



# 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

### Safety reps the key to improving safety

More rights and more time for trade union safety reps is the best way to improve workplace health and safety, a major conference has been told. Keynote speaker Hugh Robertson, the TUC's head of safety, told the sell-out 8 February event organised jointly by the Health and Safety Executive and North West TUC: "The key to improving safety is supporting that band of volunteers in the workplace - union safety reps." He added: "With better time off arrangements and greater rights, they could make a significant improvement in the health of workers in a very short period of time." The conference was attended by over 200 safety reps and was massively over-subscribed. Speaking ahead of the event, HSE North West regional director David Ashton said: "Simple precautions can greatly reduce the misery and expense caused by work related injuries and illness." TUC regional secretary Alan Manning said: "Any death is a tragedy and we must do all we can to prevent any workplace risk. This can only be done with the cooperation and commitment of enforcement agencies - the Health and Safety Executive and local authorities. We are all working together to help make working in the North West much safer." He added: "It is important to note that workplaces with recognised union safety reps have a serious accident rate which is about half of that in non-union workplaces. Union safety reps do save lives."

- [HSE news release. TUC safety reps webpages.](#)
- Hazards [union effect](#) and [safety reps](#) webpages.

### Huge payout for Corus blast survivor

An Amicus member who suffered 43 per cent burns in a steel blast furnace explosion which killed three other workers has received a "huge" six-figure payout. Peter Clement, 54, was one of 12 workers injured in the blast at the Port Talbot steelworks in November 2001 ([Risks 244](#)). Len Radford, 53, Andrew Hutin, 20, and Stephen

Galsworthy, 25, all died. In December last year a High Court judge ordered the firm to pay more than £3m in fines and costs for related breaches of health and safety laws ([Risks 288](#)). Negotiations over compensation have continued since Corus admitted civil liability about a year after the fatal explosion. In addition to his burns, Mr Clement, who was unconscious for 46 days after the blast and given just a six per cent chance of survival, suffered septicaemia, renal failure, liver problems, neurological problems and psychiatric injuries. He acknowledged Corus had admitted liability for the accident at an early stage but he said reaching this final settlement has been a difficult battle. "It's been a very frustrating five years, and I understand it could of taken a lot longer had I contested the compensation that they gave me," he said. Mr Clement, who will never work again, said he felt very bitter towards Corus and "cast aside and forgotten about." Amicus regional secretary Cath Speight said the explosion was a "horrific accident which caused enormous suffering for the victims." She said the law needed to be strengthened to make firms and their bosses more accountable. "We need stronger penalties against employers who fail in their duties to protect the health and safety of their employees. All the evidence shows that the threat of prosecution and imprisonment is the main incentive for companies to improve their health and safety standards." Amicus is seeking to make amendments to the Corporate Manslaughter Bill which the union says fails to make company directors liable for the deaths of their employees. Workplace safety campaigners have criticised Corus's safety record, which in recent years has included a sequence of fatalities on its work sites, with at least nine deaths in the last six years ([Risks 289](#)).

- [Amicus news release. South Wales Evening Post. BBC News Online.](#)
- [More from Hazards on Corus safety.](#)

### RMT has had enough of rail firm's excrement

Rail firm GNER has failed to stop its trains spraying human waste into the atmosphere from on-board toilets, despite warnings from the Railways Inspectorate ([Risks 269](#)). Rail union RMT says monitoring of trains from the Linger and Die crossing at Ferryhill, near Darlington, has revealed that the problem has worsened. The union has demanded the Railways Inspectorate take action to stop a fine spray of human waste being released into the air from toilet tanks when Mallard Class 91 trains go round steeply-banked bends at speed or brake heavily. "It is now more than two years since our members working on the track near Darlington complained that they were being sprayed with human excrement and we asked GNER to deal with it," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said. He added "they lied to us, telling us that the discharge was from air conditioning and was harmless, even though their own study showed traces of E-coli in the discharge," a standard indicator of sewage contamination. Mr Crow said a long promised solution, a new tank emptying facility, "has been in operation since November, and the most recent monitoring, in December, showed that there was a discharge from three out of eight trains observed - worse than the previous two monitoring exercises. If GNER cannot find any other way to sort out the problem they will have to put in place speed restrictions in those places where the discharge is released." The union leader added: "We have had enough lies and excuses, and we now need to see our members' and the travelling public's health and safety put ahead of GNER's profits."

