



Risks Newsletter



Number 267 – 29 July 2006

Editor: [Rory O'Neill](#) of *Hazards* magazine.



Comments to the TUC at healthandsafety@tuc.org.uk

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](#).

In this issue

• UNION NEWS

- TUC action call as workers feel the heat
- Amicus wins payout for bullied reverend
- Cyber-bullying rules "should protect staff"
- Union warning on scaffolding qualifications
- NUJ condemns Israeli attacks on media
- HSE faces probe call in Shell deaths case
- Warning on flawed corporate killing bill
- Scots fury over corporate killing plan

• OTHER NEWS

- Hatfield report criticises firms
- Blast highlights Conoco Phillips safety concerns

- Firm fined after teen loses three fingers
- Michelin fined £100,000 for mangling hand
- Roller death brings £75,000 fine
- What did HSE ever do for trade unions?
- Meat staff contract Q fever

• RESOURCES

- Unions can lift some better backs cash
- ILO launches child labour web movie

• INTERNATIONAL NEWS

- China: The high price of workplace ill-health
- Global: More profits, more deaths at BP
- New Zealand: Action call as work deaths increase

• EVENTS AND COURSES

- TUC courses for safety reps
- USEFUL LINKS

UNION NEWS

TUC action call as workers feel the heat



look into the fan.
you are feeling cooler...
you are feeling cooler...

Soaring temperatures should not mean baking workers, the TUC has said. It is warning that as

temperature stay high, employers who fail to protect indoor workers could be breaking the law. Although under UK law there is no clear legal maximum workplace temperature, health and safety regulations place a duty on employers to make sure that the inside temperature is “reasonable” during working hours. If the temperature gets too hot then the regulations say that employers must take action by introducing air conditioning or distributing fans, providing plentiful amounts of cold drinking water, moving staff away from windows or allowing them to dress down. The TUC is warning that if employers fail to keep workplaces cool, they could be liable if a member of staff falls ill because of the heat or has an accident at work because they are feeling tired or faint. To end any possible confusion, TUC wants to see a maximum working temperature of 30°C, or 27°C for those doing strenuous work. At this threshold employers would have to take steps to cool workplaces down. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: “Whilst most sensible employers will be doing their utmost to keep their staff cool in the oppressive heat, there will always be some too mean to do anything to bring their office or shop temperatures down.” He added: “Bosses who fail to adopt the cool work approach risk damaging their firms’ productivity as their employees wilt in the heat. They are also increasing the chances of a member of staff falling ill or having an accident because they were too hot. Employers clearly cannot control the weather, but there is much they can do to keep staff cool, and a clear maximum temperature would make a real difference.” The TUC also this week published an information sheet on temperatures for safety representatives.

- [TUC news release, WorkSmart advice on handling the heat, Temperature factsheet](#)
- Know someone who's feeling the heat? [Send them a 'virtual desk fan' or a workSMART](#)

[eCard](#) to tell them about the TUC hot work advice.

Amicus wins payout for bullied reverend

The Church of England has paid compensation running into tens of thousands of pounds to an evangelical clergyman who said he was abandoned by his bishop over a dispute with parishioners in the Algarve expatriate retirement belt. Clergy union Amicus said the Reverend Eric Britt faced a campaign of abuse and intimidation by one of his congregations in the Algarve and rather than supporting him, his bishop withdrew his licence. Another of his congregations who wanted him to remain in post, declared its independence from the diocese as result. Supportive parishioners claimed their views were disregarded in favour of what they described as “a significant and powerful minority” who objected to his ministry. Rachael Maskell, Amicus’ national officer for clergy, said: “This is an absolutely shocking case of bullying and discrimination but it demonstrates how vulnerable clergy are in these situations. They are being denied basic employment protection and face losing their livelihoods and their homes without the support and backing of their bishops.” She added: “Eric’s bishop failed to seek the views of the congregation and instead sided with a powerful minority, with no regard for natural justice.” Amicus said Eric Britt was the latest of a series of chaplains to have left the parish, with bullying a common factor.

