



Risks Newsletter



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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](#).

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UNION NEWS

Safety reps are sidelined on sickness

Trade union safety reps are being sidelined on sickness absence issues, with the resulting policies frequently controlled by management and punitive, a survey has found. Researchers from Bradford University's School of Management questioned hundreds of UNISON safety reps and found employers "appeared to categorise absence management as separate to the health and safety function and, as a result, attempted to exclude union safety reps and maintain control of absence arrangements." The preliminary analysis of the survey, based on responses from 834 safety reps, found the focus of many absence agreements was reactive, "punishing individuals following a spell of absence as opposed to identifying and remedying the causes of absence or rewarding good attendance." It report adds in the public sector "management perceptions of a workforce conspiring to abuse absence provisions had resulted in punitive sanctions, a lack of sympathy and discretion and genuinely ill employees being penalised." It concludes trade union safety reps "must forge a systematic link between absence and health and safety," but adds safety representatives themselves were not always properly familiar with absence agreements or their legal entitlements in respect of absence. "This has implications for UNISON in terms of training and support for their safety reps", the report said.

- Absence agreements in the UK Public Sector: A bitter pill to swallow? Preliminary results from a survey of UNISON safety representatives, Interim Report, UNISON, June 2006, authors Dr Robert Perrett and Professor Miguel Martínez Lucio, Bradford University School of Management [[pdf](#)].
- [Hazards sickness news and resources](#).

'Robots' strike threat as work gets LEAN and mean

Around 8,000 civil servants are threatening strike action in response to production line-style methods in tax offices that are turning them into "robots" and risk landing them with repetitive strain injury. The PCS members working for Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) in 10 large processing offices (LPOs) across the UK, have started voting in a ballot for industrial action in a dispute over the deskilling of work. The ballot for strike action, and action short of a strike, follows the introduction of new working practices into HMRC called "LEAN". Workers have reported the new system has led to a culture of corporate bullying, deskilled and an increased strain injuries risk in some jobs. PCS says management has refused to either negotiate or participate in a joint evaluation of the LEAN system, which has so far run up a £7.4m consultancy bill. Mark Serwotka, PCS, general secretary, said: "Members are quite right to be angry that they are being forced to meet unreasonable targets, which in some cases is even leading to repetitive strain injury. It is ironic that in an age where the government is placing a huge emphasis on creating a skilled workforce across the economy, that we have one of the biggest government departments introducing working practices designed by consultants, that reduce the workforce to robots." He added: "Senior management need to start engaging constructively on the issue with the union before ploughing on with the roll out of such demoralising working practices."

- [PCS news release. Newcastle Evening Chronicle](#).

Tony Blair urged to back "kids on farms" campaign

Farmer workers' union TGWU has called on Prime Minister Tony Blair to back its "kids on farms" safety campaign. The union says official figures show 46 children under 18 years old have died in accidents on farms in the last 11 years. TGWU national secretary for agriculture, Chris Kaufman, speaking this week at the first ever

public session of the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Agricultural Advisory Committee, appealed to Tony Blair to recognise that the use of "victims" in talking of safety in society should have a resonance in farming. "One child's death is a tragedy let alone the nearly five a year which we are recording now," he said ahead of the meeting. "Tony Blair is right to highlight victims but farming has its share of victims too. I shall be writing to him as well as making this appeal for action. Farms are dangerous workplaces, not playgrounds." He called for better resources for HSE, adding it was wrong that the agricultural inspectorate had been cut. "What farming needs is a much stiffer safety regime," he said. "It's all very well to focus on slips and falls but wrong to let a culture go on that sees people suffer and record child deaths." TGWU is making four key demands: Mr. Kaufman will outline four key demands this morning: Raising the age for driving tractors and operating machinery on farms from 13 to 16; providing affordable childcare in rural areas; ensuring supervision of farms and prevention of access to hazardous working areas; and the creation by HSE of a project group to examine how the poor record on child safety can be improved. Of the 46 reported deaths in the last 11 years, 19 were under 6 years old; six between 6 and 10; 11 between 11 and 15; and 10 were 16 and 17 year olds.

