidency. After the failure of EU ministers to agree the text, talks on the measures will now not resume until after Finland takes over the role in July. Trade and industry secretary Alastair Darling said talks had hit an impasse. “We could not agree a text saying that we will phase out the opt-out,” he said. Last year the European Parliament voted to phase out the exception over the first three years following the introduction of a new directive. Ahead of the vote, European trade union federation ETUC urged ministers to respect the views of the European Parliament and support the phase out of the opt out clause. ETUC said “compromises on key points in the Directive” would undermine safeguards protecting workers and would leave the way open for “long and irregular working hours, at the expense of the health and safety and social well-being of workers and their families.”

- [ETUC news release](#). [CBI news release](#). [BBC News Online](#). [Personnel Today](#).

- [TUC It's about time website](#). [TUC Changing Times website](#). [Hazards getalife webpages](#).

### Fraudulent chrome cancer study downplayed risks

A highly influential occupational health journal has had to retract a paper on risks posed by cancer-causing chromium after it emerged the paper was not written by the scientists credited, but by consulting firm which has chromium industry clients. The fraudulent paper had been cited by official agencies to justify continued use of a chromium containing wood preservative. The retraction follows a six-month internal review by the journal, prompted by an Environmental Working Group (EWG) investigation. The July issue of the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* (JOEM), the official publication of the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, will carry a retraction of a 1997 article published under the byline of two Chinese scientists, JianDong Zhang and ShuKun Li. The paper contradicted an earlier paper by Zhang which had linked chromium pollution to certain cancers. In an email to the JOEM editorial board, JOEM editor Dr Paul Brandt-Rauf acknowledged that there would be a retraction, but for legal reasons it would be “carefully worded and kept to the barest minimum of facts.” EWG had obtained records from the courts and regulators that showed the article was actually the work of ChemRisk, a San Francisco-based consulting firm whose clients include corporations responsible for chromium pollution. The article was cited by the US Environmental Protection Agency in its decision to allow continued use of chromium in a wood preservative, and by the US Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry in a report that discounted chromium-6 as an oral carcinogen. Chrome-6 compounds are classed as “group 1” human carcinogens by the International Agency for Research on Cancer, its highest risk category.

- [EWG news release](#). [EWG “Chrome-plated fraud” webpages](#). [JOEM notice of retraction](#).

### [Common Dreams](#).

- [Hazards occupational cancer webpages](#). [IARC cancer classifications](#).

### Jobs cause one in 10 adult asthma cases

One in 10 people who develop asthma as an adult probably have their workplace to blame, a study has found. New statistics released by respiratory experts in Australia show hairdressers, spray painters and other people working with chemicals are at greater risk of developing asthma. A survey of 3,300 adults in the state of New South Wales (NSW) by the Woolcock Institute in Sydney found that 9.5 per cent of adult-onset asthmatics developed the condition after working in a “high risk” job. Woolcock's head of epidemiology Dr Guy Marks said these occupations were wide and varied, encompassing everything from automotive repair, electronics manufacturing and farm work, to bakeries, hairdressing and the pharmaceutical industry. He said medical specialists had long recognised work-related asthma as a problem, but the public was still largely unaware of the risks. “And even if people do realise what's happening to them they are often forced by their economic situation to stay in the job,” Dr Marks said. “It might be the only thing they can do and they need the income. So it was vital for employers to do all they can to control exposure to irritants “as many of them already do.” The findings are published in the June issue of the journal *Occupational Medicine*.

- [The Age](#). Anthony Johnson, Brett G Toelle, Deborah Yates, Elena Belousova, Kitty Ng, Stephen Corbett and Guy Marks. Occupational asthma in New South Wales (NSW): a population-based study, *Occupational Medicine*, volume 56, issue 4, pages 258-262, 2006 [[abstract](#)]. doi:10.1093/occmed/kql020.

### Survey to probe bullying of media staff

A new survey is being conducted to determine the extent of bullying in the media. It asks participants to ‘click to be counted’ on a website set up to investigate the prevalence and scope of workplace bullying across key sectors within the UK media industry. ‘Bully at work’ is a three-year research programme being carried out by the University of Ulster at Jordanstown, Northern Ireland. It is an opportunity for employees to register their experiences of workplace bullying, whether that be directly as a target of a bully or indirectly, as a witness to a colleague being bullied. The researchers say the study will provide a comprehensive picture of the size, scale and nature of workplace bullying within the industry.

- [Bully at work research programme](#). NUJ [news release](#) and [bullying guide](#)

## RESOURCES

### Europe and your rights at work

Many of the advances in workplace rights that employees take for granted would not have become law in the UK if it were not for Europe, says a new pamphlet published by the TUC. ‘Europe and your rights at work’ says that many of the protections that we have come to accept at work such as most recent health and safety laws and the right to a minimum of 20 days paid annual leave began life as directives in Europe. The publication features 12 key rights emanating from Europe including the “six pack of safety laws”, sex discrimination law, protection for employees whose jobs are contracted out, equal treatment for part-time workers and limits on working time.

- [TUC news release](#). Europe and your rights at work, £10 (£5 to trade unions), from [TUC publications](#).

### Global Labour Inspection Network

The Global Labour Inspection Network (GLIN), created by award-winning Brazilian labour inspector Fernanda Giannasi and Danish labour inspector John Graversgaard, has the stated aim of defending the role of health and safety enforcement agencies and workplace inspections. A GLIN website includes regular news updates and extensive links.

- [Global Labour Inspection Network](#).