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

Cyber-bullying rules “should protect staff”

Teaching union NASUWT says new government guidelines to help schools, parents and pupils tackle the issue of “cyber-bullying” should also protect teaching staff. The union said the Department for Education and Skills’ (DfES) cyber-bullying guidance should be incorporated into school discipline policies to protect the

health and careers of staff. Chris Keates, general secretary of NASUWT, said: “We are receiving increasing reports of members being harassed and abused by pupils using the internet, emails and mobile phones.” She added: “In the last two years we have had cases of photographs of a teacher being superimposed on obscene images on the internet, a website established to run a hate campaign against a teacher, persistent offensive phone calls to a member of staff and emails being used for sexual and homophobic harassment of members. Cyberbullying and harassment, whether of pupils or staff, is unacceptable and should be met with zero tolerance. It can destroy health and careers.” She called on the government to “take the opportunity when the guidance is issued to schools to advocate its application to staff.” The Education and Inspections Bill would give teachers a legal right to discipline pupils. Parents of bullies would also face court-imposed parenting orders compelling them to attend parenting classes or face £1,000 fines.

- [NASUWT news release](#). [DfES news release](#) and [anti-bullying webpages](#). [Anti-Bullying Alliance news release and report](#). [BBC News Online](#).

Union warning on scaffolding qualifications

Firms should check that trainers issuing scaffolding qualifications are providing the legally-required levels of training, the union Amicus has warned. The union alert comes after it was discovered a training provider in Scotland had been claiming erroneously its course reached the professional standard. The provider, who had received Scottish Enterprise funding, has now gone abroad. Companies had used the training firm believing their trainees had qualified under the Construction Industry Scaffolders Record Scheme (CISRC). Scaffolders must carry the CISRC card. Amicus said the union “strongly recommends” that when companies select scaffolder training providers and courses they check with CISRS that the training is recognised and whether it will qualify

trainees for a CISRS card on completion. “A simple check could avoid much wasted time, trouble and uncertainty for both Amicus members, your workmates and your employers,” the union said.

- [Amicus alert](#). Construction Industry Training Board list of [approved CISRC training providers](#).

NUJ condemns Israeli attacks on media

UK journalists’ union NUJ has protested to the Israeli authorities about the targeting of the media in the current escalation of violence in the Middle East. NUJ general secretary Jeremy Dear has written to the Israeli embassy in support of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), which has condemned the Israeli bombing of the Lebanese broadcaster Al-Manar. IFJ warned the attack follows a pattern of media targeting that threatens the lives of media staff, violates international law and endorses the use of violence to stifle dissident media. Media staff have been killed and injured by Israeli forces in both Lebanon and Palestine this month. A 22 July Israeli air strike on the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation killed technician Suleiman Chidiac. Lebanese photographer Layal Nejib, 23, was killed on 23 July in southern Lebanon after a missile exploded near her taxi. She worked for *Al-Jaras* magazine and other media outlets. Reports say on 19 July an Al Jazeera news crew was fired on by an Israeli military vehicle, and one media worker was slightly injured. Also this month, photographer Mohammad Az Zanoun was shot and injured by Israeli forces in Gaza ([Risks 265](#)). Commenting on the latest incident, IFJ general secretary Aidan White said: “The bombing of Al-Manar is a clear demonstration that Israel has a policy of using violence to silence media it does not agree with.” He added: “This action means media can become routine targets in every conflict.” According to agency reports, an Israeli helicopter fired a missile at the headquarters of Al-Manar in the Beirut suburb of Haret Hreik, wounding seven people, including a television employee.

Israeli aircraft later attacked an Al-Manar transmission tower south of Baalbek in eastern Lebanon, witnesses said. Last week, the International News Safety Institute appealed to all sides in the current Middle East conflict to respect the safety of media staff. “Journalists of all persuasions representing news organisations of every stripe are covering the fighting in Lebanon, Gaza and Israel. They have a dangerous and difficult job to do and their safety and independence must be honoured,” said INSI director Rodney Pinder.