- [TGWU news release.](#)

Firefighters warn of cutback dangers

Cost-cutting measures by fire services in Cleveland and North Yorkshire could put lives at risk, firefighters have warned. Cleveland fire crews have started a ballot for industrial action over savage cuts planned for the local fire service. Fire stations will be downgraded, 66 frontline firefighter posts will be lost and specialist rescue equipment and fire engines will be axed. Firefighters' union FBU has accused the fire authority of having a cavalier attitude to safety with fewer firefighters taking longer to get to incidents. Telfer Whitfield, chair of Cleveland

FBU said: "These cuts mean fire crews could be left at 999 incidents with the choice of standing back and doing nothing until the necessary resources arrive and risking the public, or ignoring basic safety procedures and risking ourselves. That will clearly compromise our safety and public safety and councillors and senior managers need to take those concerns seriously." Plans by North Yorkshire fire chiefs to cutback on fire crew attendance next year have been criticised for "playing Russian roulette" with the lives of people in the district. FBU said if the plans go-ahead homeowners and businesses will find firefighters no longer automatically attend if their automatic fire alarm is activated. Harrogate firefighter and FBU chair Ian Watkins said: "What is the point of having an expensive fire alarm fitted when the fire service is not going to attend if it goes off?" He added: "These plans really are playing Russian roulette with people's lives." Under the plan, non-attendance will be adopted at premises considered low risk unless a back up call from a member of the public confirms there is a fire, mirroring the approach of the police to burglar alarms.

- [FBU news release. Harrogate Today.](#)

Unions want safer ship recycling

Irresponsible shipbreaking must be eradicated immediately with more work instead undertaken in safe and robustly regulated UK yards, a union organisation has said. In a response to a government consultation on a "ship recycling" strategy, the Northern TUC said: "We would welcome the development of a thriving ship dismantling industry in the United Kingdom, which dismantled all defunct state-owned vessels to the highest standards of health, safety and environmental protection. We expect that the presence of such facilities would act as a catalyst to enable UK-based ship owners to have their commercial vessels dismantled here." The union paper says: "Given the stringent safety and environmental requirements that would be required in the ship recycling industry, it is

essential that a robust regulatory framework be in place to monitor the industry.” It adds: “The Northern TUC believes that ship recycling, were it to prioritise worker health and safety and local community environment, should take place in suitable dry dock facilities, which offer the most environmentally sound means of dismantling toxic and hazardous vessels. Most work in the UK could take place in ex-merchant naval or commercial yards, such as Swan Hunters on Tyneside. There are few facilities in OECD countries that can handle major dismantling of the largest ships. The opportunity presented by potential ship recycling could give the UK a lead in a major environmental industry.” The union paper adds that there must be international support for Asian shipbreaking yards “to alleviate the harmful effects of economic relocation and potential job losses on another set of workers and communities.”

- [UK Ship Recycling Strategy Consultation Paper: Northern TUC Response. Defra consultation on the UK ship recycling strategy.](#)
- [IMF international union shipbreaking campaign.](#)

STUC says take safety crimes seriously

Taking money from a business is treated far more seriously than when a business takes someone’s life or health, STUC has said. The Scottish union federation says the 10 year prison sentence handed down this week to an Edinburgh bank manager for obtaining £21 million by fraud “illustrates that the law treats corporate crime committed against an employer by an employee more seriously than employer crime against workers and their families.” STUC health and safety officer Ian Tasker said: “We have to ask why a crime of fraud attracts a 10 year penalty while employers who kill or maim their workers do not even end up in court”. He added: “Companies and their directors should not be allowed to hide behind the corporate veil and receive immunity from prosecution following workplace fatalities while at the same

time being able to enjoy the protection of the legal establishment when crimes are committed against them. There is quite clearly something perverse about a society that cannot investigate and prosecute employers who commit acts of homicide against individuals but accepts that lesser crimes of fraud should be punishable by substantial sentences as witnessed in this case”. Scottish justice minister Cathy Jamieson last week said she had blocked plans for a new corporate homicide law in Scotland - until after next year's election. Jamieson had told trade unions the law would come into force after experts called for a new law against companies killing workers ([Risks 234](#)). An STUC spokesperson said: “We remain committed to ensuring we get a Scottish corporate homicide law.” Clydesdale MSP Karen Gillon last week launched her own Bill to change culpable homicide legislation so firms can be prosecuted.

