



# 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](#).

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## UNION NEWS

### More agonising delays for Stockline families

A further delay in court proceeding against the company charged with safety crimes relating to the 11 May 2004 Stockline explosion ([Risks 156](#)), in which nine workers died, has angered unions and campaigners. They say the agony looks set to continue for the families who lost loved ones as it now appears the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service are prepared to agree to another extension – the hearing was original due to start on 12 December ([Risks 287](#)) - to allow representatives of the company more time to prepare their defence. Speaking on behalf of the families' group, STUC assistant secretary Ian Tasker said: "For the second time families have been informed with less than a week to go that is unlikely that the preliminary hearing scheduled for the 30 January will take them any further forward in their search for answers as to how their loved ones died. Letters have been received from the Fiscal Service to indicate that the Crown Office will not oppose a further application by company lawyers for an extension." He added: "Families are left bewildered and angered by a justice system that pays little attention to their plight... it is extremely disappointing that it would appear that there is likely to be a further delay in the preliminary hearing and this is another example of how families who lose loved ones through work-related tragedies are treated by a justice system that pays very little notice of their pain and anguish when taking such decisions." He said the campaigners were seeking an urgent meeting with Lord Advocate Catherine Dyer to request a detailed explanation for the further delay.

- [STUC news release](#).

### Union anger as HSE cuts paper handling guide

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has withdrawn its guidance on transporting paper safely, in spite of opposition from the union

Amicus. The print and paper industry union says 'Transporting paper safely: Guidance for hauliers and others who transport paper and paper products' included crucial safety advice on securing tall paper reels, bales and palletised products on curtain-sided lorries. The industry has now been advised to refer to a Department for Transport (DfT) code of practice, which does not cover many hazardous workplace activities. Amicus says it will now be targeting HSE and local authority inspectors to ensure they enforce "interim guidance" from the safety watchdog. Tony Burke, Amicus assistant general secretary said: "This whole process has been highly unsatisfactory. Amicus has opposed the withdrawal of this guidance on the basis it was not being replaced by any effective, alternative guidance, thus leaving our members in the industry unclear about what they should do. Although the DfT guidance has existed for some time, there is no evidence of it being enforced. In addition it only refers to the public highway and not loading/unloading operations." He added: "We will be advising Amicus health and safety reps to approach their employers to clarify the standards that operate in their company for the loading and unloading of curtain-sided vehicles. Amicus will also be ensuring that health and safety inspectors are enforcing the new guidance."

- Amicus [news release](#) and [briefing](#). HSE decision to withdraw the guidance [[pdf](#)].

### 'Management culture' causing college stress

High levels of stress are widespread amongst staff throughout further and higher education and staff widely believe that management - far from addressing the issue - are contributing to the problem. A survey of 5,000 staff in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for the University and Colleges Union (UCU) and teaching union ATL received over 1,000 responses. Findings published this week show the main sources of work-related stress were clearly linked to targets and deadlines, long working hours, increased workloads and frequent changes of timetables or

courses. Not being able to exert control over demands made and being given responsibility without the authority to take decisions also scored highly, as did feeling undervalued and lack of administrative support. A “massive” 82 per cent of respondents reported their overall workloads had increased in the last three years. The same proportion felt this had directly or indirectly increased stress levels. UCU head of employment rights Roger Kline said: “We are now actively seeking legal test cases on excessive hours and against employers breaching their duty of care to staff, to back up our local campaigns. As student staff ratios rise and bureaucracy rockets, it appears that only collective action and legal threats will serve as a wake up call.” ATL general secretary Mary Boustead said: “We can't allow these appalling conditions to continue unchallenged - it really is not good enough in the 21st century. ATL urges members to report any instances of poor behaviour so they can be contested for the good of everyone working and studying in further education and higher education.”