- [NUJ news release](#). IFJ news releases on the deaths of [Loyal Nejjib](#) and [Suleiman Chidiac](#). [INSI news release](#).

HSE faces probe call in Shell deaths case

Offshore union Amicus has called for an investigation into the workings of the Health and Safety Executive’s offshore division, alleging the safety watchdog failed to take action which could have prevented two deaths on Shell’s Brent Bravo platform. The tragedy resulted in a £900,000 safety fine for the company ([Risks 204](#)). A Fatal Accident Inquiry (FAI) last week found that the deaths of Sean McCue and Keith Moncrieff on 11 September 2003 “might reasonably have been prevented” ([Risks 266](#)). Amicus regional officer Graham Tran said he was part of a March 2003 delegation which alerted HSE to safety concerns raised by workers and to a maintenance backlog on Shell platforms including Brent Bravo ([Risks 200](#)). It also highlighted problems with the temporary neoprene patches used in maintenance and whose use was identified in the FAI report as a potential contributory factor in the tragedy. “The Health and Safety Executive had this information and failed to take the necessary action that, in my opinion, could have prevented this tragic incident,” said Graham Tran. “It is beyond belief that following this complaint the HSE wrote to Shell on 18 August 2003 stating ‘these changes do not present an imminent risk to health and safety of the persons working on

the offshore installation.’ It was only weeks later this incident occurred and we lost two of our colleagues.” Amicus said it believed “the time is now right to review the HSE’s role and effectiveness offshore.” Amicus officials will meet on the 3 August to evaluate offshore safety, including the FAI findings. “Lessons must be learnt and immediate steps must be taken to ensure the offshore workforce that health and safety is the number one priority of companies operating in the North Sea, as quite frankly the workforce are not convinced thus far,” said Graham Tran.

- [Amicus news release](#). [Full findings](#) of the FAI report. [HSE news release](#). [BBC News Online](#).

Warning on flawed corporate killing bill

Union campaigners have warned that the corporate manslaughter bill published last week does not go far enough. TGWU general secretary Tony Woodley said: “It is not organisations that kill people - it's those who own, direct and manage organisations, who through negligence, incompetence, or sheer disregard for the law, that do so... The new law must be able to reach those managers who abuse the safety laws of this country. If not, work-related deaths will not be prevented and justice will still be denied.” TUC general secretary Brendan Barber last week welcomed the bill, but added TUC would “urge the government to look at the issue of placing specific legal health and safety duties on directors of companies either through this bill or separately” ([Risks 266](#)). Employers’ organisations CBI and IoD both welcomed the omission of new directors’ safety duties from the legislation.

- [Fack news release](#). [Irwin Mitchell news release](#). [Thompsons Solicitors news release](#). [CBI news release](#). [IoD news release](#). [The Guardian](#). [BBC News Online](#).
- [Home Office press statement](#). [Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Bill](#).

Scots fury over corporate killing plan

Trade union leaders in Scotland have reacted angrily to plans for UK-wide legislation on corporate killing, claiming the proposed bill does not go far enough. The Home Office announced last week that the new corporate manslaughter bill would also be introduced as a corporate homicide law in Scotland. The Scottish Executive had been expected to bring forward its own bill. An expert group convened by the Scottish justice minister Cathy Jamieson reported last year that the Home Office proposals were flawed and recommended more rigorous safety duties, including the possibility of jail terms for company bosses guilty of serious safety crimes ([Risks 234](#)). However, Scottish ministers last week said they had decided it was best for Westminster to legislate for the UK. Ian Tasker, health and safety officer with the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC), said: “While this new legislation may make it easier to prosecute organisations following deaths, of either their workers or members of the public, those who take the decisions that ultimately cause the deaths remain immune from the sanctions normally handed out by the courts for culpable homicide”. He added: “The STUC continues to believe that the Scottish Executive can legislate, and has a duty to do so, to ensure that those who suffer the loss of loved ones are treated fairly by our justice system”. TGWU Scotland regional secretary, Mike Bridger, said: “TGWU Scotland firmly believes that the Scottish parliament should support legislation which will hold negligent employers and the individuals who hide behind the corporate veil to account.” He added: “It is only through this will we be able to change the behaviour of companies who cut corners in order to save money and end up costing lives.” Both STUC and TGWU said they would continue to support a more rigorous private members bill put forward last month by Karen Gillon MSP.