- [STUC news release. The Scotsman. Sunday Mail.](#)
- Culpable Homicide (Scotland) Bill. Consultation Paper, Karen Gillon MSP, June 2006 [[pdf](#)].

OTHER NEWS

Shell accused over oil rig safety

Shell has been plunged into a major safety scandal with a senior consultant to the company revealed maintenance documents had been falsified and safety procedures ignored in the North Sea. The revelations, which have led to calls from oil and gas unions for the Department of Trade and Industry to examine Shell’s licence to operate, come from Bill Campbell, a former senior Shell engineer, who alleges that Shell allowed the pursuit of greater oil and gas production to compromise safety. Campbell, who worked directly for Shell for 24 years, says he brought his concerns to the attention of directors as far back as 1999 - and again in 2004 - but still feels safety is compromised. “I am

sorry to have to go public on this but if the current safety regime demonstrated by the Brent Bravo case study ([Risks 204](#)) has failed and if improvements are not undertaken another major accident is inevitable,” he said. Mr Campbell, who led a Platform Safety Maintenance Review (PSMR) of Shell’s North Sea facilities in 1999, said that managers at the vast Brent complex were instructed not to take any action that might cause an unplanned shutdown of production. Shell was fined £900,000 after pleading guilty to safety lapses on the Brent Bravo platform following an accident in 2003 when the facility was hit by a gas leak in which two oil workers, Sean McCue and Keith Moncrieff, died. The fine was criticised by unions at the time as “no deterrent.” The company, which made £13bn profit last year - a UK record - is awaiting the findings of a fatal accident inquiry at Aberdeen sheriff's court into the same event ([Risks 216](#)). Mr Campbell’s report mentions that Shell offshore workers used an acronym TFA - Touch Fuck All - to describe among themselves the need not to meddle with equipment but keep things working. The report by Mr Campbell's team concluded: “Directives such as TFA encourages a behaviour of non-compliance - the Brent TFA acronym is a potential reputation liability.” A May 2005 email by an HSE inspector in Aberdeen, Ray Paterson, said a recent Shell review had “shown up similar safety-related issues, if not more so” as those raised by Mr Campbell. HSE issued an improvement notice in May calling for Shell to take action for failure to maintain pipelines in the legs of the Brent B and D platforms. The company has faced a series of recent penalties for safety offences ([Risks 229](#)).

- [The Guardian](#). [The Times](#). [Reuters](#).
- [TUC/Hazards deadly business campaign](#).

Allergy nurse's compensation deal

An RAF dental nurse whose career was ruined by a potentially fatal allergy to latex gloves has been awarded £260,000 compensation. Lisa Furphy, 35, had to be invalided out of the RAF

in 2004 because of her allergy to powdered latex gloves. It developed after years of exposure to the gloves while assisting dentists. Ms Furphy sued the Ministry of Defence, which agreed to settle her case for £260,000 at London's High Court on 27 June. Ms Furphy, who attained the rank of sergeant after joining the RAF in 1987, will have to cope with the condition and carefully avoid latex exposure for the rest of her life. Although her condition was not formally diagnosed until April 2003, her lawyers claimed medical warnings had been given years earlier but not enough was done to ensure that she was not exposed to powdered latex gloves in the workplace. After years of experiencing breathing problems and other symptoms, the crisis came when she suffered an anaphylactic attack while working at RAF Holton in 2003. Nurse Bernadette Chouchene received £144,000 in compensation last year after her allergy to latex gloves went untreated for years ([Risks 197](#)). In December 2004, UNISON member and former nurse Alison Dugmore received a £330,000 payout for life-threatening latex allergy ([Risks 186](#)).

- [Aylesbury Today](#). [BBC News Online](#).
- [Latex Allergy Support Group](#).

