



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

Improvements promised on work deaths law

A draft law to make companies more accountable for workplace deaths passed its latest procedural hurdle this week, with the government pledging to change the bill to make it easier to prosecute companies following fatal accidents. After passing its crucial second reading stage on 10 October, the Corporate Liability and Corporate Homicide bill will now be debated in committees where amendments can be made, before being voted on again late this year or early in 2007. Unions and workplace safety campaigners, who lobbied MPs ahead of the vote, believe it does not go far enough and will not deter irresponsible employers, given it does not carry the threat of imprisonment for gross negligence. Home Secretary John Reid acknowledged the bill “was not perfect”, but told parliament: “It will enshrine a more effective offence of corporate manslaughter, one which properly targets corporate failures.” In a concession to critics of the bill, he told MPs the government would bring forward amendments to change the test of liability. Many critics “felt this test of liability too narrowly drawn”, Mr Reid acknowledged. He stressed it was “critical that the new offence has public confidence”, so the government would seek to change the bill at the committee stage to take account of the way the fatal activity had been managed generally within the organisation. Many critics, however, argue the bill must go further. Speaking ahead of the vote, Tony Woodley, TGWU general secretary, said the bill “hands negligent directors a ‘get out of jail free’ card and will not deliver justice or safer workplaces.” He added: “Labour Party conference voted overwhelmingly for directors’ duties to include health and safety, carrying a custodial sentence in the most severe cases, and Labour MPs and the government should listen” ([Risks 277](#)). Alan Ritchie, general secretary of construction union UCATT, said: “Hundreds of workers are losing their lives every year, and will continue to do so unless government acts to change workplace health and

safety culture by making negligent bosses responsible.”

- [TGWU/UCATT news release](#). [STUC news release](#). [The Scotsman](#). [The Herald](#). [Reuters](#). [Financial Times](#). [The Guardian](#). [Personnel Today](#).
- [House of Commons debate](#), Hansard, 10 October 2006.
- [Hazards deadly business campaign](#). Centre for Corporate Accountability briefing on corporate manslaughter [[pdf](#)].

Corporate killing law must target bosses

Trade unions and health and safety campaigners will be seeking changes to the corporate killing bill to make dangerous bosses accountable for deadly workplace crimes. Representatives of national unions and campaign groups Families Against Corporate Killers (Fack) and the Hazards Campaign lobbied MPs ahead of the 10 October House of Commons vote on the Corporate Liability and Corporate Homicide bill. Ian Tasker, health and safety officer for the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC), said: “We want a broader test of management failure, an individual responsibility on directors and managers who are responsible for the deaths of workers or members of the public, and an increase in the range of sentencing options.” He had met Scottish Labour MPs to put across changes campaigners felt were necessary for effective legislation. Home Secretary John Reid has already promised improvements to the liability test, but the issue of liability of company bosses is certain to be the focus of lobbying by unions and campaigners at the committee stage of the bill. Fack founder Dorothy Wright, whose son, Mark, was killed in an explosion in a factory in Chester last year ([Risks 242](#)), said: “The legislation is extremely weak and has many flaws - the most important one being that it fails to hold senior managers to account.” She added: “Directors of companies cannot easily be imprisoned for manslaughter, which is wrong.”

Bereaved relatives protested outside parliament, holding up posters which read: “Death at work is not an accident.” Hilda Palmer, of the Hazards Campaign, which supported the demonstration, said employers who flouted health and safety laws should face more serious penalties. “Until directors of large companies face imprisonment for their negligence, workers will not be any safer than they are now. The government must listen to the families of people killed by employer negligence, not collude with the business world. The current bill is a disgrace and a betrayal of workers and their families.”

- [STUC news release](#). [BBC News Online](#). [The Guardian](#). [Evening Times](#). [The Scotsman](#).
- [FACK website](#). [Hazards Campaign website](#).

