



Risks Newsletter



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Risks is the TUC's weekly online bulletin for safety reps and others, read each week by over 14,000 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](#).

Missed us?

Did you miss Risks over the holidays? A technical glitch meant not all our subscribers received the last two issues. Recent back issues are available online at: www.tuc.org.uk/risks. Or you can go directly to [Risks 287](#), 16 December 2006, and [Risks 288](#), 23 December 2006.

In this issue

- Missed us?
- **UNION NEWS**
- Unpaid hours cost workers £4,800 a year
- High Court orders CPS to review work death decision
- Post union action call after van attacks

- Union warning on nuclear clean-up cutbacks
- Union starts probe at toxic leak plant
- Union fears over in-house driver tests
- Real concern over school safety, union warns
- TUC repeats call for hearing checks
- **OTHER NEWS**
- Corus work death crisis continues
- Seven die in Morecambe Bay copter crash
- Worker dies on North Sea vessel
- Three workers found dead in building site container
- Tesco fined after worker is scarred
- Poultry workers to get flu jabs
- **INTERNATIONAL NEWS**
- Australia: ABC staff may strike over cancer concerns
- Global: Bloodiest year ever for media workers
- India: The real cost of cheap stone
- USA: Gloves off in union fight for free safety gear
- **ACTION**
- Go on - tell your MP to support directors'

duties!

- **RESOURCES**

- New occupational health resources

- **EVENTS AND COURSES**

- TUC courses for safety reps

UNION NEWS

Unpaid hours cost workers £4,800 a year

Employees in the UK who do unpaid overtime do an average of seven hours six minutes extra work a week, and would take home an extra £4,800 a year if they were paid the average wage for those unpaid hours, according to new figures from TUC. Its analysis of official statistics shows that if everyone in the UK who works unpaid overtime did all their unpaid work at the start of the year, the first day they would get paid would be Friday 23 February. That is why TUC has declared 23 February 'Work Your Proper Hours Day' and is calling on employees to use it to remind bosses of their extra unpaid work by taking a proper lunch break and going home on time for this one day a year. Across the UK people did £23 billion worth of unpaid overtime last year. But there was a small drop of 18 minutes in the average amount of extra work - from seven hours 24 minutes to seven hours 6 minutes put in by the average worker doing unpaid overtime. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "We work the longest hours in Europe, and too many workplaces are gripped by a long hours culture. There are some small signs that we are getting a bit better, but there is still a long way to go. That is why we say that employees should take a stand on 'Work Your Proper Hours Day' and for just one day a year take a full lunch break and go home on time." He added: "We do not want to turn Britain into a nation of clock watchers, and few mind putting in extra effort from time to time when it is needed, but it is too easy for extra time to get taken for granted and

then expected every week." Long work hours have been linked to increased accident rates, heart disease, depression and other work-related health problems.

- [TUC news release](#). [STUC news release](#). [Wales TUC news release](#). [NUJ news release](#). [BBC News Online](#). [BBC Scotland](#). [The Guardian](#). [The Herald](#). [Western Mail](#). [Local London](#).
- Find out more about TUC's fourth '[Work Your Proper Hours Day](#)', 23 February 2007. [TUC Changing Times](#) and [Hazards get-a-life](#) webpages.

High Court orders CPS to review work death decision

Prosecutors have been ordered to look again at possible manslaughter charges in a case where a teenage roofer fell to his death in his first week at work. Daniel Dennis died aged 17 after falling through a skylight at a store in Cwmbran in 2003 ([Risks 272](#)). The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) decided a criminal prosecution against his employer, North Eastern Roofing, would not succeed despite an inquest verdict of unlawful killing. However, a High Court judge has ruled the matter should be referred back to the CPS. Daniel's father Peter took legal action, through the GMB trade union, asking the High Court to quash the CPS's decision not to bring a prosecution for gross negligence manslaughter. Giving his ruling on 29 December 2006, Lord Justice Waller said there were "failures" over factors which influenced the CPS not to prosecute. The judge said a solicitor acting for the CPS did not take into account the "seriousness of a failure to give proper instruction not to go on the roof prior to induction or proper instruction." He also said the CPS had not taken sufficient account of the Newport inquest jury's unlawful killing verdict in March 2005. The court said the matter should be referred back to the CPS and that it was possible that a different decision could be made after these factors are taken into consideration. Allan Garley, GMB South West