Pub trade 'not hit' by smoke ban

A quarter of Scots are likely to visit pubs more often now public places are smoke-free, according to a survey. The Cancer Research UK poll found just 10 per cent of the 1,000 over-18s surveyed were less likely to visit a pub since the ban came in three months ago. The charity said the net result indicated the smoking ban would not lead to losses for the pub trade. Jean King, Cancer Research UK's director of tobacco control, said the results mirrored the positive experience of other countries that had already banned smoking in public places. “This survey should reassure publicans still worried that the smoking ban will drive customers away,” she said. “Making pubs and bars smoke-free gives workers the protection they deserve and creates a

more appealing place to go to for your social drink with friends.” The survey found since the ban 24 per cent of those questioned visited the pub more often, 45 per cent about the same and 10 per cent less often. Meanwhile, new figures from local authorities indicated a 99 per cent compliance with the ban. The US government’s top medical adviser this week said secondhand smoke kills people and the only way to control it is to ban all smoking in workplaces. Launching a new report, US Surgeon General Richard Carmona said: “The scientific evidence is now indisputable: secondhand smoke is not a mere annoyance. It is a serious health hazard that can lead to disease and premature death in children and nonsmoking adults.” In a preface to the report he wrote: “Nonsmokers need protection through the restriction of smoking in public places and workplaces and by a voluntary adherence to policies at home, particularly to eliminate exposures of children.” The report said it is impossible to protect nonsmokers even with designated smoking areas, making a workplace ban necessary.

- [Cancer Research UK news release. BBC News Online.](#)
- [HHS news release. The health consequences of involuntary exposure to tobacco smoke: A report of the Surgeon General.](#)
- [TUC](#) and [Hazards](#) smoking webpages.

'Smoking gun' found in asbestos case

An insurance giant that tried to evade payment of asbestos compensation in the UK ([Risks 106](#)), is facing the prospect of a massive asbestos bill in the US after it inadvertently handed over a “smoking gun” document in a court battle with General Motors. Royal & SunAlliance is attempting to recover the document that the US car manufacturer claims to be the killer evidence in its \$1bn (£550m) lawsuit over personal injury liabilities linked to asbestos. “It's like a smoking gun, your honour,” GM's legal counsel, Edward Tessler, told the court. GM told the Oakland

County Court in Pontiac, Michigan, that it had found a handwritten memo which it claims to be conclusive proof that the insurer was liable for the claims. GM alleges the memo contains an admission of liability by one of the insurer's former senior US executives. Royal & SunAlliance has said the document records a confidential conversation and should be inadmissible to the court as evidence. The insurer also said that the document had been “inadvertently” included among the 2,000 boxes of documents that changed hands, and that it is entitled to ask for it to be withdrawn. GM is suing Royal & SunAlliance in both America and Britain. In 2003, a UK court told the insurance company it must payout claims to former employees of Turner and Newell, once Britain’s biggest asbestos firm.

- [The Telegraph.](#)

Widow wins asbestos lung cancer battle

The widow of a Birmingham man, who died from lung cancer after being exposed to asbestos, has won her legal battle for compensation. Bill Byrne, a former scaffolder died in 2002 aged 71. Seven years earlier his brother, Bob, who had worked alongside him at Mills Scaffolding and Lyndon Scaffolding during the 1950s and 60s, died aged 61, from the asbestos cancer mesothelioma. Although an inquest concluded that Bill's death was as a result of industrial disease, his widow, Mrs Elizabeth Byrne, had to prove that her husband's death was due to asbestos exposure in order to sue his former employers. Asbestos causes at least as many deaths from lung cancer as it does from mesothelioma, but because there are other causes, including smoking, it is much harder to prove asbestos exposure was to blame. After calling for Bill Byrne’s former workmates to come forward, law firm Irwin Mitchell built a successful case against the firms who had regularly sent their workers to put up scaffolding around power stations, where asbestos dust was present. Solicitor Helen Ashton, who represented Elizabeth in her claim for compensation said:

“Bill Byrne's case was extremely difficult both medically and legally. We had to prove on the balance of probabilities that the asbestos exposure led to Bill's lung cancer and untimely death.” She said the evidence from workmates “was a real turning point and, thanks to these men, we were able to move the case forward and start a court action. Although the defendants hotly contested the case, we also had evidence from internationally renowned experts in Britain, Australia and America, who were able to prove that Bill's exposure to asbestos dust had doubled, if not tripled, his chances of getting lung cancer.” The case was settled in May for a five figure sum. She added that solicitors were seeing an increasing number of asbestos related lung cancer cases.