## INTERNATIONAL

### Global: French government calls for worldwide asbestos ban

France has called on the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to ban asbestos all over the world. The proposal was presented by junior employment minister Gerard Larcher at the ILO’s annual conference in Geneva. “France strongly urges the International Labour Organisation to host a far-reaching debate with a view to rapidly ending the use of this material which has caused a major catastrophe,” Larcher told delegates from the ILO’s 178 member states. Asbestos is now illegal across the European Union, but worldwide only around 60 countries have banned it, some with various exemptions. Larcher said the world should follow Europe’s example. But the minister admitted that his proposal ran counter to the positions of “a number of industrialised countries... where asbestos still represents a sizeable market and who think that protective measures are sufficient.” Canada had led the pro-asbestos lobby and has resisted previous attempts to ban the substance. It has recently spearheaded efforts to expand asbestos exports to the developing world. The Canadian government and asbestos lobby have also backed a series of workshops in Indonesia, India, Southern Africa and elsewhere, claiming white asbestos (chrysotile) posed no health risk when used responsibly ([Risks 247](#)). The Global Unions network is backing the call for a global asbestos ban.

- [Yahoo News](#). [Netscape News/CNN](#).
- [International Ban Asbestos Secretariat](#). [IBAS webpages on regulations, bans and related information](#). [Hazards asbestos news and resources](#). [Building Workers International](#).

### Iraq: The deadliest media war in history

A global campaign has been launched to end the terrifying ordeal of journalists in Iraq where at least 129 media staff have been killed and hundreds more injured or disabled in what has become the deadliest media war in modern history. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), joined by the Iraqi Journalists Syndicate and the Kurdish Journalists Syndicate, this week announced the campaign, which they say is backed by journalists' groups across the Middle East and North Africa, as well as throughout the IFJ's international network. IFJ general secretary Aidan White, speaking to journalists in Dubai, said: "Iraqi journalists are the real heroes of this war. Every day they take risks and make sacrifices that must be recognised in the crucial fight for freedom and democracy in Iraq." On 15 June – Iraq's National Day of the Press – there will be demonstrations in Iraq and around the region to highlight what the IFJ says is the "unspeakable suffering" of media in a country where press freedom is close to extinction because of ruthless extremists and targeting of journalists by warring factions. "On this day journalists around the world will honour the memory of those we have lost, we will focus attention on the urgent humanitarian needs of survivors and grieving families, and we will reinforce our demands for action from governments to reduce the risks journalists face," IFJ's Aidan White said. "No journalist and no journalists' group in the world is untouched by the routine intimidation of media and the rising death toll in Iraq. We mourn, but we also demand action to end this slaughter."

- [IFJ news release](#).

### UAE: Anger at reduced heat break plan

Construction workers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have expressed dismay at the Ministry of Labour's decision to reduce the midday break in July and August by 90 minutes. The break was implemented last year as a safety measure to give labourers a rest during the hottest part of the day in July and August. But this year it's been cut by 90 minutes from 12.30pm-4.30pm to 12.30pm-3.00pm. Labourers have complained that even the original four-hour break was too short. Contractors, by contrast, said that the shortened break is still too long and costs them money. The new, reduced, break comes as a result of negotiations between the ministry and the UAE Contractors Association. The association's leader Humaid Salem, said he had pushed for a two-hour break from 12.30pm to 2.30pm. "Extending the break for even half an hour is going to cost the companies a lot of money," he said. The ministry has promised tough penalties for companies flouting the ban this time around, including a temporary ban on recruiting workers. If workers are needed during the break hours because work cannot be stopped for technical reasons, employers must provide desalinated water, first aid, cooling systems and sheds to protect the workers from direct sunlight, a circular from the labour ministry said.

- [Seven Days](#). [Gulf News](#). [Khaleej Times](#).

### USA: "Safe" construction giant done for record fraud

The contractor building the new California Bay Bridge eastern span, KFM (Kiewit/FCI/Manson), which once boasted the job was five times safer than the average heavy construction project, has been cited by state safety authority CalOSHA for an accidents cover up. Three citations include a "wilful regulatory violation" for the unreported injuries - the most severe classification possible.

Of the 13 injuries not reported on the company's annual injury logs, 11 occurred in 2004 - more than doubling the contractor's reported injuries rate that year. "Obviously we are very disappointed in KFM after reviewing the findings of this investigation," said Len Welsh, acting director of CalOSHA in a statement. Both KFM and CalOSHA officials have vouched repeatedly for worker safety conditions on the project. Yet more than 20 welders who have worked on the project said they were pressured to conceal injuries for fear of retribution or the loss of their job. In addition, the company used behavioural safety systems so crews received cash bonuses for posting clean safety records, a practice that could discourage workers from reporting accidents ([Risks 202](#)). Workers say an outbreak of metal fume fever – known on site as "KFM flu" - was also hushed up. A year ago, the company was accused of hiring a top spin doctor to deal with growing criticism of its health and safety practices ([Risks 209](#)). CalOSHA itself has come in for criticism. It had formed a close "partnership" with KFM on the project, and vouched repeatedly for its safety, even after questions were raised about the firm's injury and illness practices. CalOSHA in turn has implicated the federal safety watchdog OSHA, which approved and encouraged the partnership. Partnerships of this type have been part of the national government's business-friendly alternative to enforcement.

- [Confined Space. Oakland Tribune. San Francisco Chronicle.](#)
- Hazards guides to [behavioural safety](#) and the [dangers of alternatives to enforcement.](#)

#### 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/](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

TUC courses for safety reps