- [UCU news release.](#)

### Cyber-bullying affecting 1 in 6 teachers

More than one in every six teachers is being bullied by mobile phone, email or over the internet, a new survey on cyber-bullying has revealed. The Teacher Support Network and teaching union ATL say the problem is becoming so serious that the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) will need to ensure effective implementation of anti-bullying policies covering cyber-bullying. They found 17 per cent of respondents had experienced the worrying new phenomenon. These incidents ranged from “upsetting emails” and unwelcome text messages, to silent phone calls and the malicious use of websites and internet chat rooms. The results also showed that 53 per cent of respondents did not know whether their school had a code of conduct to address cyber-bullying, and 39 per cent said their schools did not have such a policy. Of those schools that did have a

code of conduct to address the issue, 19 per cent said it was not properly enforced and 72 per cent did not know if it was. Commenting on the results of the survey, ATL general secretary Mary Boustead said: “Cyber-bullying takes an age-old issue to new levels. It’s an insidious and growing problem in our schools and colleges that goes beyond the school gate. Our survey shows that for all its benefits, information technology is allowing pupils and parents to bully teachers and lecturers from afar by phone, email and the internet, exposing them to public humiliation, damaging their good reputation and taking away their professional pride and confidence.” Patrick Nash, the chief executive of the Teacher Support Network, said: “Any teachers who have been affected by cyber-bullying can contact Teacher Support Network for free, confidential advice and support from our trained counsellors and coaches.”

- [ATL news release. The Guardian. Teacher Support Network.](#)

### Big Brother bullying uncomfortably common at work

Unions have warned that racist bullying, highlighted in this month’s Big Brother controversy, is something seen in many workplaces and must be stopped. The call comes after media industry regulator Ofcom and Channel 4 were inundated with tens of thousands of complaints about the treatment dished out by Jade Goody and fellow Big Brother contestants to Bollywood film star Shilpa Shetty. Media union BECTU issued a statement condemning the film star's treatment, drawing a comparison with the experiences of black and ethnic workers in some parts of the audiovisual industry. It said members of BECTU had remarked that the treatment of Shilpa Shetty has provoked uncomfortable reminders of their own experiences in the industry. Amicus said there are Shilpas in workplaces right across the country being victimised and bullied. The only difference is their ordeal can't be seen by millions. The union has published “10 pointers to help you

spot the Jade in your workplace.” Amicus anti-bullying coordinator Mandy Telford said: “Bullying is not just confined to the Big Brother household, it’s a widespread and serious problem and one which none of us can afford to ignore.” She added: “If you witness someone being bullied in the workplace - speak out about it and give them the support that they need. It is rare for a bully to pick on just one person in the office, helping that individual means you are helping everyone in your workplace.”

- [BECTU news release](#). [Amicus news release](#).
- [Dignity at Work](#). [TUC bullying webpages](#).

### Union concerns with grounded ship firm

The London-based company at the centre of the shipping accident off Devon is in dispute with unions over crewing and safety issues. Seafarers’ unions RMT and Nautilus have both raised serious concerns about safety practices at Zodiac Maritime, owner of the grounded MSC Napoli. Nautilus said the company was one of two firms that had registered in Britain but were deemed by the union to be low standard operators. RMT called for urgent action to end the erosion of standards on UK-flagged ships, following the grounding of the Napoli off the “Jurassic coast” of Devon. It said the incident underlines the growing problem of sub-standard vessels on the UK register and marks another blow to the reputation of the UK flag, calling for an urgent investigation and “action to tackle operators whose safety culture and employment standards are lacking.” RMT general secretary Bob Crow said: “Zodiac Maritime is well known to the International Transport Workers’ Federation, (ITF) as a company which does its best to evade trade-union attention and decent safety and employment standards.” He added: “UK registration provides a cloak of respectability and enables companies like Zodiac to operate without effective regulation of employment standards for non-domiciled seafarers. Safe working also demands a common on-board language, and there must be serious questions

over the safety of a vessel crewed by low-paid seafarers of five different nationalities.” Nautilus pointed out it had previously expressed concerns over an accident involving the Zodiac-controlled - but not operated - Hyundai Dominion ship that collided with another vessel, the Sky Hope, in 2004. Britain's Maritime Accident Investigation Branch issued a damning report on the incident and noted there was poor communication between the crew, which was made up of six nationalities. Brian Orrell, the general secretary of Nautilus, has said that he was concerned about the Hyundai Dominion incident, which highlighted what the union described as poor quality seafarers.