- [Irwin Mitchell news release](#). [Hazards asbestos news and resources](#).

UK faces huge lung disease toll

Lung diseases kill more people in the UK than in most other European countries, according to a study published this week. The report claims that only seven European countries, five in the former Soviet Union, have a respiratory disease death rate higher than the UK figure of 77.85 deaths per 100,000 people. The European average is 54.09. ‘The burden of lung disease 2006’, commissioned by the British Thoracic Society from the Lung and Asthma Information Agency at St. Georges, University of London, reports that respiratory disease kills one in five people in the UK – an improvement from the one in four it killed in 1999. Many of the top killers, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), lung cancer, asthma and lung fibrosis, are caused commonly by workplace exposures. The report says occupational lung diseases such as mesothelioma, caused by exposure to asbestos fibres, are increasing. Mesothelioma deaths have increased by 70 per cent to 1,862 since 1992. The report adds that health inequalities have a particularly pronounced effect on lung disease deaths. The government this week announced plans for a new National Framework Service to

tackle COPD. ‘A job to die for?’ a report from Hazards magazine, last year estimated that 15-20 per cent of all obstructive lung diseases were caused by work.

- [British Thoracic Society news release](#). Burden of Lung Disease 2006 [pdf]. [DH news release](#).
- [A job to die for?](#), Hazards magazine, Number 92, Oct-Dec 2005. [Hazards work and health webpages](#).

Site blitz leads to mass stoppages

A one-day construction site safety inspection blitz by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has resulted in 17 work stoppages on 19 sites visited. On 19 June HSE inspectors visited 19 sites in Grimsby and Cleethorpes and issued the prohibition notices stopping work immediately because people were at risk of falling and sustaining serious, if not fatal, injuries. HSE inspector Dave Bradley, who was involved in the inspections, said: “I am both disappointed and disturbed at the amount of work inspectors had to stop because there was a clear risk to people's safety.” He added that HSE “propose to continue with this type of saturation inspection of construction sites during the rest of the year in selected parts of South Yorkshire, the Humber region, and North and North East Lincs.” He said falls from height continue to be the most common cause of injuries to people at work with, across the whole country, 53 deaths and almost 3,800 serious injuries occurring in 2004/05 alone.

- [HSE news release](#). [HSE Height Aware Campaign](#).

Olympic contractors must prove safety case

Contractors hoping to win work for London's 2012 Olympics will have to prove they are “walking the talk” on health and safety and have

excellent leadership on both issues. Lawrence Waterman, the newly appointed head of health and safety for the Olympic Delivery Authority, said health and safety will be vital issues for tendering firms. In an interview with Contract Journal, Waterman said all potential suppliers will be asked about their commitment to health and safety, and will need to provide evidence of their leadership on this issue. “It will be no use giving the name of a health and safety adviser – we would expect the chief executive to be taking responsibility for health and safety. Does that person exhibit leadership and commitment to health and safety? That is the most fundamental requirement.” He added: “We could ask companies how many health and safety prosecutions they had, but I would rather know what steps that firm had taken to change things to stop it happening again. Our procurement process will ask about evidence of change. We want to work with firms that have an appetite for improvement – this project will be challenging and we are depending on our suppliers to deliver it.”

- [Contract Journal](#).