regional secretary said: “Referring the case back to the CPS is a victory in itself and we're delighted for the family of Daniel Dennis. Daniel's death was a tragic accident which could and should have been avoided. We look forward to the CPS's review of the case, in which we trust that the facts of what happened to Daniel will be considered properly.” Mick Antoniow of law firm Thompsons, who represented the family, added: “This is a landmark ruling as it's only the second case where the courts have interfered in a workplace death. It is shocking that in this case, and so many cases, the CPS failed to properly consider the bringing of manslaughter charges.” Amicus general secretary, Derek Simpson, said: “Despite the fact that an inquest into Daniel's death passed a judgement of unlawful killing, the law does not allow for the prosecution of unincorporated companies like the one that Daniel worked for, even if they are responsible for the death of one of their employees.” He said the Corporate Manslaughter Bill must “be strengthened so all employers who are responsible for the deaths of their employees can be prosecuted.”

- [GMB news release](#). [Amicus news release](#). [Thompsons Solicitors news release](#). [Full court decision](#).
- [BBC News Online](#). [Financial Times](#). [South Wales Echo](#).
- [Hazards deadly business campaign](#) and [young workers webpage](#). [Centre for Corporate Accountability](#).

Post union action call after van attacks

A spate of vicious attacks and van-jackings targeting Royal Mail delivery staff has prompted a union call for “firm action”. Postal workers' union CWU said there were three “identical attacks” in Herne Bay, Kent last year, the most recent in December. In the latest incident, a postal worker was badly beaten in an attack by two men and left lying on the pavement. His delivery van was stolen and its contents rifled,

before being abandoned close by. The union reports a string of other attacks on staff in the area. Local Tory MP Roger Gale is backing the union's call for urgent safety action. He said: “It cannot be right that high-value goods are carried in unprotected vans by men and women working alone.” He added: “The Royal Mail must ensure that vans are protected and alarmed and that staff work in teams and not alone.” CWU national health and safety officer Dave Joyce said: “Clearly more needs to be done to protect our members because these two vicious criminals are still at large and they clearly see Royal Mail delivery vans as an easy target and are not going to stop unless they are caught or are prevented from targeting our members and delivery vans.” He said: “Under the new Royal Mail ‘assaults policy’ we've ensured the full involvement of our CWU area safety reps and area delivery reps”, adding he had called for a joint meeting with management and Kent police. He said union reps should be vigilant everywhere. “I would say to all area delivery reps and area safety reps across the UK, where unit managers and CWU reps become aware of a significant risk of assault on a particular delivery walk or van delivery round, control measures can be identified from the new ‘walk threat assessment’ which is part of the policy.” Late last year GMB called for action to protect security workers who were facing rising numbers of violent attacks on cash-in-transit vans ([Risks 285](#)).

- [CWU news release](#). [Personnel Today](#).
- CWU is urging anyone with information about the attacks to contact Kent Police on 01227 762055 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Union warning on nuclear clean-up cutbacks