- [STUC news release](#). [TGWU Scotland news release](#). [The Scotsman](#). [BBC News Online](#).

- Culpable Homicide (Scotland) Bill. Consultation Paper, Karen Gillon MSP, June 2006 [[pdf](#)].

OTHER NEWS

Hatfield report criticises firms

A final report into the Hatfield rail crash has found engineering firm Balfour Beatty failed to manage track inspection and maintenance at the site. Railtrack, which then controlled infrastructure, did not effectively manage Balfour Beatty's work, added the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR). Commenting on the findings of the report into the incident in which four people died and 70 were injured, Bob Crow, general secretary of rail union RMT, said: “The victims of Hatfield were victims of privatisation, which put profit ahead of safety.” He described the prosecution arising out of the disaster as “a farce which effectively said that safety rules were broken but that no-one was responsible. It is shameful that no-one was held to account for a tragedy that could and should have been avoided.” Earlier this month a record £10m fine for Balfour Beatty's part in the crash was cut to £7.5m ([Risks 265](#)). In September 2005, five Balfour Beatty and Network Rail bosses were cleared of corporate manslaughter on the direction of a judge, and subsequently received £21m from the public purse to cover their legal costs ([Risks 259](#)). In May, Balfour Beatty was criticised by rail union RMT for paying six-figure bonuses to company directors in 2005, the same year it was convicted on safety charges relating to the deaths ([Risks 253](#)).

- [ORR news release](#). [RMT news release](#). [BBC News Online](#).
- [Train Derailment at Hatfield: A Final Report by the Independent Investigation Board, July 2006](#)

Blast highlights Conoco Phillips safety concerns

News that two workers at a Teesside oil plant have been left fighting for their lives after a flash fire has led to concerns about the safety record of oil multinational Conoco Phillips. The men received first degree electrical burns in the fire at the site at Seal Sands, Middlesbrough on 19 July. The two workers, one in his 50s and one in his 30s, suffered horrific burns to the head, neck and chest in the incident in an electrical sub-station on the site. It is believed the blast was the result of an electrical failure in the sub-station which caused a flash fire. The two men were hit by the flames and, after receiving medical treatment on site, were flown by helicopter to Newcastle's Royal Victoria Infirmary. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is investigating the blast. A year ago, Conoco Phillips was ordered to pay more than £1m for breaching health and safety regulations after an explosion at its Humber refinery, described by HSE at the time as the most serious chemical incident in Britain for decades ([Risks 231](#)). David Urpeth of law firm Irwin Mitchell, who represented over 75 workers who were injured in the 2001 blast, commented: "I am troubled that there has been another accident at a Conoco Phillips so soon after the explosion at Immingham." He added: "Despite the severity of the accident at Immingham, we see two workers being very badly injured in an accident at another Conoco Phillips site. I wonder what lessons have been learned."