Safer working pays off at Durham factory

Production at a North East factory has increased by up to 40 per cent after safer work processes and greater staff participation in safety discussions were introduced. Durham-based manufacturing firm Schmitz Cargobull sought professional help and guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on introducing newer, safer production methods for workers who work at height. The company, which manufactures up to 2,500 commercial vehicle trailers each year, then called upon HSE inspector Melony Ridgeway-Buckley for further support. As a result, the company removed the old system of gantries and ladders, and introduced a new bespoke spray painting system. Dave Sidlow, Schmitz Cargobull's operations director, said that not only had the changes led to increased production, the team of workers who operated the machinery were also

impressed. He said: “This has had an extremely positive impact on productivity in the factory. We carried out the improvements in the spray painting and prep area as part of a wider review of health and safety on the site, and we found that encouraging our employees to get involved and to contribute to the process meant greater buy in because they know we are listening to their ideas.” HSE inspector Melony Ridgeway-Buckley commented: “As Schmitz Cargobull has shown, a safer working environment can bring added advantages to a company by increasing productivity - hence our message that better health and safety is better business.”

- [HSE news release](#).

More proof links Parkinson's to pesticides

New highly credible evidence linking exposure to pesticides to the development of Parkinson's disease has come from a study in the US. A team from Harvard School of Public Health found that people who said in 1992 that they had been in contact with pesticides were 70 per cent more likely to develop Parkinson's within the next 10 years. The finding, published online this week in the journal *Annals of Neurology*, asked participants about their exposure to pesticides long before they developed the disease, removing reporting bias. Researchers led by Alberto Ascherio used data from a study of the link between diet and cancer, begun in 1992. Of the volunteers who filled in the original data, 143,325 responded in 2001 to a follow-up survey to see how they had fared. Ascherio's team found that those who said that they had been exposed to pesticides were 70 per cent more likely to have developed the disease, after age, sex, and other risk factors were taken into account. About 10,000 people in Britain have the disease diagnosed each year. Another US study of men exposed to pesticides published online in June found they are more than twice as likely to develop Parkinson's disease as are men who have managed to avoid contact with the toxic chemicals ([Risks 262](#)). Defra is backing a

three-year study examining whether pesticides can cause Parkinson's disease.

- [Harvard School of Public Health news release](#). [The Times](#). [PlanetArk](#). [Earth Times.org](#).
- Alberto Ascherio and others. Pesticide exposure and risk for Parkinson's disease, *Annals of Neurology*, published online 26 June 2006, Digital Object Identifier (DOI) 10.1002/ana.20904. [[abstract](#)].

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

China: Campaign calls for cadmium compensation

The global metalworkers' union federation IMF is calling on its affiliates worldwide to join the campaign for compensation for workers in China suffering from cadmium poisoning ([Risks 207](#)). When Gold Peak Industries opened its Huizhou factories in 1994, Chinese workers were not warned of the dangers of handling highly dangerous cadmium and were initially refused masks. Years later, these workers suffer from cadmium poisoning, are going into debt from medical bills and unable to find new employment. At least 400 workers at two factories in Huizhou have for years been exposed to cadmium, a poisonous chemical used in the manufacturing of batteries. More recently, several dozen Gold Peak workers have been hospitalised due to exposure to this toxic chemical, some complaining of intense pain. Eight workers have been diagnosed with cadmium poisoning. Protests about the dangers facing the workers have been continuing for over two years ([Risks 167](#)), but the company has refused to respond to calls for compensation, sickness insurance and better medical checks. Gold Peak humiliates workers seeking medical check-ups; for a urine test the workers have to fully undress and shower under supervision. Gold Peak batteries are widely sold in Asia and all over the world, for use mostly in toys, but also in laptop computers and cameras. IMF has

written to GP Batteries' worldwide headquarters in Hong Kong and its European headquarters in the Netherlands in support of the workers.

- [IMF news release](#).
- To send a letter in support of Chinese Gold Peak workers, contact:
- GP Batteries Europe B.V., De heer R. Brands, Kortijzer 4, 5712 VE Asten, Netherlands; and
- Mr Victor Lo Chung Wing, Chairman & CEO, Gold Peak Industries (Holdings) Limited, 8/F Gold Peak Building, 30 Kwai Wing Road, Kwai Chung, Hong Kong.