- [RMT news release](#).

### Poultry unions call for bird flu protection

Workers in the poultry industry must have their jobs and health protected, unions have said. Commenting after bird flu was found in a turkey at a Bernard Matthews' plant in Holton, East Anglia, prompting a cull of 159,000 birds, GMB senior organiser Shaun Graham said: "GMB is contacting the public authorities to ensure that everything that needs to be done is being done to

safeguard the health and safety of the workers in the poultry industry in East Anglia and in particular in the Bernard Matthews organisation. It is essential that all the workers are contacted and advised of what they need to do to protect their health and GMB will assist in this via our mainly Portuguese members in getting the message to these poultry workers." He added: "GMB is also contacting the company regarding the job security of GMB members employed by the company as poultry workers. GMB wants to ensure that the impact on workers will be included by Defra when it comes to the calculation of the compensation for the outbreak." TGWU regional organiser Miles Hubbard said: This has been a trying time for the company, the local community and our members." He added: "We have worked closely with the company to ensure people have been informed as quickly as possible of what is happening and what they should do. We are satisfied that given the difficulties of identifying avian 'flu all concerned have responded as effectively, speedily and professionally as we would expect." He said workers sent home as a result of the outbreak would not lose pay or holiday entitlement. Teaching union NUT has contributed to a new guide on precautions for schools to minimise any risk of a bird flu outbreak. The guide, which can be downloaded from the Teachnet website, includes model plans and checklists for schools and colleges.

- [GMB news release](#), [TGWU news release](#), [NUT news release](#) and [bird flu guide](#), [Defra news release](#) and [avian flu guide](#), [European Commission news release](#), [BBC News Online](#), [CIEH news release and resources](#).
- [HSE bird flu webpages](#) and [Avian influenza inspectors guidance](#), US OSHA [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for an Influenza Pandemic](#).

### Rail crash prompts call level crossing action

Rail union RMT has renewed its call for a programme to eliminate level crossings after a

fatal collision when a car was struck by a train last week near Invergordon, northern Scotland. "It is tragic that there has been another death and serious injuries in another collision between a train and a road vehicle at a level crossing," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said. "It is fortunate that the train was not derailed and that serious injury to the train's passengers and crew appears to have been avoided. But the tragic fact is that every level-crossing collision is avoidable, because the time is long overdue for a programme to eliminate level crossings from Britain's railway network." Commenting after the incident in which a teenager was killed and two others were seriously injured, Mr Crow said: "Every year there are scores of level crossing incidents, including a number of collisions between trains and road vehicles, and the Railways Inspectorate has long identified level crossings as the biggest single danger on today's railway network. On Network Rail's own figures it would cost an average of £1 million to replace each level crossing with an underpass or road-bridge - that's about half the cost of a mile of motorway. Level crossings are a 19th century solution - in the 21st century it is high time for a commitment to separate rail and road traffic." The crash involved a train travelling from Inverness to Wick and a Ford Fiesta and occurred at the automatic Delny Level Crossing near Invergordon, which has lights but no barrier. Northern Constabulary said the three 17-year-olds were cut free from the car after the collision on the morning of 2 February.