NUJ protest after police hurt photographer

The heavy-handed policing of a demonstration outside the Houses of Parliament during which a professional photographer was injured is a cause for “deep concern”, journalists’ union NUJ has said. The union is gathering evidence to mount a possible claim against the police. Marc Vallée was taking photographs in the vicinity of Parliament Square when he received a blow to the head which resulted in him being taken to hospital in an ambulance. Reports estimated that at least 800 police officers were on duty to police around 150 protesters, mainly anti-war and peace campaigners and people campaigning against the no protest zone around parliament. Some journalists were seen to be roughly handled by the police as the officers tried to push people back. NUJ general secretary Jeremy Dear, who happened to be in Parliament on union business, witnessed the protest and was shocked at what he saw. He said: “There was a totally disproportionate police presence and an overly aggressive attitude towards around 50 people sitting on the ground.” He added: “I complained to the MP I was meeting about the heavy-handed policing and stressed that the right to protest should be respected. The NUJ is appalled to hear

of Marc’s injury and we are in the process of gathering evidence about the incident.”

- [NUJ news release](#). [Indymedia](#).

Smoke out work policies now

Employers in England are being urged by the TUC not to wait until next summer before banning smoking in their workplaces. From summer 2007, all workplaces in England - with a few minor exceptions - must be smoke-free or employers will face prosecution. A new TUC guide – published last week to coincide with the closing date for submissions on the draft smoking regulations - says that rather than put off the inevitable for a few months, employers should be sitting down now with employees to work out the most sensible ways of implementing the new smoke-free regulations. The guide says that every workplace should have a smoking policy - drawn up in consultation with staff - that protects smokers from persecution and offers them help giving up. It also needs to cover what happens to persistent smokers who breach the ban as well as breaks for staff who will soon have to go outside to light up. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: “For every month that employers wait to introduce a ban more employees will die or become seriously ill as a result of second-hand smoke at work.” He added: “With around 700 workers dying every year from smoking-related diseases caused by passive smoking at work, there is no sensible reason why employers can't be sitting down with staff now to talk about how the ban will happen and how to make every workplace a safer, healthier place to be.” Research in Scotland has highlighted the benefits of a ban. Dundee University researchers found the health of Scotland's bar staff has improved dramatically since the introduction of a smoking ban on 26 March. Daniel Menzies, from the research group, said that in the two months following the introduction of the ban, the number of bar staff who showed smoke-related symptoms fell from more than 80 per cent to fewer than half. The team also recorded

reductions in levels of nicotine metabolites in the bloodstream and breathing tests showed improvement in lung function of up to 10 per cent.

- [TUC news release](#) and guide, [Negotiating smoke-free workplaces](#). [British Heart Foundation news release](#). [The Guardian](#). [BBC News Online](#).
- Daniel Menzies and others. Respiratory symptoms, pulmonary function, and markers of inflammation among bar workers before and after a legislative ban on smoking in public places, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, volume 296, number 14, pages 1742-1748, 2006 [[abstract](#)].

OTHER NEWS

Worn out doctors a road 'accident danger'

One in six junior doctors has suffered a road accident in the past two years, many of whom were on the way home from hospital after long shift, according to new research. A survey by the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) found 16 per cent of specialist medical registrars, doctors in training to become consultants, had been involved in a crash while commuting. The college is calling for shorter shifts on the back of the findings claiming, despite European legislation restricting the working day, some registrars are working a 91-hour week. The survey found 264 out of 1,619 specialist registrars had experienced a road traffic accident when commuting in 2004-2005. Of these, 134 had been accidents driving to work and 130 when driving home, with 74 happening after a day shift and 56 after a night shift. Launching a new safer rotas guide, RCP president Professor Ian Gilmore said: "The bad news from our survey is that patient and doctor safety is being compromised by current junior doctor rotas, but the good news is that we have workable evidence-based solutions to offer acute hospitals around the country. These solutions must reach

the frontline quickly." Dr Bob Coward, RCP specialist registrar adviser, said half of the specialist registrars involved in acute medical care are working seven consecutive nights, the majority with 13-hour shifts, resulting in a 91-hour week ([Risks 212](#)). The RCP findings echo those of a 2005 US study, which found "extended work shifts pose safety hazards for interns: the risk of any motor vehicle crash increased by 9 per cent while working those shifts, and the risk of a crash during commuting increased by 16 per cent" ([Risks 191](#)).