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

### RMT urges MPs to restore Thames safety

Maritime union RMT has this week urged a committee of MPs to reverse “dangerous reductions” in Thames boatmen’s training and licensing standards and to restore tighter standards of tidal-river safety that were introduced after the 1989 Marchioness tragedy in which 51 died. The union called on members of the government’s Delegated Legislation Committee to annul new regulations that it believes have seriously undermined standards of training and reduced levels of local river knowledge required to acquire a boatmaster's licence on the Thames. RMT says despite a lengthy campaign by Thames boatmasters, safety campaigners and survivors and relatives of victims of the 1989 Marchioness disaster, the government loosened the boatmen's licensing regime from 1 January, under the guise of European harmonisation ([Risks 287](#)). RMT general secretary Bob Crow called on the committee “to annul these changes that have seriously undermined safety on the Thames.” He added: “It is scarcely believable that the government has ignored the chorus of warnings and reduced qualifying service for a boatmaster's licence on the Thames from five years to two. They have removed any requirement for college-

based training, reduced the number of exams from four to one, and substantially reduced both the scope of local knowledge required and the length of service needed to acquire it, from two years to just six months.” Mr Crow concluded: “It adds up to a massive and unacceptable reduction in the very safety standards that were put in place after the sinking of the Marchioness with the loss of 51 lives in 1989. Ministers cannot hide behind the European Union, because the directive on harmonising boatmasters' licences allows higher standards on the Thames, and all we are asking is that those higher standards be restored.”

- [RMT news release.](#)

### Detailed, probing, lively and gutsy – and yours

The single health and safety magazine produced just with safety reps in mind has bagged a top national award for journalism. At a glittering awards ceremony at Bafta this week Hazards magazine – edited by the same team that brings you Risks –received The Work Foundation’s Workworld Media Award 2006 for online journalism. The judges said while health and safety was a difficult area to cover, Hazards “is so good that it not only renders the material detailed and probing, but also lively and gutsy as well. Anyone who hasn’t seen it should go and have a look.” They added that Hazards topped a “very impressive” list of entries, including the BBC’s online business webpages. The Work Foundation awards for the best workplace, management and business journalism were presented by the Foundation’s chief executive Will Hutton and Guardian editor Alan Rusbridger. Hazards also made the long list for the 2006 Private Eye/Guardian Paul Foot Award for Campaigning Journalism.

- [The Work Foundation news release. Hazards magazine.](#)

## OTHER NEWS

### Concern over delay in asbestos drug decision

A final decision on whether a chemotherapy drug that could help sufferers of the asbestos cancer mesothelioma should be available on the NHS may not now be announced for months. The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) says it does not envisage being in a position to give guidance on the drug Alimta until September. This would mean by the time NICE finally announces if it is going to make Alimta available on the NHS, campaign groups will have been fighting the cause for almost two years. There is no cure for mesothelioma, caused by exposure to asbestos, but Alimta is said to help make sufferers more comfortable during their last months. The drug is currently only available in some parts of the country on the NHS, including the North East, Liverpool and London. NICE decided recently not to recommend Alimta for use across the NHS, but this decision is being reviewed. It is understood those health trusts in the UK already offering Alimta can continue to do so until a final decision is made. Ian McFall of Thompsons Solicitors said: “The very nature of mesothelioma means many sufferers cannot afford to wait until September to find out if this drug will be made available to them.” He added: “I would urge NICE to find some way to bring this meeting forward so a decision can be made without further delay.” Chris Knighton from the Mick Knighton Mesothelioma Research Fund said the group was “disappointed that there will be no final decision until September. It is good news that those currently receiving Alimta on the NHS will continue to do so but this does not help those people who live in areas where the drug is not yet available from their local NHS hospital.”