Unions representing workers in Britain's nuclear industry have warned a shortfall in funding for the country's nuclear clean-up programme could undermine safety and public confidence in the industry. The unions are angry over what they

say is a £160m cut in the money available to the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), the organisation responsible for cleaning up Britain's civil nuclear legacy, in the coming financial year. In a December 2006 letter to Alistair Darling, the trade and industry secretary, and Stephen Timms, the chief secretary to the Treasury, the four unions - Amicus, GMB, TGWU and Prospect - protested against what they described as "this government bombshell." The letter added: "What appals the trade unions is the lack of transparency and openness around such issues; we only found out... about the shortfall at a very late stage." In their letter to the two ministers, the unions warned: "Nuclear decommissioning is an issue that will affect job security, job opportunity and skills retention and recruitment in the industry at the very time when effective partnerships are being built to ensure we have a skill base to safely decommission nuclear sites." The unions say incidents like last week's leak at the Sizewell nuclear plant, in which 40,000 gallons of radioactive water escaped from a burst 10 inch pipe, could be repeated if cutbacks lead to a curtailing of routine planned maintenance. Gary Smith, GMB national officer for the energy industries, said the incident "highlights decades of chronic underinvestment in our nuclear industry. It also comes at a time when the government is proposing to cut funding to the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA)." He added: "This government gave a commitment that it would clean up the nuclear legacy, and proposals to cut NDA funding will ultimately impact upon investment in training and maintenance, which can only further exacerbate problems that we have as a result of neglect. Any cuts in the NDA budgets will severely undermine public confidence in the future of the industry."

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

Union starts probe at toxic leak plant

A Teesside chemical plant closed down after a toxic leak last week injured 37 people has reopened. The move came as a union started its own investigation into possible worker safety concerns on the site. Two men remain in hospital following the incident at the BASF site in Seal Sands, Billingham. The more seriously injured worker, who was on the critical list, has now been moved out of intensive care at Newcastle's Royal Victoria Infirmary and moved to a special burns unit. An investigation is continuing into the leak of 4.5 tonnes of highly corrosive hexamethylenediamine on 4 January. One of the injured men needed plastic surgery for burns, according to Cleveland Police. A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inquiry has begun. Officials of the union GMB said this week they would be speaking to members at the plant. Tom Brennan, GMB regional secretary, said: "Obviously, when there is an accident of this nature, we always have questions about safety and why it happened. But we will be speaking to the workers we represent at the BASF plant and asking if they had any concerns prior to this major incident." He added: "I can assure you there will be questions raised over safety procedures, equipment and machinery. There will be a complete review. What's most important in cases of this nature is that we don't have a repeat incident." BASF was fined £20,000 in 2000 for breaching health and safety regulations at the plant. The HSE prosecution came after an investigation into the death of a worker who inhaled cyanide fumes. Teesside Magistrates Court was told the breach did not cause 41-year-old Derek Tuck's death. Emergency workers were also put on alert in August 2004 after a leak of corrosive sulphur dioxide at the plant.

- [GMB news release](#). [BBC News Online](#). [Hartlepool Today](#). [HSE information note](#).

Union fears over in-house driver tests

Civil service union PCS has called for an investigation into the safety of bus and coach drivers tested by private bus companies. It is

concerned at the significantly higher pass rates among those tested by delegated examiners attached to bus companies compared to those tested by Driving Standard Agency (DSA) examiners. An analysis of bus and coach driver pass rates obtained by the union through parliamentary questions and freedom of information requests show an average pass rate of 60.2 per cent over the last five years for candidates tested by delegated examiners. This compares to a pass rate of 44.5 per cent for those candidates tested by DSA examiners. The union warned that the persistent difference in pass rates between the delegated examiners and the DSA over the last five years pointed to different standards in testing. It added that the work of the DSA examiners is supervised far more rigorously. PCS national officer Norina O'Hare said: "These figures suggest that those tested by examiners attached to bus companies aren't as stringently tested as those examined by the DSA." She added: "We estimate that nearly 13,000 bus and coach drivers have been put on the roads by delegated examiners over the last five years, which if tested by the DSA would have failed. The question is, are these drivers less safe than their counterparts tested by the DSA, who it appears have been more stringently tested and is there a conflict of interest in allowing companies to both train and test their own drivers. Which is why we are calling for an investigation in to the safety of bus and coach drivers tested by examiners attached to private bus companies and for all tests to be conducted by the DSA."