- [RCP news release](#). [Glasgow Herald](#).
- [Designing safer rotas for junior doctors in the 48-hour week: Report of a multidisciplinary working group](#), RCP, October 2006 [[pdf](#)].
- [Hazards get-a-life webpages](#).

Man develops illness with photochemicals

The former employer of a photo booth engineer whose health was wrecked by toxic chemicals has been fined £100,000. Photo-Me International received the fine and was ordered to pay an additional £30,000 in court costs after pleading guilty at Bristol Crown Court to flouting eight health and safety regulations between 2000 and 2004. The problem only came to light after Stuart White, 37, blew the whistle on the workplace dangers. He was one of three workers who suffered debilitating injuries after they were required to mix dangerous chemicals by hand. He contracted dermatitis, which resulted in painful burns all over his body, including his eyelids. The condition was so bad he couldn't do up his shirt buttons without his blistered fingertips bursting open. Speaking after the hearing, he said: "These burns made my life a living hell. I'd drive home at night knowing that I would be in agony later on." The case follows a two-year investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). HSE investigating inspector Liam Osbourne said: "Stuart had his employment terminated because he was no longer able to work because he had been

sensitised. It's an important case for us because we think more prosecutions will come from it. It draws the public's attention to how serious and debilitating dermatitis can be. But if Stuart hadn't come forward we would be none the wiser." Judge Simon Darwell-Smith said: "We're concerned with a long period of four years and three employees who suffered considerably from the effects of chemicals. It is apparent that a woefully inadequate system existed in the company to ensure there was sufficient measures to handle this on a day-to-day basis."

- [HSE news release. Gloucestershire Echo.](#)

Cancer patients face 'misery at work'

Cancer patients are facing unfair dismissal and discrimination at work, despite a new law meant to offer employment protection. A disability rights watchdog says some have even been sacked after being refused time off for treatment. Changes to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) which came into force at the end of last year gave much stronger protection at work to people with serious illnesses like cancer, HIV and multiple sclerosis. But the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) reports that 200 cancer patients had called its helpline this year complaining of problems at work. The commission said these cases are the tip of the iceberg and many more seriously-ill patients are still unaware of their rights. DDA says employers must make changes to people's working arrangements, such as time off for treatment or reduced working hours. These changes - called 'reasonable adjustments' - should ensure cancer patients can return to work in some capacity. Agnes Fletcher, from the DRC, said they are shocked at the extent of the discrimination. "Sometimes employers think a person who's had cancer shouldn't be in work, but it can be very important for people to have the social contact and the income. We've had instances of people saying they want to go back to work and employers saying 'I don't want you because you're too much of a risk'. I think that's very sad." Responding to the DRC report, safety

professionals' organisation IOSH called for employers to be "flexible and fair" towards employees either suffering or recovering from serious illness. IOSH president Neil Budworth said: "Health and safety practitioners up and down the country can help employers find workable solutions. The law requires employers to make 'reasonable adjustments', these need not involve expensive changes. The solutions can be as simple as agreeing flexible working hours, so that people coping with these serious illnesses can vary the hours they work, return to work part-time or perhaps work from home in the short or longer term."

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

New explosion hits Welsh steel plant

An explosion ripped through part of Port Talbot's Corus steel works last week and put four workers in hospital with burns. Ambulance and fire crews raced to the number four blast furnace, which was being worked on following a shutdown for a £16 million overhaul. Police, the fire service and ambulance crews joined Corus's own emergency team following the explosion which took place at around 2.15pm on 3 October. Press reports says the scenario was chillingly similar to the 8 November 2001 disaster at the plant's number five furnace, which killed three men and left a dozen seriously injured ([Risks 232](#)). The Health and Safety Executive has served two summonses on Corus relating to the 2001 tragedy, and a hearing is due to take place at Swansea Crown Court on 14 December. Commenting on the latest incident, Corus spokesperson Robert Dangerfield said the blast furnace was undergoing maintenance work and work to install new environmental equipment. "I believe that there was a release - what they call, colloquially, a blow-out. I have been to the plant recently and health and safety are, obviously, paramount. People are obviously shook up that something like this can happen. A health and safety investigation will look at exactly what happened." The latest incident

comes just five months after Kevin Downey, 49, was killed after falling into molten waste at the plant ([Hazards 255](#)). This was the fifth death in five years at the plant.