- [Thompson Solicitors news release. Mick Knighton Mesothelioma Research Fund.](#)

### Firm fined after fireball fatality

A worker became a “human fireball” because of safety lapses at a car parts plant, a court has heard. Ray Davison, 40, was working for Hashimoto on the production line at its South Tyneside plant when the solvent xylene spilled on to his work clothes and caught fire. He suffered 85 per cent burns and died in hospital three days after the incident, which took place in January last year. This week, South Shields magistrates fined the company £15,000 and ordered it to pay £30,000 in costs to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Magistrates were told the firm, which employed 530 workers and which pleaded guilty to safety charges, did not have a health and safety policy and had ineffective management controls. Martin Baillie, prosecuting on behalf of the HSE, said Mr Davison was being shadowed by a trainee on the day of the accident. He said something “caught the trainee's eye” and he saw flames on Mr Davison's clothes. Mr Baillie said a storage tank containing the chemical had been “negligently” left unsecured on a shelf. It tipped over, smashing a heat lamp which ignited the chemical. He said that, given the lax safety practices and lack of staff training, such a tragedy was “inevitable”.

- [The Journal. Hazards deadly business webpages.](#)

### **Cranes grounded after collapses**

A construction equipment hire company has been ordered to take down 180 tower cranes after two collapsed and three people died. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) served the prohibition notice on Falcon Crane Hire of Shipdam, Norfolk. The firm must take out of service all tower cranes in their fleet which have not been examined by an independent competent person. Cranes collapsed at Battersea in London in September and Liverpool on 15 January ([Risks 290](#)). The HSE announcement came on 19 January, just one day after the Battersea Crane Disaster Action Group (BCDAG) called for a blanket national ban on the use of Falcon's

cranes. Battersea and Wandsworth TUC organiser and BCDAG member Julia Brandreth said the group had written to HSE “to demand that prohibition notices are issued on all sites in the country using Falcon cranes until full independent safety inspections are carried out. We will not rest until crane-related deaths are eliminated.” After announcing the prohibition notice, an HSE spokesperson said: “We have decided to adopt a precautionary approach and require the company to demonstrate those cranes which have been thoroughly examined by competent persons employed by them, are safe to continue in operation. Any lessons learnt from the investigations will be shared with the industry as soon as possible. The notice will affect up to 180 tower cranes which are erected currently on construction sites throughout Great Britain.” As a result of the Liverpool incident one person was killed and the driver of the crane was injured. At Battersea, in September 2006, Michael Alexa, 23, died when he was hit by the crane as he washed his car. The crane driver, Jonathan Cloke, was also killed. Speaking after the latest tragedy, BCDAG secretary Liliana Alexa, Michael's mother, said: “I cannot believe that another innocent human being has suffered the same fate as my son. We urgently need more robust legislation on crane safety to protect workers and the public.”

- [HSE news release. BBC News Online.](#)
- HSE tower crane action alert [[pdf](#)]. [Battersea Crane Disaster Action Group.](#)

### **“Iron clad” case cost-cutting hurt BP safety**

BP is to receive another damning indictment over the Texas City refinery explosion when a new report links the disaster to cost-cutting by the British oil group. Carolyn Merritt, chair of the US Chemical Safety Board (CSB), an independent, government-backed agency, said a report to be released on 20 March will pin some of the responsibility on BP budget cuts. It will argue that there was a “causal relationship” between reductions in maintenance budgets and