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

Real concern over school safety, union warns

Scotland's schools and colleges are not doing enough to make schools safer, teaching union the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) has warned. The union's figures show that last year, injuries to teachers and lecturers resulting from accidents or assaults during working hours led to a compensation and legal bill of around a quarter of a million pounds. The number of

serious incidents and the level of compensation awarded remained almost unchanged from the preceding year, EIS said, confirming progress has been slow and that much more needs to be done to make all schools and colleges a safe place for teaching and learning. EIS general secretary Ronnie Smith said: "The lack of progress in making our schools and colleges the safest possible environment for teaching and learning is a real cause for concern." He added: "In addition to the cost to educational establishments – and thus the taxpayer – in legal fees and in settling claims for compensation, we must also consider the hidden costs in these cases. These would include personal costs to the individual concerned through their pain and suffering, as well as the effects on their personal and home life. There are also considerable additional costs to employers due to the employee's absence from work whilst recovering from injuries, and the added cost of arranging replacement cover. There will also be significant costs to the National Health Service in treating the injured. Much of this could be avoided if employers took health and safety matters more seriously and ensured that correct procedures were followed at all times." One EIS member was awarded £50,000 after slipping in a school car park. Another received more than £26,000 after being punched by a pupil, one of eight assault-related payouts last year. In another case, a member was hurt while pushing pupils in a wheelchair, resulting in a £4,000 payment.

- [EIS news release. The Courier. BBC News Online.](#)

TUC repeats call for hearing checks

Hearing charity RNID and the TUC have teamed up for the second year running to call on workers and their managers to 'break the sound barrier' and take the charity's telephone hearing check on 0845 600 55 55. To date, 300,000 people have taken the telephone hearing check but RNID believes many more could benefit from taking the check to discover their level of hearing loss. TUC is encouraging the UK's 28

million workers once again to have a new year hearing check. Employers are also being urged to encourage staff to take the confidential, five minute check either in a quiet place at work or at home. Over 40 per cent of people over 50 have some level of hearing loss, which often happens naturally as people age. As many of the older generation are working longer through choice or financial constraints, it is important that they do not face communication barriers in the workplace because of hearing loss, the groups say. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "Hearing loss is a real problem at work for many employees, who may be reluctant to own up to the fact that they can't hear as well as they used to be able to because they are worried that they may be sidelined as a result. Employers should be supportive to staff who are losing their hearing and encourage them to take this important check, without fear of being treated less favourably, whatever the outcome." RNID launched its award-winning campaign a year ago, to reach out to the 4 million people in the UK who could benefit from wearing a hearing aid, but who currently do nothing about it.

- [TUC news release](#). [BBC News Online](#).
- To take the 'Break the sound barrier' telephone hearing check call 0845 600 55 55.
- [RNID Information Line](#): 0808 808 0123 (freephone) or 0808 808 9000 (textphone). [TUC noise webpages](#).

OTHER NEWS

Corus work death crisis continues

Another worker has been killed at a Corus plant, bringing the death toll on the company's facilities to at least nine in the last six years. Ross Beddow, 20, was killed last week after become trapped underneath a sheet of metal at the company's factory at Wombourne, near Wolverhampton. He was employed as a sub-

contractor by Brierley Hill-based A Hingley Transport Ltd and worked at the plant loading metal on to the company's vans. He joined the firm four months ago. Staffordshire Police and the Health and Safety Executive have launched a joint inquiry into the incident. A number of staff at the plant have been treated for shock, including a 32-year-old man who was taken to Russells Hall Hospital in Dudley for further assessment and treatment. In December, the steel-making giant was fined £1.3m at Swansea Crown Court after admitting safety offences relating to an explosion in which three workers died. Mr Justice Lloyd-Jones, who criticised the company's 'casual' attitude to safety, ordered Corus to pay more than £3m in a combined fine and costs award ([Risks 288](#)). Len Radford, 53, Stephen Galsworthy, 25, and Andrew Hutin, 20, were killed when blast furnace number five exploded at Corus's Port Talbot plant in November 2001 ([Risks 244](#)). Workplace safety campaigners have criticised Corus's safety record, which in recent years has included a sequence of fatalities on its work sites ([Risks 255](#), [Risks 202](#), [Risks 93](#), [Risks 88](#)).