- [Irwin Mitchell news release. Hartlepool Mail.](#)

Firm fined after teen loses three fingers

A teenage construction worker laying concrete on the new Wembley Stadium site lost three fingers after his employer removed safety guards from a machine. Ian Goom, trading as Aztec Screeding, of Chalfont St Peter, Buckinghamshire was fined £3,000 and ordered to pay £3,028 costs at the City of London Magistrates Court. Robert Haywood, 18 at the time of the incident, was involved in work to lay concrete flooring

using a screed pump, a machine that first mixes the cement and then under high pressure pumps the cement through a pipe. On his fourth day at work on the site, a safety grill designed to prevent access to the mixing paddles inside the machine had been removed and a safety interlock switch had been overridden. Whilst emptying a bag of cement into the mixing chamber of the pump the young employee's left hand was dragged into the machine. Three of his fingers were crushed requiring partial amputation down to his first knuckle. Speaking after the case, investigating inspector Simon Hester said: "The risks associated employing young people are well known, managers of young persons should take into account their inexperience and possible lack of awareness in assessing potential dangers." He added: "Had Mr Goom ensured the screed pump on site was properly maintained, that the manufacturer's operating instructions were followed and that his employee was adequately supervised, the accident involving Mr Haywood would not have happened." Goom pleaded guilty to breaching the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998, Regulation 11 in that he did not ensure measures had been taken to prevent access to dangerous parts of machinery.

- [HSE news release.](#)

Michelin fined £100,000 for mangling hand

Tyre firm Michelin has been fined £100,000 and ordered to pay costs of £12,500 after an employee's hand was mangled in a machine from which the guard had been removed. The firm pleaded guilty to a breach of the work equipment regulations at Stoke on Trent Crown Court. The prosecution came after employee Kenny Beech caught his hand in work equipment, removing three fingers to the first knuckle. Speaking after the case, HSE investigating inspector Janice Dale said: "In this case Michelin Tyres plc failed to ensure that all safety measures were in place on their work equipment. If the guarding arrangement had been used as in the original design Mr Beech

would have been unable to access the moving part that was responsible for part of three of his fingers being removed.” She added: “It is the employer’s duty to ensure that risks to safety within the workplace are adequately assessed and that adequate control measures are implemented to avoid injury.” Mr Beech was injured on 7 September 2004, when his fingers were caught in work equipment. A guard that was originally part of the equipment had been removed. This, combined with other modifications, allowed access to moving parts of the machine.

- [HSE news release. Auto Industry. BBC News Online.](#)

Roller death brings £75,000 fine

A plant hire firm has been fined £75,000 after one of its Plymouth employees was killed while loading a roller on to a lorry. Ashtead Plant Hire Company Ltd, commonly known as A-Plant, was also ordered to pay £18,500 costs by a judge at Plymouth Crown Court last week. The court heard that the firm had failed to ensure equipment used by Kenneth Agnew was in working order. Mr Agnew, 62, was killed after being thrown from the roller on 13 April 2004. Witnesses saw Mr Agnew, who had worked for A-Plant since May 2003, driving the roller up a ramp on to the back of a lorry, only for it to accelerate and lurch to one side. A-Plant admitted at an earlier hearing failing to comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The prosecution had been brought by the Health and Safety Executive. Mr Recorder Alun Jenkins QC, sentencing, told the court that the incident was most likely to have been caused by a “combination of a number of factors altogether.” He said that depressions in the ramp meant that the roller lost traction as Mr Agnew drove it on to the lorry. Hooks which were used to attach the roller to the wire winch cable were too small and one had no safety catch. A third factor was that Mr Agnew was not wearing a seatbelt, the judge said. A-Plant had paid compensation to Mr Agnew's widow following

the incident, the hearing was told. An HSE spokesperson said: “The level of fine in this case sends a serious message to employers that health and safety in the workplace must be an absolute priority.”

- [Plymouth Evening Herald.](#)

What did HSE ever do for trade unions?