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

## OTHER NEWS

### PM offers assurances on work deaths law

The prime minister has indicated the government will not abandon the Corporate Manslaughter Bill after this week's defeat in the House of Lords. He told the Commons Liaison Committee that he was committed to the principles of the Bill despite earlier reports that the home

secretary, John Reid, had threatened to scrap the legislation if the lords insisted on extending it to cover deaths in prisons and police cells. On 5 February, the lords voted 223 to 127 in favour of such an amendment. Mr Blair said that ministers would now look at the Bill again before deciding how to proceed. Asked by Labour MP Andrew Dismore, a member of the liaison committee, about the "quite strong suggestions" the government would withdraw the Bill rather than accept the amendment, the prime minister responded: "I have not heard that, I must say. No, I think it is important that we have the Bill but we are going to have to make up our minds on this. Our desire was to try and accommodate reasonable opinion as much as possible; it is just that, as often happens in government, we have two very diametrically opposed views as to what the right thing to do is and we need to try and make a balanced judgment about it."

- [Commons Liaison Committee, uncorrected transcript of oral evidence](#), 6 February 2007. [The Times](#). [The Guardian](#). [The Telegraph](#). [Financial Times](#). [The Herald](#).

### BP profits hit by safety failures and delays

BP has been forced to slash some production targets by up to 20 per cent and increase capital expenditure in a bid to tackle safety and output problems in the aftermath of accidents in the US. The oil giant made a profit of \$3.9bn (£2bn) in the last three months of 2006, down from \$4.4bn a year earlier, although overall profits for 2006 were up 15 per cent to \$22.3bn. BP exploration boss Tony Hayward, who becomes group chief executive when Lord Browne steps down on 31 July, said: "We have further increased our focus on safety and operational integrity, and will in some cases deliberately slow the pace of our activity in order to improve safety and efficiency." The company said as well as production difficulties, increased demand for staff meant many inexperienced workers were coming into the industry, which could also affect safety levels. Mr Hayward said: "My priority is

simple and clear, it is to implement our strategy by focusing like a laser on safe and reliable operations.” BP was severely criticised over safety by the Baker panel, a body established by the company to assess its performance in the aftermath of the March 2005 Texas City explosion that killed 15 and injured 180 workers ([Risks 291](#)). The report said blame went all the way to the top, and said the London-based global board had a “corporate blindspot” on safety. Commenting on the latest profits statement, BP chief executive, Lord Browne, said: “The fourth quarter result reflects the recent declines in the overall price and margin environment, as well as operational factors and increased safety and integrity investments.” He added: “We remain committed to addressing the recent operational issues while executing our strategy with discipline and focus.”

- [BP fourth quarter and full year 2006 results. The Guardian.](#) [BBC News Online.](#)
- [Hazards BP webpages.](#)

### Work and finances are top stress causes

Money worries and work are driving up stress in Britain, making it one of the most stressed countries in Europe. Half the population say they feel more stressed now than five years ago and more than 10 per cent say they have felt suicidal, twice the level in 2003. The findings, from an internet survey of 2,000 employees commissioned by the Samaritans, confirm Britain as one of the most stressed nations in Europe. Half of those surveyed (51 per cent) cited money as the biggest cause of stress, followed by work (about 38 per cent). About seven in 10 respondents said stress made them irritable and 56 per cent said it disturbed their sleep patterns. A third of the respondents said alcohol helped to make them feel less anxious. The director of Samaritans service support, Joe Ferns, said: “The results of the survey are worrying - not only because we're getting more stressed but because it seems we're getting worse at dealing with that stress.” Women suffered more than men, with

over half saying they felt stressed more than once a month.

- Samaritans [Stressed Out survey, information on managing stress at work](#) and [short film about stress.](#) [Personnel Today.](#) [The Independent.](#)