- [Express and Star](#). [BBC News Online](#).
- [Hazards Corus webpage](#). [Hazards deadly business webpages](#). [Hazards young workers webpages](#). [Fack website](#).

Seven die in Morecambe Bay copter crash

Seven workers killed in a 27 December helicopter crash over the Morecambe Bay gas field are unlikely to be included in official workplace fatality figures, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has confirmed. Rig workers Robert Warburton, Leslie Ahmed, John Shaw and Alfred Neasham, contractor Keith Smith and pilots Stephen Potton and Simon Foddering all died in the crash. The helicopter, which took off from Blackpool Airport, was on a routine flight between rigs for gas firm Centrica when it crashed into the sea 25 miles off the coast on Wednesday evening last week. Lancashire Police say the helicopter, a Eurocopter AS365N, had

flown to two gas rigs and was on its way to a third when it ditched into the sea just a few hundred yards short of the rig. The helicopter was flying from the Millom West platform - owned by Burlington Resources Ltd but operated by Centrica - to the North Morecambe platform on its way to the South Morecambe platform, which is permanently occupied. The four dead passengers all worked for Centrica, and Mr Smith was an employee of one of its contractors, Costain Petrofac. The Air Accident Investigations Branch (AAIB) has launched an inquiry into the incident. Graham Fowler, deputy general secretary of pilots' union BALPA sent the union's "sincere condolences go to the families of all those who lost their lives, and in particular to the families of the two members of flight crew." He added: "BALPA has a network of support for all pilots, and the family and friends of those we have lost will be helped in a number of different ways." A spokesperson for HSE confirmed it was unlikely any of the deaths would be included in workplace fatality statistics. "The Civil Aviation Authority are taking the lead on this investigation," she told Risks. "Consequently, we would not expect these fatalities to show in our annual statistics. This is consistent with the more general approach, whereby if another enforcing authority takes the lead, then generally those injuries are excluded from HSE's figures."

- [BALPA news release](#). [HSE news release](#). [BBC News Online](#). [Morecambe Bay Today](#). [Blackpool Citizen](#).

Worker dies on North Sea vessel

An incident on board a North Sea support vessel has left one worker dead and another injured. Matthew Grey, 59, from Darlington, was working in the cargo tanks of the Bleo Holm 72 miles north east of Aberdeen when he died on Saturday evening last week. The pipe fitter's colleague, Norman Jackson, 58, from North Shields, was flown to hospital with an arm injury. Talisman Energy, which operates the vessel, said an investigation was under way to

find out the cause. Mr Grey, who worked for engineering firm Aker Kvaerner, was treated at the scene by the vessel's medic but died before he could be stabilised and airlifted. An investigation team including officers from Grampian Police and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and representatives from Talisman and Aker Kvaerner, boarded the vessel at 1100 GMT on Sunday. Mr Jackson, a rigging foreman, was treated by the vessel's medic before being transferred to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary on Sunday morning. He left hospital after a few hours. The death came just days after five offshore workers and two pilots died in a helicopter crash off the Lancashire coast.

- [BBC News Online](#). [Northern Echo](#).

Three workers found dead in building site container

Three workers have been found dead in a shipping container on a building site in Berkshire. The bodies of Kirpal Singh, 30, Manjit Singh, 35 and 21-year-old Gurdeep Singh Deol, from Southall, Middlesex, were found on the morning of 22 December at the site where St James Homes is building a multi-million pound urban village in Manor Farm Road, Whitley. Initial tests showed the men died from carbon monoxide poisoning. One theory is that instead of going home on Thursday the trio spent the night in the container, using a portable generator to help them keep warm, and were overcome by its fumes. Police family liaison officers have spoken to workmates and employers and contacted relatives. A Health and Safety Executive investigation is under way. Tony Pidgley, a spokesperson for St James Homes said: "To have three deaths at any time is a real tragedy, but it takes on special significance at this time of year and our thoughts go out their friends and family. We will do all we can to co-operate with the investigation."