the explosion at the Texas City refinery in March 2005, which killed 15 people. The legacy of Lord Browne, BP's outgoing chief executive, was tarnished last week when a US independent panel of experts, convened by BP, said the company appeared to have had a "corporate blindspot" on safety ([Risks 290](#)). The report said BP had failed to learn from earlier incidents, singling out ignored lessons from a series of safety failings at Scotland's Grangemouth refinery which resulted in an HSE prosecution and a £1m fine in 2002. Ms Merritt said the CSB report would go even further and become the first investigation of the explosion to make cost-cutting a key factor in the incident. She said: "Budget cuts had an impact on safety and that impact on safety had a causal relationship with what happened on March 23. We have an iron-clad case for the impact of cost-cutting on safety. We will be making those conclusions in our report." BP and the United Steelworkers Union (USW) last week reached "an agreement in principle" on a comprehensive joint safety initiative. "Nothing can mitigate the 2005 tragedy," said USW president Leo W Gerard. "But our new agreement with BP shows the company's willingness to work with the union to address the root causes of the explosion, not just in Texas City, but throughout the corporation." USW international vice president Gary Beevers said: "This work will not end with BP's US refineries. The company has committed itself to discussions on improving safety worldwide, and in the union we plan to broaden this effort to all the oil companies. We look forward to improved relations with BP as the first step in that process."

- [The Guardian. USW news release.](#)  
[Forbes.com.](#) [The Observer.](#)
- [Hazards BP safety updates.](#)

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### France: Union calls day of action on demanding work

The long-term wear and tear caused by work must be addressed by employers, the French trade union body CFDT has said. Over three years ago, a new pensions law in France gave employers just three years to reach agreement with unions on measures to deal with the health impact of the cumulative hazardous job exposures that wear out workers ([Risks 173](#)). According to a report last year from the European Working Conditions Observatory (EWCO), some measures to offset the effects of physically arduous working conditions - such as bonuses, reduced annual working hours, and early retirement options - were already in place prior to the reform law. However, EWCO said this was the first time there has been an explicit requirement for action to remedy physical strain caused by factors like night work, assembly line work, carrying heavy loads, or exposure to noise or toxins. Measures to address problems could include early retirement or new work organisation and safety measures to reduce risks. However, the talks have stalled, especially on the issue of early retirement for workers in very demanding jobs. CFDT general secretary François Chérèque called last week for physically wearing work to be made a "national cause". The union body is to call a national day of action to get the negotiations back on track.

- [ETUI-REHS new item. Hazards older workers webpages.](#) [Hazards age news and resources.](#)

### USA: US employers make bad stand on chairs

Safeway customer Deana Jordan Sullivan, concerned that checkout workers in her local supermarket were being left standing all their working day, went out and bought stools for them. Safeway officials, however, said: "Thanks, but no thanks." Craig Muckle, a spokesperson for the chain, said: "We do appreciate the customer's thoughtfulness and generosity. But sitting on a chair could potentially expose employees to injury. Part of their job requires them to lift heavy objects - laundry detergent, frozen or fresh turkeys, cat or dog food. Their

checkstands are designed to be conducive to standing.” The reason why US checkout workers are far more likely to be required to stand has much less to do with safety and worker health, however, than with image and notions of customer service. The UK Health and Safety Executive two years ago recommended supermarket cashiers be given sit-stand stools so staff could sit when not lifting those heavy items. “A seat should be provided enabling operators to have a choice,” it concluded. Muckle says Safeway's checkouts are not designed to permit stools. Anyway, “culturally, I don't know of any American supermarket where checkers sit down,” he said. “That is prevalent in Europe, but in our culture, if people saw that, a lot of people would wonder, 'Are these people really working?'" Sullivan, an executive at Discovery Networks, isn't done rocking the boat. She's rallying support from neighbourhood online bulletin boards. In the UK, a report from Hazards magazine in 2005 warned that individuals spending most of the day on their feet every working day are at greater risk of health problems including varicose veins, poor circulation and swelling in the feet and legs, foot problems, joint damage, heart and circulatory problems and pregnancy difficulties.