### Bars ban brings massive fall in passive smoking

Scotland's bar workers are now exposed to 86 per cent less smoke following the ban on smoking in enclosed public places, according to new research. The results were revealed to the Scottish parliament's health committee as it considers the effectiveness of the ban, which came into effect on 26 March 2006. Researchers said the air quality inside most bars was now comparable with outdoors. The team, from Aberdeen University and the Institute of Occupational Medicine in Edinburgh, measured the air quality inside 41 Scottish pubs in the two months leading up to the ban and again in May and June 2006. They also carried out studies with 371 bar workers from across Scotland to investigate respiratory health. Professor Jon Ayres of Aberdeen University, who is leading the research, said: “These findings confirm the dramatic effect that smoking cessation in pubs and bars can have on air quality. This can only be to the benefit of bar staff and customers alike.” Full findings of the health assessments will be available at the end of the year, the researchers said. A new study has strengthened the evidence linking workplace passive smoking to an increased lung cancer risk. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) says its study for the first time establishes a clear dose-response between exposure to co-workers' smoke and lung cancer risk. The analysis showed a two-fold increased risk of lung cancer among highly exposed workers. The European Commission has launched a Green Paper consultation on a Europe-wide workplace smoking ban. A workplace smoking ban took effect in France on 1 February.

- [IOM news release](#) and the full health committee report [[pdf](#)]. [IARC news release](#). Leslie Stayner and others. Lung cancer risk and workplace exposure to environmental tobacco smoke, American Journal of Public Health, published online 31 January 2007 (to appear in the March print edition) [[abstract](#)]. [BBC News Online](#) plus story on the [French ban](#).

### Figures reveal daily attacks on teachers

A teacher suffers a violent attack almost every school day in England, official government figures suggest. There were 221 recorded attacks on teachers last year alone, and 1,128 between 2000 and 2006, information revealed by the Liberal Democrats shows. The figures show the number of injuries caused by violent attacks increased by a fifth over the same period. Lib Dem education spokesperson Sarah Teather, who obtained the figures after tabling a question to DWP junior minister Anne McGuire, said such attacks led to fear in schools. "These chilling figures reveal the shocking levels of violence in schools," she said. "Every few years a particularly tragic case makes the news, but the hidden story is that a teacher in England falls victim to a serious assault every single working day. As with patients who attack staff in A&E, pupils and parents have to be made to understand that the law applies inside the school gates just the same as outside. Violent attacks against teachers are completely unacceptable and must be prosecuted." NASUWT general secretary Chris Keates said: "We need to take strong action where there's serious violence against teachers." A spokesperson for teaching union NUT said any attack was "completely unacceptable". Scottish teaching union EIS called this week for a crackdown on "happy slapping", after a teenage pupil was allegedly filmed punching his headteacher in the face while another pupil recorded the assault on a camera phone. EIS wants schools to order all phones to be switched off during the school day and for teachers to be given rights to confiscate phones and delete images.

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

### Ford cancer probe highlights work risks

AN 18-month investigation into a throat cancer cluster at Southampton's Ford car factory has concluded six cases – twice the expected number – occurred as a matter of chance. Experts were called in after five employees in the paint shop died of throat cancer. Another developed the illness but recovered. The six staff members were diagnosed with the disease between 1994 and 2005. It is more than twice the number of cases medical researchers would expect to occur over an 11-year period. Cancer problems have been identified in car plant studies in the past. A general health probe carried out in 2003 by Alabama University at Ford plants across the US identified a high numbers of oesophageal cancer cases, and also concluded they were coincidental. In Canada, the Canadian autoworkers' union CAW was so concerned about the workplace cancer risk to its members, in December 1997 it launched a national 'prevent cancer campaign'. The union said metalworking fluids and other common car industry exposures placed its members at risk. A 1999 collective agreement with the Ford Motor Company covering 13,300 CAW members "succeeded in prohibiting the introduction of 14 hazardous substances, most of them carcinogens, including asbestos, PCBs and vinyl chloride," the union said. New International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) figures for Europe published this week suggest rising rates of cancer diagnosis will put an increasing strain on health care systems. IARC director Professor Peter Boyle commented: "With an estimated 3.2 million new cases and 1.7 million deaths each year, cancer remains an important public health problem in Europe, and the ageing of the European population will cause these numbers to continue to increase, even if age-specific rates of cancer remain constant."

- [Daily Echo](#). [CAW Prevent Cancer Campaign](#). [IARC news release](#). [BBC News Online](#).