- [Reading Chronicle](#). [BBC News Online](#).

Tesco fined after worker is scarred

Supermarket giant Tesco has been ordered to pay out £24,000 after one of its employees was scarred in an accident at work. The store bakery worker suffered burns to both her feet when hot oil dripped on to her from a doughnut-frying machine. This week, Tesco admitted breaching health and safety laws at its Ashby store. The company admitted it failed to ensure the health, safety and welfare of bakery workers, by not providing metal buckets near the doughnut fryer to catch the oil. As well as fining Tesco £10,000 and ordering it to pay £13,000 in costs, magistrates told bosses to pay £1,000 compensation to the injured employee, who needed medical treatment for her injuries and suffered scarring to her right foot. Kathryn Preece, head of environmental health at North West Leicestershire District Council, which led the prosecution, said: "If the correct equipment for undertaking tasks is not provided, this can lead to employees putting themselves at risk of injury, sometimes without realising it." She added: "This case highlights the importance of training and supervising all employees in the correct use of equipment to ensure that accidents do not occur." Magistrates ruled the store had not followed its own safety policy and that the high turnover of bakery managers made it difficult to supervise staff. They also said training given to the injured woman, who no longer works at the store, had been very basic during her two years at the bakery. In December, shopworkers' union Usdaw warned that a government move to reduce red tape on business must not result in weaker safety enforcement in the retail sector ([Risks 288](#)). There have been several recent convictions of major high street retailers for workplace health and safety offences.

- [Leicester Mercury](#).

Poultry workers to get flu jabs

Poultry workers in England are to be offered seasonal flu jabs as a way to minimise any threat from bird flu. Experts say offering them protection against human flu will cut the already small risk that they might catch human and bird flu at the same time. At present, bird flu - H5N1 - cannot easily pass from human to human. But once the virus gains this ability - which is most likely if it mixes and combines with human flu - it could put millions at risk worldwide. The latest move is designed to ensure that poultry workers do not provide an opportunity for the two types of virus to come into close contact. Dr David Salisbury, the Department of Health's director of immunisation, stressed that H5N1 was a disease of birds, which posed a small risk only to people who had prolonged contact with infected birds. Even then the risk was tiny, and there had been no human cases of H5N1 bird flu in the UK. In total, 157 people worldwide have died from bird flu since the current outbreak of H5N1 began in 2003 - the large majority in south east Asia. Dr Salisbury said the programme is "a precautionary measure which reduces any very low risk of a pandemic flu virus emerging in the UK. This is a prudent and precautionary step to take as part of our contingency planning in protecting the population against the risk of pandemic flu." Information packs are being sent to all keepers of poultry who are required to be registered and approved slaughterhouses in England. It is estimated that more than 60,000 poultry workers may be eligible for the flu vaccine.

- [Department of Health news release. BBC News Online](#).
- [Department of Health flu advice](#) and poultry worker vaccination programme [[pdf](#)] and [leaflets](#).
- ILO-CIS web resource, [Protecting workers against avian influenza](#).

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Australia: ABC staff may strike over cancer concerns