- [South Wales Evening Post](#) including [details of recent deaths at the plant](#).
- [Hazards Corus webpages](#).

BP chief in US court escape bid

BP chief executive Lord Browne has been granted a reprieve from giving evidence in a US federal court over a March 2005 fatal explosion at the oil company's Texas City refinery ([Risks 272](#)), after 52 claimants agreed to seek a settlement with BP. The chief executive had been due to give a six-hour deposition within the next three weeks after being ordered to testify by a US federal court. However, Tony Buzbee, the lawyer representing the 52 people seeking damages from BP in the federal court, said three cases had been settled out of court on 9 October and the rest would be settled within 10 days. The settlement terms were confidential, but Mr Buzbee said: "I think my clients are going to do great and I'm very happy." The danger the London based executive will have to give evidence in the US hadn't yet passed entirely, however. A separate case in a Texas court this week also heard arguments from lawyers representing a further 59 litigants who insist that Lord Browne must be forced to make a deposition on his knowledge of cost-cutting at the refinery. A BP spokesperson said that this court was unlikely to make an immediate decision. Eva Rowe is suing BP over the loss of her parents, James and Linda Rowe, who were killed in the explosion that left 15 people dead and more than 170 injured. Ms Rowe has refused a settlement. Her case is expected to be heard in the first week of November. Ms Rowe's lawyer, Arturo Gonzalez, has already argued that Lord Browne must give evidence because he had unique knowledge of what might have caused the blast. Claimants suspect that cost-cutting by BP after the oil-price

slump of the 1980s led to safety failures at the refinery.

- [The Times](#). [KLTV](#). [BBC News Online](#).
- [Hazards BP webpages](#).

Death firm evades defective product rap

A firm that supplied defective equipment which failed causing a workplace death has escaped prosecution because it is no longer trading. A forensic investigation by Health and Safety Executive (HSE) experts found Sam Ball, a 21-year-old construction worker, died in January 2002 after a pin - part of site lifting tackle - fractured in two places and become dislodged, causing one end of the lifting frame to drop. A concrete beam fell from a mobile crane as a result, hitting Mr Ball and causing fatal injuries. The pin was only visible when the lifting tackle was dismantled, hampering routine inspection and maintenance. Dave Rothery of HSE's construction division said: "The fundamental cause of the incident was the failure of the pin, which was defective. HSE's enquiries revealed that the South African-based manufacturer/supplier company was no longer trading and, therefore, that legal proceedings would not be possible." HSE enquiries to Interpol established the firm, Johannesburg-based McKinnon Chain, was no longer in business. Commenting on the lessons of the tragedy, HSE's Dave Rothery said: "We advise that where lifting tackle components are not visible, the competent person undertaking the examination should give careful consideration to the circumstances in which such components should be removed for examination or routinely replaced. Lifting equipment manufacturers and suppliers should provide information on this subject to their customers."

- [HSE news release](#) and incident report [[pdf](#)].
- [Hazards young workers webpages](#).

Harassed woman awarded second payout

A woman made sick by sexual harassment at work has been awarded compensation. An Exeter employment tribunal this week ordered Councillor Tony Prior, the former mayor of Chard, Somerset to pay £33,697 in damages to former town clerk Sally Bing. In a case supported by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), Ms Bing said she was sexually harassed and victimised by Mr Prior, who was the town's mayor at the time. When she complained about the harassment and reported the mayor to the Standards Board for England, Mr Prior issued her with a written warning and put out a press release calling her integrity into question. As a result of her treatment, 31-year-old Ms Bing became sick with stress and eventually resigned from Chard Town Council. She has already settled a similar claim against the council, which agreed to pay £25,000 for loss of earnings. EOC chair Jenny Watson said: "Sexual harassment is still an issue causing women like Sally Bing stress and financial penalties when they leave their jobs as a result of it. We suspect that cases that come to our attention – like Ms Bing's - are only the tip of the iceberg. It's important for women to know what they can do to tackle harassment - and for employers to know how they can help stamp it out in the workplace." She said new EOC guidance shows "strong leadership and a few simple steps taken by employers can make all the difference, something that the best employers already recognise. Creating a workplace in which everyone is valued and in which there is no place for bullying or harassment helps to boost morale and productivity, and of course helps to avoid the high costs of tribunal claims."