Unions and Health and Safety Executive (HSE) might have occasional differences, but that doesn’t mean there’s not a lot of good stuff going on too. A new briefing from HSE lists over 20 positive recent developments, from the creation of a “worker involvement programme” with dedicated staff and its own impressive six-figure budget, to joint working on campaigns and publications. It says HSE is now “working more closely with trade unions in developing and delivering policy,” and has regular “keep in touch” meetings with TUC policy staff. The briefing adds that legal changes sought by unions are in the pipeline, including new worker consultation rights and the corporate killing law. On top of that, it says HSE has “published guidance for employers on how to consult... previous guidance was only about what the law requires rather than how to do it.” And there’s plenty more, on publications, penalties and other pertinent points. Commenting on HSE’s developing work with trade unions, TUC head of safety Hugh Robertson said “we warmly welcome this area of work by the HSE and look forward to working with them to make sure that it makes a difference in the actual workplace.”

- [HSE and trade unions. HSE safety reps’ webpage.](#)

Meat staff contract Q fever

Eighteen people who work at a meat processing plant in Bridge of Allan in Stirlingshire have contracted the work-related infection Q fever.

NHS Forth Valley said it was possible others could be affected by the outbreak of the flu-like illness. An environmental health team was called in after workers at the Scotbeef facility reported feeling unwell. Q fever is caused by a bacterium called *Coxiella burnetii* carried by farm animals, and is an officially recognised “prescribed industrial disease” in the UK. The infection is usually passed to humans through the faeces, urine or milk of goats, sheep, or cows. It can also spread if people inhale dust that contains particles of infected animal tissue and has been reported in the UK in workers handling animal hides. The disease causes flu-like symptoms. Within a few weeks of becoming infected a person will experience a high fever, severe cough, headaches and muscle pains. However, many will fight off the infection without needing treatment. Once Q fever has been diagnosed with a blood test, doctors can prescribe antibiotics, which usually allow people to make a full recovery. However, a significant minority of sufferers can develop Q fever endocarditis, a serious heart condition. Leading microbiologist Professor Hugh Pennington described the outbreak as “big”. He said: “It’s a big number, it’s a big outbreak.” The number of confirmed cases is expected to increase.

- [Glasgow Herald](#). [BBC News Online](#). [The Scotsman](#).

RESOURCES

Unions can lift some better backs cash

Do you intend to lift a finger to prevent bad backs? Have you got a load of good ideas on safer handling? Then you might be able to get your hands on some HSE lolly. Its Better Backs Campaign has a funding pot for initiatives to “reduce the incidence and impact of bad backs caused or made worse by work” and “reduce the number of working days lost due to back pain.” HSE says: “If you run an event that supports these aims we want to work with you, providing both financial and non-financial support to help

you and your organisation get the most out of these initiatives.” So, if your union or safety campaign group is planning anything backs related from the workplace level to nationwide, it could well be worth making an application. TUC is backing the initiative, which will also result in new workplace resources including a workplace inspection guide.

- [HSE Better Backs Campaign funding webpage](#).
- To apply for funding and non-funding support, complete the [Stakeholder Event Request form](#). Help filling out the form can be found in [Guidelines to Stakeholder Event Funding and Support](#). For more information and advice on running an event, email [HSE Better Backs Campaign](#) or telephone Emmie Galilee on 0207 717 6118 or Lucy Ashken on 0207 717 6716.

ILO launches child labour web movie

The International Labour Office (ILO) has launched a new online movie on the plight of more than 200 million child labourers worldwide. ILO says improvements are achievable, with a recent ILO report saying the number of child labourers worldwide fell by 11 per cent between 2000 and 2004, from 246 million to 218 million. What's more, the number of children aged 5-17 years trapped in hazardous work decreased by 26 per cent, to reach 126 million in 2004, down from 171 million in 2000. ILO attributes the reduction in child labour to increased political will and awareness and concrete action, particularly in the field of poverty reduction and mass education that has encouraged a worldwide movement against child labour. “In this 21st century, no child should be brutalised by exploitation or be placed in hazardous work,” said ILO director-general Juan Somavia. “No child should be denied access to education. No child should have to slave for his or her survival. Let's keep up the momentum. Let's resolve to keep investing in the struggle for the right of all children to their childhood.” ILO says it is committed to helping countries lift all

children out of the worst forms of child labour by 2016.