Staff employed by Australian broadcaster ABC in Brisbane have threatened further industrial action as concerns continue about elevated cancer rates linked to its ageing studios in the city. The studio was abandoned before Christmas after an independent panel of experts found the breast cancer rate there was up to 11 times higher than the general working community. Twelve women who worked at the office have been diagnosed with breast cancer in the past 11 years, eight in the newsroom. Staff returned to work on 27 December at a temporary studio. But that did not stop about 40 angry staff meeting at a hotel and passing a vote of no-confidence in the management, condemning it for failing to properly plan for the relocation and calling for more detailed daily updates. About 90 journalists, presenters and producers walked off the job in a snap strike in July 2006 over the breast cancer issue and media union state secretary David Waters said there may be further industrial action. “Certainly the health and safety concerns are sufficiently serious that employees are considering industrial action,” Mr Waters said. “But it's in the interests of all parties that these health and safety concerns are addressed immediately and ABC staff be permitted to get on with the job without any further risk to their health. This vote reflects the staff frustration that the lack of information that management is passing on to employees.” Publishing the expert panel report on 21 December, ABC managing director Mark Scott said: “In effect the panel has been able to answer one of the two key questions we put to it – namely is this a significant atypical spike in the incidence of breast cancer? The answer to that question is yes, which is of great concern to the ABC.” He added: “The panel has been unable to answer the second question, which is what has been the cause of this high incidence of breast cancer.”

- [Sydney Morning Herald](#). [The Australian](#). [ABU news](#).
- [ABC news release](#) and full panel report [[pdf](#)].

- [Hazards workplace cancer webpages](#).

Global: Bloodiest year ever for media workers

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has said 2006 was a year of tragedy for the world's media as killings of reporters and media staff reached historic levels with at least 155 murders, assassinations and unexplained deaths. “Media have become more powerful and journalism has become more dangerous,” said Aidan White, IFJ general secretary. “2006 was the worst year on record – a year of targeting, brutality and continued impunity in the killing of journalists.” During the year the numbers began to accumulate with civil strife and resistance to military occupation in Iraq. The IFJ says media became prime targets of terror attacks or victims of poor soldiering. By the year's end, 68 media staff had been killed, bringing to 170 the number killed in the country since the invasion in April 2003. Elsewhere, the IFJ says continuing violence in Latin America, particularly Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela, claimed the lives of 37 media staff while in Asia relentless attacks in the Philippines and Sri Lanka pushed the total of killings to 34. The only positive sign came in the final days of the year, says the IFJ, when the United Nations, for the first time ever, issued a statement condemning targeting of journalists and calling for prosecution of the killers of media staff. In a resolution passed on 23 December the UN Security Council unanimously called on governments to respect international law and to protect civilians in armed conflict. “For the first time the United Nations has put the focus on a deepening media crisis,” said White. “It is long overdue. We want to see action against countries that allow impunity in the killing of journalists.” Commenting on the record fatality figures, Chris Morley, president of UK journalists' union NUJ, said: “The horrendous annual toll on media workers doing their jobs around the world was all the more insidious in 2006 because of the targeted nature of so many of the deaths.”

- [IFJ News release](#). [International News Safety](#)

[Institute \(INSI\) news release](#). [NUJ news release](#). [IFJ](#) and [INSI](#) news releases on the UN statement. [Full UN Security Council Resolution](#).

India: The real cost of cheap stone

The global building boom and the fashion for smart interiors has created huge demand for natural stone. In the past few years this has been fed by a booming export trade from countries where rock is plentiful and labour is cheap. India is among the most rapidly growing sources of granite, slate and sandstone. But a BBC report says questions are being asked about the cost to the environment and the human toll for workers. Highly-polished kitchen worktops and gleaming stone cladding in the washroom were once the preserve of the very rich, but now, thanks to the exploitation of new sources, the price is plummeting. Granite imports from India to Britain grew eight-fold in the past five years. Leo Saldhana of the Environment Support Group said quarry owners were taking advantage of people's desperation by employing children and paying low wages. "People have found it easy to just walk into the forest and start mining," Mr Saldhana said. "Obviously it means the government has failed in regulating... and senior bureaucrats have colluded to just look the other way when this has been happening for the last five or six years." Research and "diagnosis camps" run by the Gujarat-based Peoples Training and Research Centre (PTRC) have identified an "epidemic" of silicosis, a deadly lung disease caused by exposure to stone dust. Quarry workers, gem polishers, foundry and other industrial workers are at risk. A PTRC-organised "machine yatra" or pilgrimage, saw hundreds of workers take to the streets to call for local exhaust ventilation to protect them from dust exposures.