- [Washington Post. Confined Space.](#)
- [Hazards standing hazards webpages.](#)

**USA: Concern grows about deadly 9/11 legacy**

Doctors have established a definite link between work at New York's September 2001 “ground zero” World Trade Center site and chronic respiratory illness. A study published last year by the largest monitoring programme for post-9/11 workers found nearly 70 per cent were likely to have lifelong breathing problems ([Risks 274](#)). But experts have been slower to officially link deaths to the exposures, saying it is easy to misinterpret some diseases, like cancer, as being connected to ground zero when other factors may be at play. However, an unofficial, anecdotal death toll of post-September 11

workers is rising rapidly. In 2006, the number of deaths tracked by a lawyer suing the city and contractors overseeing the clean-up of ground zero more than quadrupled to 90 people, up from about 20, said attorney David Worby. The plaintiffs, who all worked at ground zero in one capacity or another, died of diseases now familiar to the thousands who are sick - sarcoidosis, mesothelioma, and pulmonary disease. So far, two deaths have been firmly connected to exposure to the toxic cloud that enveloped lower Manhattan after the twin towers collapsed. The family of Felicia Dunn-Jones, who died of sarcoidosis - an inflammation of the lungs - a year after escaping the twin towers, was paid a \$2.6 million (£1.3m) death benefit by Kenneth Feinberg, who oversaw the compensation fund for victims. And last April, a New Jersey medical examiner concluded that the January 2006 death of retired police Detective James Zadroga was “directly related” to his work at ground zero ([Risks 263](#)). New York senator Hillary Clinton has now taken up the cause of affected workers.

- [Newsday. Occupational Hazards. NY Daily News.](#)

**USA: Campaign targets nail salon hazards**

Nail salon workers are facing serious risks to their health from physical strains and toxic exposures, an advocacy organisation has warned. Lehn Tsan, a community advocate and organiser, and Connie Nguyen, a peer trainer, are from Asian Law Caucus, which has launched a nail salon project as part of a worker health and safety programme. “This group we're targeting has been silent for so long,” said Tsan, 23. “Our goal is to educate and empower workers, to let them know that they have a right not to work in poor conditions.” Tsan, who is fluent in Vietnamese, was hired out of college as an intern for the San Francisco-based Asian Law Caucus, and was retained full-time to work on the nail salon project. In 2005, a group of health advocates, community-based groups, and nail salon owners and workers formed the California

Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative out of a growing concern for the health and safety of workers in this industry, many whom are immigrants. Workers use toxic chemicals such as acetone, formaldehyde, toluene and polishes that contain phthalates. Many of the chemicals are linked to cancer. A four-part worker health training programme is based on a bilingual English and Vietnamese curriculum developed by the University of California, San Francisco and Asian Law Caucus. It includes sessions on ergonomics, infectious diseases, chemicals and ventilation, and an introduction to the law called “know your rights.” Tsan hopes to form an advisory group of nail salon workers and hone leadership and organising skills amongst the workers. The larger goal, she said, is to influence state policy. Several recent bills were signed into law that affect nail salon workers and Tsan said she'd like workers - who would be most affected by the laws - to have a voice in the process.

- [San Mateo County Times.](#)

**USA: Women’s work cancers under the spotlight**

Many work environments - no matter how seemingly innocuous - expose people to human carcinogens, substances that can cause cancer. Studies show higher incidence of breast cancer among women who work in offices, for instance. “People who work in offices globally have a higher risk,” said Cornell University’s Suzanne Snedeker. “Why? Is there chemical exposure in offices and schools? Is there out-gassing from ceiling tiles and flame retardants?” Snedeker is an associate research director at Cornell's Program on Breast Cancer and Environmental Risk Factors (BCERF). “It's appalling how little data we have,” she said. “Until the 1990s we had very little data on exposure to chemicals.” The occupations in which women have a higher incidence of breast cancer are scientific researchers, laboratory technicians, physicians, nurses, organic solvent workers, rubber makers, electrical and electronic engineers, textile weavers and knitters, teachers, librarians, clerical workers

and administrative clerks, accountants and bookkeepers, according to the Shanghai Breast Cancer Study conducted from 1980 to 1984. There is some evidence of increased incidence of breast cancer and mortality in women who work with benzene, carbon tetrachloride, formaldehyde, methylene chloride, acid mists, ethylene oxide, lead oxide and styrene. Snedeker said historically women have not been included in studies of occupational cancer. Housework is another area that needs to be examined, she said. Even if women work outside the home, they often are responsible for housework inside the home. “We use a lot of hazardous chemicals. They are under our sink and people think if they can buy it it's OK. It's not,” Snedeker said.