- [Hazards cancer webpages.](#)

### Six figure payout for man infected by sick parrot

A man left debilitated after catching a disease from a parrot at work has received a £700,000 out-of-court settlement. Glyn Atherton, 35, was working at Focus Do It All in Nottingham in March 2000 when he caught psittacosis, an occupational lung disease similar to pneumonia, from a parrot belonging to Petworld, a pet store renting space on the premises. After initially improving and returning to work, he had a relapse and spent three months in hospital where he was diagnosed with post-viral chronic fatigue syndrome. The condition has left him requiring a wheelchair, unable to work and in great muscular pain. His wife had to give up work to care for him full-time. The family began legal action against Focus Do It All in February 2001 because the company at first refused to pay prescription charges. Focus Do It All admitted liability for exposing Mr Atherton to risk of infection. Humans can contract the disease from infected birds by breathing in material contaminated with the responsible bacteria. The parrot at the store had shown no signs of the disease but died days after Mr Atherton was first admitted to hospital in March 2000.

- [Hucknall Today.](#) [DIY Week.](#) [The Telegraph.](#) [CIEH news release.](#) [US CDC psittacosis guide.](#)

### Drivers fined for not taking rest breaks

Four bus drivers have been fined for working too many hours and not having enough rest – despite being denied training on working hours rules and just sticking to the rosters set by their employer. Gloucester Magistrates heard the Stagecoach drivers all worked shifts driving the Cheltenham to London Megabus route, which meant driving to London's Victoria bus station and back daily. They were found to have acted

illegally by not taking the required amount of rest after a six-day week. They pleaded guilty to charges under the Transport Act of not taking the full 36-hours rest between shifts. Each was fined £100 and £30 costs. The court heard the four had been given a rota which meant they took between four and five hours less than the required 36 hours off work. The drivers said they were never told of the law by Stagecoach and added repeated requests for training on the legislation were refused. Prosecuting for the Vehicle and Operating Service Agency (Vosa), Roger Rose said the discrepancies came to light after a records check by an agency officer. “The drivers felt they were entitled to rely on the company rosters but each individual has to take some responsibility to ensure that they do not exceed the limit,” he said. Defending the four drivers, Rosalind Cameron-Mowat said her clients were let down by Stagecoach. She said: “All of them relied, very foolishly, on their employer getting it right. They asked for training and they were told that it was not available. The company got it wrong.”

- [The Citizen.](#) [BBC News Online.](#)

### Small firms don't get occupational health services

Workers in small firms rarely have access to occupational health services but rarely take sick leave either, a business survey has found. Survey responses from nearly 4,000 members of the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) revealed 43 per cent of firms had not experienced any sickness absence in the past twelve months. They indicated this was down to good management and the loyalty that a small family firm can engender. The survey also found providing cover for sick workers “can significantly reduce the perceived impact of sickness absence on productivity and staff morale.” Barely one in 20 of the respondents (6.5 per cent) provided access to occupational health services. The FSB report concludes that small businesses “need incentives to enable them to promote healthy workplaces and provide occupational health support to their

staff.” It says “an important part of this is reduced Employers’ Liability Compulsory Insurance (ELCI) premiums in return for good workplace health and safety practices.” The survey report adds that the government needs to do more to get the message out about support available to small firms, for example Workplace Health Connect. And GPs need more effective training in occupational health so they can provide better advice, the report concludes.

- [Health matters: A small business perspective](#), FSB.

### Give the gift of safety this Valentine’s Day

Anti-poverty campaign group War and Want would love it if you gave that special someone a Valentine’s gift this year that will make a lasting difference. In Colombia, the fresh-cut flower industry – the source of the most popular gift on 14 February - provides work for 90,000 people. These workers are forced to labour in terrible conditions with minimal health and safety conditions. Contracts are not renewed if workers become ill, pregnant, or attempt to form a union. What’s more, cancer-causing pesticides are used in the vast greenhouses where the workers grow, cut, and package the flowers for shipping to European and North American markets. Often the workers are not provided with vital safety equipment such as masks and gloves. Cactus, War on Want’s partner organisation, runs health and safety workshops for the flower workers, to highlight the dangers of their workplace. It says through education, workers can work to minimise the hazardous effects. Cactus has already organised seven health and safety workshops, providing information on safety rights and how to achieve them. Work on Want says a £5 donation could see 20 workers receive an eight-day safety course. It’s the non-fattening, healthy way to show you care, and will give the lucky recipient a gift pack including a personalised message and a photograph of a Colombian flower worker.