- [EOC news release](#) and guidance [[pdf](#)]. [The Guardian](#).

ACTION

HSE/C and disability and gender equality

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Health and Safety Commission (HSC) are seeking comments by 18 October on draft HSE/C disability and gender equality schemes. It says the joint schemes aim to ensure that disability and gender equality fully informs HSC/E's activities, adding "key actions commit HSC/E to making a difference to the working lives of Britain's diverse communities, so demonstrating the genuine desire to conduct workplace health and safety regulation with sensitivity and respect for people's different needs, vulnerabilities and perspectives on life." The safety watchdog says all public authorities are required to publish a disability equality scheme by 4 December 2006 and a gender equality scheme by 6 April 2007.

- [HSE news release](#). HSE/C public consultation, [Equality Schemes Framework: Disability Equality Scheme, Gender Equality Scheme, CD209](#). Comments by 18 October 2006 to [Jacqui Olusemo](#), HSE, Rose Court, 5NW Rose Court, 2 Southwark Bridge, London SE1 9HS, telephone 0207 7176730.

Design a nano-hazard symbol

They've all got one – everyone can recognise the nuclear hazard symbol and even the Cap'n Jack Sparrow generation are more likely to think "toxic" than "pirate" when they see a skull-and-crossbones. But there's nothing out there to warn you when you are about to dip into a barrel of nano-nasties. Now top nano-hazards campaigning organisation ETC Group believes the safety message should be seen and heard, so has launched an international design challenge. It says: "We are asking concerned people everywhere - including artists, designers, scientists, students, regulators and members of the public - to submit possible designs for an international Nano-Hazard warning symbol that could be used to identify the presence of nanomaterials. This symbol could, for example, be placed on products containing nanomaterials, in laboratories or factories where workers handle

nanoparticles, or on containers transporting nanomaterials. The symbol should be simple, easy to recognise and communicate clearly the new, potential hazards that result when matter is manipulated at the nanoscale (1 billionth of a metre - the size of atoms and molecules).” A shortlist will be selected by an international judging panel, including Risks editor Rory O’Neill. Entries will also be judged by participants at the World Social Forum to be held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 20 to 25 January 2007.

- Further details of the [Nano-Hazards symbol design competition](#). Wikipedia guide to [existing hazard warning symbols](#).
- [More on nanotech hazards](#).

the legislation,” Mr Sacconi told reporters following the committee's decision. “If there's a safer alternative and if it's economically viable, that alternative must be used.” European trade union confederation ETUC urged the Council of Ministers at the second reading of the REACH provisions to support the substitution principle now backed by both the environment committee and MEPs. The environment committee’s support for the substitution clause was also welcomed by environmental groups including Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and WWF.

- [European Parliament news release](#). [ETUC news release](#). [FoE Europe news release](#). [WWF news release](#). [BBC News Online](#). [New Scientist](#). [Chemical Reaction website](#). [Rachel’s Precaution Reporter](#).