Europe: Unions demand legal safety measures

Europe's trade unions are calling on the European Commission to ensure its forthcoming health and safety strategy does not undermine workers' legal protection from risky employers. The European Commission will unveil its new health and safety at work strategy for 2007-2012 in the coming months. A comprehensive trade union briefing puts the case against any "break from introducing new legislation". It argues that Commission proposals for "legislative simplification" or "better regulation" may mean unpicking the European Union's legal framework for health and safety at work. The unions say this approach would be "misguided" and would "undermine directives that grant all European workers entrenched rights to better protection for their health and safety." The union submission says the strategy must put a central focus on two key risks, musculoskeletal disorders (MSD) and chemicals. Unions also want mutagens and reprotoxins to be brought within the scope of the Carcinogens Directive, currently undergoing revision. The right to collective representation on health and safety is another focus of trade union demands. A separate submission by the European employers' lobby, UNICE, takes a different line and says "we should move away from the belief that legislation is the only valid means of dealing with occupational health and safety".

- ETUI-REHS news reports on the [union response](#) and the [employers' response](#).
- New scope for the Community health and safety at work strategy 2007-2012, ETUI-REHS [[order form](#)].

- [Sunday Mail](#). [Hill Times](#). [More on the ILO resolution](#).

Global: Asbestos industry continues "safe use" con

The asbestos industry and its friends are continuing to claim they have International Labour Organisation (ILO) support for the continued use of asbestos, despite an ILO resolution expressly refuting this claim. On 14 June, the ILO conference adopted a resolution demanding an end to the use of ILO conventions "to provide a justification for, or endorsement of, the continued use of asbestos" ([Risks 262](#)). However, on 25 June, an article appeared in Zimbabwe's Sunday Mail, saying: "The proposed regulations still hang over the sector and the government of Zimbabwe, in conjunction with the National Chrysotile taskforce, including the International Chrysotile Association (ICA), continues advocacy to raise awareness of the 'Safe Use Principle' of white chrysotile asbestos as stipulated by the International Labour Organisation." On 26 June, a Bloc Québécois MP, in a letter published in the Hill Times, Canada, wrote "in 1986, 137 member countries of the ILO unanimously passed Convention 162, which recommended strict regulations on the use of chrysotile, while banning amphiboles...The 1,500 workers at the mines in Asbestos and Thetford Mines deserve better than this constant criticism of chrysotile, which is wrongly associated with the dangers of asbestos products that have not been used in decades." The statements would appear to be part of an ongoing charm offensive by the asbestos industry ([Risks 247](#)), which seems to be having some success. According to the Sunday Mail article, Zimbabwe government figures show the industry has "managed to carve lucrative markets in the region and is already making headway in Malawi and Botswana."

USA: Police union plans ground zero registry

The USA's largest police union is considering a registry to track the health of its officers who toiled on the pile of World Trade Center rubble. The extent of health effects on the thousands of emergency workers and others who were exposed to smoke, dust and debris are only now becoming apparent. Health and government officials are trying to track the results with screening programmes and health registries. The Bush administration has appointed an official to oversee the federal response. But leaders of the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (PBA), which represents NYPD officers, say they cannot afford to wait for government registries to assess illnesses - like cancer and severe respiratory ailments - over periods of years. "We don't know what the trends are, what kinds of illnesses there are, what symptoms are manifesting themselves," said PBA spokesperson Al O'Leary. "We understand that science takes time, but these officers don't have time. Some have already died, and those who are alive today need to know what kinds of symptoms they should be watching for." A 34-year-old retired police detective, James Zadroga, died in January of respiratory failure, which his autopsy concluded was "directly related to the 9/11 incident." Dr John Howard, the federal appointee, said recently that James Zadroga's death and others may be "warning cases to us that something might be going on here."

- [New York Post](#). [Newsday](#). [Washington Post](#). [The Guardian](#).

RESOURCES

It's in your hands

A new short guide to work-related dermatitis and its prevention is available on the TUC website. The 'It's in your hands' guide is part of a campaign coordinated by the Health and Safety Executive and the safety clothing trade organisation BSIF and is backed by occupational hygiene and medical organisation and TUC. The new guide outlines causes of occupational dermatitis, the law on work with hazardous substances, control measures, recognition of hazardous substances and dermatitis and skin care.

- [TUC skin hazards webpages](#). It's in your hands leaflet [[pdf](#)].

EVENTS AND COURSES

TUC courses for safety reps

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](#).
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