



Risks Newsletter



Number 300 – 31 March 2007



Editor: [Rory O'Neill](#) of [Hazards](#) magazine. Comments to the TUC at healthandsafety@tuc.org.uk

Risks is the TUC's weekly online bulletin for safety reps and others, read each week by over 14,500 subscribers and 1,500 on the TUC website. To receive this bulletin every week, click [here](#). Past issues are [available](#). This edition contains [Useful links](#) [TUC courses for safety reps](#) [Disclaimer](#) and [Privacy statement](#).

In this issue

- **UNION NEWS**
- Hidden cancer epidemic is work's biggest killer
- Unions march for construction workers' rights
- RMT will fight to protect train guards
- Report tracks history of rail safety problems
- Loco campaign sets improvements in train
- Union legal protection pays off
- Last chance to win on penalties!
- **OTHER NEWS**
- Dramatic rise in workplace fatalities
- Government 'failing' on nano safety

- Poor site management leads to fines
- BP under pressure to link board pay to safety
- New asbestos victims didn't do dirty jobs
- New review of the working nation's health
- Safety survives as a council enforcement priority
- Action call on cash van attacks
- Calls for return of kidnapped BBC reporter

RESOURCES

- New IOSH occupational health toolkit

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

- Australia: ABC breast cancer victims in compo bid
- Canada: Firefighter won final cancer battle
- China: Safety drive for deadly small mines
- USA: Regulation by litigation is the new order

EVENTS AND COURSES

- TUC courses for safety reps

UNION NEWS

Hidden cancer epidemic is work's biggest killer

UK unions are supporting a global 'zero cancer' campaign targeting workplace cancers. A coalition of global unions is warning a worldwide epidemic of occupational cancer claims at least one life every 52 seconds, but says this tragedy is being ignored or seriously underestimated by both official regulators and employers. Stage one of the coalition's campaign, which is backed by 11 global union organisations, was launched last week and aims to tackle what unions say is the No.1 workplace killer worldwide. Amicus health and safety officer Bud Hudspith said: "Occupational cancer is the most common work-related cause of death, ahead of other work-related diseases and accidents, but it is not being taken seriously enough by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) or employers." A new international work cancer prevention guide, which is being distributed in the UK by GMB, Amicus and other union safety organisations, reveals that globally there are over 600,000 occupational cancer deaths a year – one death every 52 seconds – making up almost one-third of all work-related deaths. The guide was produced as part of the first ever international zero occupational cancer campaign, involving 11 global trade union organisations together representing over 300 million members in more than 150 countries. In the UK, an estimated 50 people a day are dying from work related cancers ([Risks 234](#)). Amicus has called on HSE to issue an updated estimate of workplace cancer deaths – it says HSE's estimate of 4 per cent of all cancers being caused by work is based on flawed evidence and is about one-third the true figure. Bud Hudspith says unions have raised the matter formally with the tripartite UK Advisory Committee on Toxic Substances (ACTS). Unions have called on ACTS and HSE, through its Disease Reduction Programme, to address workplace cancer risks and in particular cancer risks to women workers. "Most of all Amicus wants clear action to reduce and then eliminate workplace cancer deaths," the union says.

- [Amicus news release](#). [IMF news release](#). [BWI](#)

[news release](#). [EI news release](#). [ICEM news release](#).

- Campaign resources: Occupational Cancer/Zero Cancer: A trade union guide to prevention [[pdf](#)] (also available in French, Spanish and Russian).
- *Hazards* [occupational cancer webpages](#) and new [Work cancer prevention kit](#). [IMF occupational cancer webpages](#). [BWI occupational cancer webpages](#). [Amicus occupational cancer webpage](#).

Unions march for construction workers' rights

Construction unions marched on Westminster this week to protest at the exploitation of migrant workers. Site workers from across the country joined the 28 March rally. The event was organised by Amicus, with its campaigners joined by members of the construction union UCATT and the European Federation of Building and Woodworkers. Amicus said the industry's national agreements are being undermined by the use of temporary and agency workers. It called for the government to use only directly employed labour and for legislation to prevent the use of cheap labour, and the resulting exploitation of workers. Amicus general secretary Derek Simpson said: "Without the protection of our national agreements, workers will continue to be exploited on building sites. We need to protect our national agreements and it is time the government set the standards for all workers in the construction industry." At the rally, UCATT announced its key demands of the government, including a "serious crackdown" on bogus self-employment and the introduction of individual director liability in the corporate manslaughter legislation currently before parliament. It is also calling for more apprenticeships, public sector pay increases and a dramatic increase in the construction of social housing. UCATT general secretary Alan Ritchie said; "This is not a shopping list of unrealistic demands. These are sensible realistic policies which will not just help construction workers but will benefit Britain as a whole." The

union protesters lobbied their MPs in support of the changes.

- [Amicus news release. Building magazine. Contract Journal.](#)
- [Hazards migrant workers' webpages.](#)

RMT will fight to protect train guards

Secret plans to remove “safety-critical” guards from busy commuter trains across London just before the 2012 Olympics will be fought “all the way”, rail union RMT has said. The union says “privateers” bidding to run the London Rail Concession from 2010 have been told by Transport for London (TfL) that driver-only trains could be operated on the North London and West London lines from December 2011. Trains on both lines currently have guards. The invitation to tender, obtained by RMT under freedom of information legislation, tells bidders it anticipates trains will be driver-only. RMT general secretary Bob Crow said the move to privatise the lines and get rid of guards “is absolutely crazy and RMT will fight it all the way. The North and West London lines are heavily overcrowded at the best of times, and removing a key safety-critical member of train crew is the opposite of what is needed.” He added: “Just about everyone who uses and works on the railways agrees that there is a pressing need for more staff on stations and trains, for security and safety reasons.” Mr Crow concluded: “TfL have sought to sell us a vision of Metro services that are safe and secure, but by anyone's standards removing guards will have the opposite effect.”