- [Send a War and Want Valentine’s Day message](#). [Online order form](#).

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### Australia: Unions win asbestos compensation campaign

A multinational that had resisted finalising an asbestos compensation deal has finally put pen to paper, after a high profile trade union campaign ([Risks 284](#)). Greg Combet, secretary of the Australian union federation ACTU, expressed pride in the role of unions and union members in achieving justice for the victims of James Hardie asbestos products. Speaking after the Aus\$4bn (£1.58bn) 40-year deal was ratified this week at an extraordinary general meeting of the firm’s shareholders in the Netherlands, he said: “After six years of struggle, unions are pleased to see James Hardie now taking responsibility for its Australian asbestos victims.” He added: “What unions have helped secure is a final, open ended, tax-office and now shareholder-approved funding agreement from James Hardie which will see Australian victims of its asbestos products properly compensated now and into the future.” The company will make an initial payment of around Aus\$185 million (£73m) into an Asbestos Injuries Compensation Fund with further regular payments to be made over the minimum 40 year life of the agreement. AMWU NSW secretary Paul Bastian said: “The AMWU has been campaigning for this result for over three years. The deal will ensure current and future victims of James Hardie asbestos products are properly compensated.” The company, which was Australia’s largest manufacturer of asbestos products, established a Netherlands based parent company that took Aus\$1.9 billion (£0.75bn) out of Australia in a bid to evade its legal obligations. Boycotts of James Hardie products ([Risks 233](#), [Risks 235](#)) and protests at shareholder meetings in Australia ([Risks 213](#)) and the Netherlands were just some of the

activities that eventually forced the company to the negotiating table with unions.

- [ACTU news release](#). [AMWU news release](#). [Sydney Morning Herald](#). [News.com.au](#). [ABC News](#). [The Age](#).

**Colombia: Mine gas blast kills 32**

A gas explosion at a coal mine in north-eastern Colombia has killed 32 miners, officials say. The blast occurred on 3 February at La Preciosa mine, about 580km (360 miles) north of the capital, Bogota. President Alvaro Uribe visited the site to speak to the miners' families and assure them that the tragedy would be fully investigated. The blast took place at the makeshift mine near the town of San Roque in Norte de Santander province. Rescue crews struggled for more than a day to reach an area about 400m (1,300ft) underground where the miners were trapped. President Uribe told the grieving relatives that the government would help them get social security benefits after the loss of their loved ones. The authorities said they were also stepping up their supervision of Colombia's mines. In 2001, a gas explosion in northern Colombia caused part of a coal mine to collapse, killing 15 workers underground. In 1997, 16 miners were buried alive after a blast at coal mine in the same region in what was then the country's worst mine disaster.

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

**Global: Seafarer death highlights dock work dangers**

The death last month of a Filipino seafarer, crushed by an eight-ton container on a vessel berthed in Rotterdam, has drawn attention to the dangers of requiring non-specialist workers to do dockers' jobs. The dead man, Glenn Cuevas, was employed by Cyprus-based Marlow

Navigation and was lashing cargo when the tragedy struck. The incident took place on board the mv Eucon Leader, owned by the German company, Bernd Becker KG, while it was moored at Rotterdam, the Netherlands, on 21 January, according to the Dutch union FNV Bondgenoten. The vessel is covered by an International Bargaining Forum (IBF) agreement, preventing cargo handling and lashing by seafarers unless the local dockers' union is contacted to waive the relevant clause - this did not occur. The union says it had on several previous occasions reminded the manager of the vessel about the cargo-handling clause, but to no avail. Global transport union federation ITF has called for the company to ensure that managers of the vessel are aware of their obligations under the IBF agreement. Frank Leys, ITF dockers' section secretary, said: "Seafarers already suffer from stress and fatigue because of their long working hours. If, on top of that, they are forced to do work that has traditionally and historically been done by dockers - lashing and securing containers - regrettably the risk of such tragedies are greatly enhanced." ITF says it will be helping Cuevas' family to obtain compensation from the company.