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Europe: Substitution principle gets more backing

A top European committee has endorsed tough new laws on chemicals. The European Parliament's environment committee backed a law which would require companies to replace dangerous substances where safer ones exist. Last year ministers from European Union nations voted for a weaker version of the REACH law which would have merely “encouraged” substitution ([Risks 264](#)), although MEPs have consistently supported a more stringent substitution requirement ([Risks 234](#)). REACH (Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals) will oblige manufacturers to demonstrate that about 30,000 substances already in use are safe. Companies will have to register all chemicals they produce or import, and get authorisation for the most dangerous substances. An amendment proposed by Italian MEP Guido Sacconi and agreed by the environment committee would also oblige companies to demonstrate that the benefits of hazardous substances outweigh the risks. “The substitution principle is clearly the cornerstone of

France: Major Paris rally calls for asbestos action

Thousands of protesters last month gathered at a landmark Paris tower once lined with asbestos to demand a nationwide lawsuit against those who allowed workers to be exposed to the deadly substance. Relatives of workers who died or suffer from asbestos-linked lung ailments led the march from Montparnasse Tower toward the Health Ministry. Some 3,100 people from around France took part, according to police. Many carried photos of deceased family members, under a banner reading, “Our poisoners must be prosecuted without delay.” The protesters were demanding a large-scale lawsuit that would draw nationwide attention to the consequences of asbestos exposure. Organisers said 3,000 people in France die each year from asbestos-related disease, though no official numbers are available. At least two French legal cases last month implicated large companies in asbestos-related damages. A court in northern France fined Alstom Power Boiler for exposing employees to asbestos. And a court in Clermont-Ferrand in the south is hearing four lawsuits accusing tyre giant Michelin of negligence for exposing its workers to dangerous levels of the substance.

- [International Herald Tribune](#). [ETUI-REHS news report](#). [Insurance Journal](#). [Alstom news release](#).

Global: Plea on deadly shipbreaking risks

Shipbreaking workers from India have exposed the deadly risks commonplace in the industry and have called for urgent reforms to save lives. A delegation attending a meeting of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in London this week called on IMO members to regulate the industry. They said thousands of shipbreaking workers die, are injured or fall ill when recycling old ships in one of the world's most dangerous, dirty and largely unregulated industries. Ninety-five per cent of old ships are broken up and recycled on the beaches of Bangladesh, India, China, Pakistan and Turkey, with workers at risk from fire, explosions, falls, and exposure to asbestos, heavy metals and other toxins. Negotiations are underway at the IMO to develop internationally agreed regulations on the recycling of ships. However, the campaigners are concerned that adoption of the regulations is not expected until 2009, with proper implementation due by 2015 at best, if at all. Vidyadhar V Rane, secretary of the Mumbar Port Trust, Dock and General Employees' Union, called on IMO members to deliver binding regulations. "Shipbreaking workers in India and other parts of the world need work, but they need safe work," he said. "I am appealing to the developed countries who send their ships to Asia to take some responsibility and save lives." Global metalworkers' union federation IMF and its transport counterpart ITF are supporting the campaign. IMF general secretary Marcello Malentacchi said: "In many countries the state of shipbreaking is an open scandal. The answer is not to shut it down - to call for that is to ignore that it is a vital industry for tens of thousands of people for whom no alternative employment exists. The solution is to reform, train and support." ITF general secretary David Cockroft commented: "We're all behind the IMO in tackling this terrible problem, but 10 years is too

long. Many of these workers – men, women and children – aren't going to live that long."

- [IMF news release](#) and [shipbreaking webpage](#). [ITF news release](#). [Amicus news release](#). [Video news release](#).

Global: Road transport women put safety first

Women road transport workers are "very worried" about health and safety issues, a new survey from global transport union federation ITF shows. Initial results of an ongoing study found 43 per cent of respondents "expressed the highest level of concern," it says. Top problems included their employers' failure to deal with stress and violent attacks and bad sanitation. Working hours are also a major worry. Unions are twice as likely as employers to carry out health and safety assessments, provisional survey results suggest. ITF said so far 375 women in 10 countries have answered the survey, which is available online in English, French, Spanish, Russian and Portuguese. This month, ITF is urging road transport women worldwide to contribute to the survey. The initiative is in conjunction with ITF's Road Transport Action Week, which ends on 15 October.

- [ITF news](#) and [online survey](#). [ITF Road Transport Action Week](#).