- [BBC News Online](#). [PTRC website](#). [More on the PTRC dust campaign](#).

USA: Gloves off in union fight for free safety gear

US foodworkers' union UFCW is suing the Department of Labor over its failure to issue a standard requiring employers to pay for personal protective equipment (PPE) - a standard which has been delayed for nearly eight years. This Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) rule would require employers to pay the costs of protective clothing, lifelines, face shields, gloves and other equipment used by an estimated 20 million workers to protect them from job hazards. The lawsuit, which is also backed by national union federation AFL-CIO, asserts that the Bush administration's failure to act is putting workers in danger. The organisations say by OSHA's own estimates, 400,000 workers have been injured and 50 have died due to the absence of this rule. The lawsuit says that workers in some of America's most dangerous industries, such as meatpacking (slaughterhouse), poultry and construction, and low-wage and immigrant workers who suffer high injury rates, are vulnerable to being forced by their employers to pay for their own safety gear because of OSHA's failure to finish the PPE rule. It says the delay is "egregious." UFCW international president Joseph Hansen said: "Nothing is standing in the way of OSHA issuing a final PPE rule to protect worker safety and health except the will to do so. It is long overdue that the agency take action on protective equipment. Now, we are asking the courts to force OSHA to act." AFL-CIO president John Sweeney added: "The Bush administration's failure to implement even this most basic safety rule spotlights how it has turned its back on workers in this country." He said: "Too many workers have already been hurt or killed. The Bush Department of Labor should stop looking out for corporate interests at the expense of workers' safety and health on the job."

- [UFCW news release](#) and text of the lawsuit [[pdf](#)]. [AFL-CIO Now blog](#). [Change to Win news release](#). [Confined Space](#). [Newsday](#). [New York Times](#). [The Hill](#).

ACTION

Go on - tell your MP to support directors' duties!

There's still time to get your MP to sign up to Early Day Motion EDM 359 on directors' duties. So far almost 100 have signed up – but that means several hundred have not. The motion - sponsored by Labour MP Ian Stewart and designed to send a message to the government on the strength of feeling on the issue - says: “That this House welcomes the provisions of the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Bill; notes that it does not include any mention of health and safety duties applying to company directors; further notes that the report by the Home Affairs and Work and Pensions Select Committees (First Joint Report of Session 2005-06) clearly supported the introduction of such directors' duties; and calls on the government to introduce appropriate legislation to ensure that company directors who neglect health and safety to the point of causing death or serious injury can be prosecuted.” Make sure your MP is signed up and speaking up.

- [EDM 359 on directors' duties](#) - check to see if your MP has signed. If not, ask why not. [Find your MP](#) - you just need to know your postcode, MP's name or constituency name.

RESOURCES

New occupational health resources

For those of you with a hankering for highly detailed information on occupational health topics and practices, or who have a lot of time on your hands, there are two new resources that are worth giving a look. The UK Institute of Occupational Medicine (IOM) has made its

reports – over 450 of them - available free online. IOM says: “These comprise an important historical record of occupational health research in the UK, particularly in the coal industry. Registration with the IOM online library gives access to Institute research reports from 1969 to the present. The database allows searching by author, subject and keywords.” The World Health Organisation (WHO), meanwhile, has published the latest guide in its ‘protecting workers’ health’ series. The new resource, ‘A practical guide for the use of research information to improve the quality of occupational health practice’, targets mainly public health and occupational health professionals. However, it could be of interest to anyone wishing to know about work-related research methods. It might also help you pick apart dodgy research. And the section on ‘databases of interests to occupational health professionals’ includes a lot of links that would be of interest to union safety reps, too.

- [IOM news release](#) and [online library](#). [WHO publication note](#) and Protecting Workers' Health Series No. 7: A practical guide for the use of research information to improve the quality of occupational health practice [[pdf](#)].

EVENTS AND COURSES

TUC courses for safety reps

COURSES FOR JANUARY TO MARCH 2007

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