- [New Caanan News Review. BCERF, Cornell University.](#)
- [Hazards cancer webpages.](#)

**RESOURCES**

**HSE inspection pack on worker involvement**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has published a new “topic pack” to advise HSE and local authority inspectors on worker consultation and involvement issues. HSE says: “There is strong evidence to suggest that involving the workforce in health and safety matters has a positive effect on health and safety performance. This topic inspection pack is designed to help staff in HSE and local authorities to: understand what is meant by ‘worker involvement’; understand the legal requirements to inform and consult workers, along with the policy position on enforcing those requirements; determine when discussion of worker involvement is appropriate; and promote the benefits of involving workers.” Commenting on the new 21 page pack, which can be accessed on the HSE website, TUC head of safety Hugh Robertson, said: “While this is welcome, we have to wait and see if it makes a difference in the way that inspectors deal with problems

around consultation in the workplace. We hope that safety representatives will raise the points in the pack with any inspectors they come into contact with.” A key concern of TUC and unions not addressed by the pack is the lack of support from inspectors for union safety reps who are denied time off to undertake necessary safety training and functions.

- [HSE publication alert](#) and full inspection pack [\[pdf\]](#).

### REACH briefing for safety representatives

TUC has published a detailed online guide to the REACH chemicals law. The guide, which targets union safety reps, spells out the background to the law, and says it was “primarily intended as a measure to protect the environment and consumers, but it has implications for workplace safety.” The briefing gives a background on the need for a chemicals law, its scope, and the timetable for implementation. It says: “At the moment we do not know how the REACH regulations will be introduced into the UK. The Health and Safety Commission will be consulting on new regulations either in late 2007 or during 2008 and trade unions will be fully involved in discussions on these. In the meanwhile it is important that safety representatives continue to ensure that employers undertake full risk assessments on all chemicals and other dangerous substances and ensure they are provided with safety data sheets from manufacturers.”

- [TUC REACH briefing](#), [TUC hazardous chemicals webpages](#).

### EuroFound loses old name, finds new look

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions has given its website a thorough revamp and at the same time given itself a less RSI and voice loss inducing

name. The rebranded “EuroFound” has also brought together its specialised websites in one more easily accessed package. The major web resources now under one web roof are: European Working Conditions Observatory (EWCO) – information on quality of work and employment; European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO) – information on industrial relations; European Monitoring Centre on Change (EMCC) – information on restructuring and industrial change; and EurLife - statistical indicators on quality of life. The organisation’s European Working Conditions Surveys are the main source of Europe-wide data on working conditions, particularly safety standards.

- [EuroFound news release](#) and [website](#).

## EVENTS AND COURSES

### Mesothelioma Action Day, 27 February 2007

The second Mesothelioma Action Day will be held on 27 February 2007. As well as a parliamentary reception at the House of Commons, there will be events in Manchester, Chesterfield, Leicester, Liverpool, Glasgow, Rotherham, Gateshead, Leeds and elsewhere. A purpose produced short video presentation to raise awareness of the UK mesothelioma epidemic will be shown throughout February 27 on giant BBC TV screens in city centres including Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester. The day aims to highlight the rising death toll from asbestos cancers, the lack of government funding for treatment and the under-estimated risk from relatively small asbestos exposures.

- For further information, see the [International Ban Asbestos Secretariat](#) website. Also see [Asbestos Forum](#) and [Hazards Campaign](#) websites.

### TUC courses for safety reps

**COURSES FOR JANUARY TO MARCH 2007**

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