Sweden: Free bus travel after horrific attack on driver

Members of Sweden's Kommunal union have taken a novel form of industrial action in protest at violence against bus drivers in Stockholm. Passengers who do not have a pre-purchased ticket or travel card will be let onto buses free of charge as drivers refuse to handle cash. The action started last week after a "brutal" assault on a bus driver during a robbery. Three men who had been at a beer festival assaulted the driver when the bus reached the terminus and

stole the cash box. “They smashed his head on the floor and began to strangle him. Then they took a small amount of cash and ran away from the scene,” said police spokesperson Jan Olsson. Björn Dalborg, a spokesperson for SL, the firm that runs Stockholm's transport network, said: “It's shocking that this sort of thing happens to people who work on public transport. We've already had an exchange of letters and discussions with the Swedish Work Environment Authority about this.” It was the third incident in recent weeks. The Work Environment Authority, the agency responsible for workplace health and safety in Sweden, has to date opposed the no cash handling tactic, but it is now considering a complete bar on drivers handling cash in Stockholm county from next year. The authority says a new ticket system in Stockholm has increased cash handling fourfold, increasing the risk for drivers.

- [The Local](#).

RESOURCES

New REACH helpline

The government has designated the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) the UK's “competent authority” for REACH (Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals), the forthcoming European regime for the regulation of chemicals. HSE this week launched a helpdesk to support UK business in the run-up to the regulations coming into force. Once fully operational the competent authority, in addition to providing the helpdesk, will monitor compliance, evaluate substances of concern, as well as taking regulatory action as appropriate, coordinate UK enforcement of the regulations. It says it will work closely with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Environment Agency, the devolved administrations and other government departments and liaise with the new European Chemicals Agency in Helsinki. HSE says REACH could be in force by April 2007.

- [HSE news release](#). [Defra news release](#).
- The REACH helpdesk can be contacted by phone 0845 408 9575 or [email](#).

EVENTS AND COURSES

Asbestos disease treatments lobby, London, 17 October

The Forum of Asbestos Victims Support Groups is to lobby MPs on 17 October in a bid to get better treatment for patients suffering from the asbestos cancer mesothelioma. It is calling “on all those concerned about the provision of treatment for the asbestos-related cancer, mesothelioma, to arrange to meet their MPs in the House of Commons between 2 and 4 pm on Tuesday 17 October.” The forum says experts will be on hand to explain why it is important the medicine approvals agency NICE approves the life-extending drug Alimta for the treatment of mesothelioma.

- [Lobby of parliament to seek support for the approval of Alimta for the treatment of mesothelioma](#) , 2.00pm to 4.00pm, 17 October 2006, House of Commons, Grimond Room, Portcullis House, London. For further information [email the asbestos forum](#) or call 0161 636 7555. [Asbestos Forum website](#).

National Inspection Day, 25 October

National Inspection day this year is on 25 October, the Wednesday of European Health and Safety Week. The TUC, ever keen on getting safety reps inspecting, has produced a poster for the day, and there is a page on the TUC website publicising the event. And if you got any qualms about workplace inspections, there's a TUC guide to that too. This year Euroweek has a ‘safe start’ young workers theme. TUC has issued guidance for that, too ([Risks 276](#)).

- [TUC inspection day guide and posters](#), [TUC Euroweek webpages](#). Young workers - a guide for safety representatives [[pdf](#)].
- [Hazards young workers news and resources](#).

Safety enforcement conference, London, 3 November

A Centre for Corporate Accountability (CCA) conference on corporate manslaughter, health and safety enforcement and penalties will take place in London on 3 November. The TUC-supported event brings together the Home Office minister responsible for the government's draft corporate manslaughter bill, the chair of the Health and Safety Commission, bereaved families, trade unions, academics and campaigners. Issues to be covered include the draft corporate manslaughter bill currently going through parliament, the significant reduction in HSE's use of formal enforcement measures, new sentencing proposals and the Coroners Reform Bill.

- CCA enforcement conference, Friday, 3 November 2006, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1. Cost: £40, individuals and trade union representatives; £70, public bodies; £100, Lawyers, private companies; and £10, unemployed. Further details [on the CCA website](#) or call Ana-Maria at CCA on 0207 490 4494.

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 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