- [ITF news release](#).

**USA: Lawsuit pushes for a quicker pesticide ban**

Farmworkers and environmental groups have reopened a lawsuit against the US government's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in an attempt to hasten the phase out a pesticide they say has been poisoning fieldworkers for decades. The federal lawsuit challenges a decision by the EPA last November to set a 2012 timetable for phasing out the pesticide azinphos-methyl, known as guthion or AZM. "These pesticides put thousands of workers at risk of serious illness every year," Erik Nicholson of the United Farm Workers of America (UFW) said. "It is inexcusable for EPA to allow AZM to continue poisoning workers for six more years." The pesticide has been used on apples, cherries, pears

and other crops since the late 1950s. The union and environmental groups, represented by the environmental law firm Earthjustice, sued the EPA in federal court in Seattle in 2004, arguing that the agency was wrong to continue allowing the use of a pesticide that could cause dizziness, vomiting, seizures, paralysis, loss of mental function and even death. “It is outrageous that EPA allowed continued use of AZM knowing that it would expose farmworkers to unacceptable risks of pesticide poisonings,” said Patti Goldman, an attorney for Earthjustice. Shelley Davis, attorney for Farmworker Justice, said: “With safer alternatives already in widespread use, the EPA has betrayed the trust of the men, women, and children whose health it is duty bound to protect by allowing this extremely hazardous pesticide to remain in use for six more years. It is time to make that shift now.” The lawsuit was originally put on hold when the EPA agreed to reconsider the use of AZM and another pesticide, phosmet, which is used on orchard crops and blueberries.

- [UFW news release. Common Dreams. International Herald Tribune. Houston Chronicle.](#)
- [UFW pesticides campaign. Earthjustice. Farmworker Justice.](#)

## RESOURCES

### Meat industry health and safety guide

Guidance notes on health and safety in the meat industry have been published by the British Meat Processors Association. The guidance notes, which are available free online, have been developed by a meat trades joint working party involving the union Usdaw, the Health and Safety Executive and trade associations. The guidance covers commonly used machinery and equipment such as bowl choppers, bandsaws, hand knives and mechanical deboning systems. It also gives advice on risk assessment in the industry and on priority health and safety topics

such as workplace transport, control of hazardous substances and thermal comfort. Usdaw national health and safety officer Doug Russell said: “The meat trades joint working party is one of the longest running tripartite forums in the food industry and has an excellent record for raising standards.” He welcomed the free guide, which provides “practical information on the issues that matter in the industry. The thermal comfort guide, for example, gives authoritative guidance on protective clothing and work/rest patterns in freezers and cold stores that is not readily available elsewhere. Usdaw safety reps in the industry will find them very helpful.”

- [Usdaw publication alert](#). BMPA health and safety guidance notes for the meat industry [[pdf](#)].

### NUT guide on animals in education

A briefing prepared by teaching union NUT explores the context in which animals may be encountered by students in schools – whether in the classroom, the school grounds or on a farm visit. The union says many teachers know from experience the positive benefits which can accrue from the responsible observation of living creatures at close quarters, both in delivering the science curriculum and in enhancing pupils’ personal, social and moral development. It warns, however, there can be many safety considerations. The guide covers: the law; animal welfare and handling; hygiene, diseases, parasites and allergies; physical injuries; and “unexpected” animal visitors that may wander on to school premises. It includes a checklist for union reps on introducing and updating a school animals policy.

- [Animals in education](#), NUT briefing [[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](#)