- [ILO news release. Web movie \(in 12 languages\).](#)
- [International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour \(IPEC\)](#)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

China: The high price of workplace ill-health

The cost of occupational illnesses and work-related injuries in China has soared to 100 billion yuan (£6.8 billion) in direct losses every year, underscoring the risk to workers' health, a senior health official has said. The indirect costs could be double that the figure, reaching 200 billion yuan (£13.6 billion), said Li Tao, head of the Occupational Health and Poisons Control Institute. The official noted that some local governments had long ignored the prevention and control of occupational diseases, focusing only on economic growth. "Many projects were launched without an assessment of their impact on occupational health, and approval criteria were lowered to attract investment," he added. Occupational health research and education were low priorities, with most of the occupational healthcare institutes that do exist located in big cities in the eastern regions. Li said government statistics showed 26 provincial occupational healthcare institutes on average dealt with 8,385 enterprises and every occupational health professional served 4,713 workers. The Ministry of Health is conducting a nationwide survey of the 200 million rural and migrant workers, and has vowed to provide basic occupational health services for them. It will also set up a pilot network to improve reporting and monitoring of illnesses as the existing system is incomplete, said Su Zhi, deputy head of the ministry's supervision division.

- [China Labour Bulletin. China Daily.](#)

Global: More profits, more deaths at BP

As the media oozed praise for global oil giant BP this week on the announcement of record quarterly profits, another BP statistic went largely unmentioned. A US contract worker became the firm's latest casualty, killed at the same BP Texas City plant where 15 died in an explosion last year ([Risks 249](#)). The company has been criticised repeatedly for a fatality rate significantly higher than all its major US competitors. The latest death occurred when a worker on a telescopic platform became pinned against a pipe rack he was attempting to move. He was the 18th person killed at the BP Texas City facility in two years. In September 2004, two men were killed when a pipe burst and struck them with super heated water. In March 2005, a series of explosions ripped through a unit and killed 15 people. The multinational has also had safety problems outside the US. In January 2002, BP was fined £1m after a series of safety breaches at its plant in Grangemouth, Scotland ([Risks 38](#)). This week the oil giant unveiled record \$6.1bn (£3.3bn) second-quarter profits. The figure for the three months to 30 June represents a 23 per cent rise on the same period in 2005, boosted by higher oil prices. The company's safety record was one factor that contributed to a reduced bonus for BP CEO Lord Browne. In March 2006 it was announced 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 ([Risks 249](#)). 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.

- [Galveston Daily News. Confined Space. BBC News Online.](#)
- [More on BP's safety record.](#)

New Zealand: Action call as work deaths

increase

The New Zealand government is calling on all businesses and workers to make health and safety improvements in the workplace a key priority this year. This follows workplace deaths investigated by the Department of Labour rising to 65 in the year ended June 2006. “The tragedy is that many of these fatalities are preventable,” Department of Labour workplace deputy secretary Andrew Annakin said. Until 2005/06, the number of workplace deaths had been falling, despite a growth in the size of the labour force. The Department of Labour investigated 73 workplace deaths in 2001/02 and 73 in 2002/03. This fell to 62 in 2003/04 and to 47 in 2004/05, before rising to 65 in 2005/06. “Businesses should not view good health and safety systems as a cost or impediment but as an investment,” Mr Annakin said. “The death or injury of a worker can have a massive cost, both human and financial. This includes the loss of productivity through lost skills and experience, effects on staff morale and confidence, and possible fines. The loss of loved ones, the suffering of family and friends, and the wider social impacts are immeasurable.” The 65 victims in 2005/06 ranged in age from two to 92. All but five were men.

- [NZ Department of Labour news release.](#)

[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****COURSES FOR SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 2006**

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

USEFUL LINKS

- **Visit** the TUC http://www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/ website pages on health and safety. See what’s on offer from [TUC Publications](#) and [What’s](#)