- [RMT news release.](#)

Report tracks history of rail safety problems

Safety problems involving Network Rail and its subcontractors were increasing in the year before

the Cumbria derailment in February in which one passenger died ([Risks 296](#)), rail union TSSA has said. The union points to the latest figures from the rail industry’s Confidential Incident and Reporting Analysis System (CIRAS) which showed non-compliance with railways rules rose from 4.1 per cent to 13.7 per cent between 2004/05 and 2005/06. Network Rail’s top failures were the result of putting performance before safety (47 per cent), poor planning (20 per cent) and poor management (13 per cent). Its sub-contractors fell short on training (33 per cent of its reported non-compliance incidents), staff shortages (22.2 per cent) and putting performance before safety (22 per cent). Between them, Network Rail and its subcontractors accounted for 40 per cent of reported “non-compliance failures”, followed by train operating companies (35 per cent). TSSA general secretary Gerry Doherty called for urgent talks with Network Rail and the other rail companies to examine the safety implications of the report. “I am particularly concerned that the largest single cause of non-compliance was the priority given to putting performance before safety,” he said. “Having reviewed this report, we are very concerned with the large increase in reports of non-compliance with the safety rules between 2004/05 and 2005/06. We need action on this and we need it now. The industry should take this report very seriously indeed.”

- [TSSA news release. CIRAS website and newsletter \[pdf\].](#)

Loco campaign sets improvements in train

Train cabs riddled with comfort and safety problems are being improved after a campaign by train drivers’ union ASLEF. The union says companies GB Railfreight and Freightliner have both responded positively to the union’s demands concerning the Class 66 locos. GB Railfreight told the union it is actively exploring a number of initiatives to improve the Class 66 cab environment. The company is trialling pneumatically cushioned seats with lumbar support, backrest adjustment and soft and hard

damping. Freightliner has said that subject to ASLEF confirmation that the trials have been satisfactory, it plans to introduce the new seats. GB Railfreight has already committed itself to roll out this modification across its Class 66 fleet. The firm has also on a trial basis installed a cab-cooling device, directing cool air onto the drivers' upper torso. The company currently provides bottled water and wet-wipes in the cab and has begun fitting side window blinds. ASLEF says official reports have linked unsatisfactory, poorly ventilated cabs to an increase in unsafe incidents on the rail system ([Risks 299](#)).

- [ASLEF news release](#).

Union legal protection pays off

Unions continue to offer the best free legal support around, representing thousands of members suffering as a result of poor workplace health and safety standards. Amicus member David Waring, a maintenance worker who slipped on oil and had his hand crushed in a machine while working for Automotive Applied Technologies in Accrington, has received over £4,000 in compensation. Liability was denied by the defendants, but once court proceedings were issued they agreed to settle the claim. PCS member John Burdett, a customer care officer working for Jobcentre Plus, received an undisclosed sum after he tripped over trailing computer wires and suffered fractured ribs and other injuries to his neck, shoulders and arms. UNISON member Adele Dodd, a former secretary at Mersey Care NHS Trust, received a £70,000 payout after being forced by injury to leave on grounds of ill-health aged just 52. She was trying to push a rotating filing system which had been recently installed, but injured her back when the system jammed. FBU member and retired firefighter Paul Rogerson, 53, received an undisclosed sum for partial hearing loss caused by exposure to noises including two-tone horns on the fire engine, in-cab radios and pumps.

- Thompsons Solicitors news releases on cases involving [David Waring](#), [John Burdett](#), [Adele Dodd](#) and [Paul Rogerson](#).

Last chance to win on penalties!

A TUC campaign for more serious safety penalties for dangerous employers is in pole position in a Labour Party 'Labourspace' online competition to find the best work-related campaigning issue. The winner of the Labourspace competition – the campaign receiving the most votes - will be invited to present their campaign to the prime minister at No.10. TUC says the voting deadline is 31 March, so is urging all reps to vote now for its 'Give safety some teeth!' campaign so No.10 is sent a strong message that stern safety penalties are necessary. The TUC's campaign is pushing for more meaningful penalties for safety offences, including higher fines and a new safety duty on directors. TUC says: "Unless fines are increased in line with those for other offences, and a new more imaginative approach to sanctions is taken, less responsible companies will continue to avoid making many small but crucial changes, and we will see many more preventable deaths at work." It only takes a few moments to vote.

- VOTING IS EASY! Back the TUC 'Give safety some teeth' campaign and [vote for serious safety penalties](#). [Background on the campaign](#).

OTHER NEWS

Dramatic rise in workplace fatalities

There has been a dramatic rise in workplace fatalities at work, official figures show. Statistics for the six months up to the end of September last year released this week by the Health and Safety Executive show 124 workers died in the six month period, compared to 212 in all of 2005/06. If the same trend continued until the

reporting year ends this month, it would push the fatalities figure to a five year high of 248 deaths, up 17 per cent on last year. Based on the new provisional figures for April-September 2006, fatality rates have increased dramatically in workers employed in the extraction and utilities, construction and service industries, but have fallen in agriculture and manufacturing. Worker fatalities on the railways have already hit last year's figure of five deaths. Construction fatality figures released earlier this month show the dangerous trend did continue through the year in that industry, reaching 74 deaths in early March – the reporting year ends on 31 March – compared to 59 in the whole of 2005/06, a rise of 14 per cent. Unions UCATT, PCS and Prospect linked the rise in deaths to cuts in resources available to the Health and Safety Executive ([Risks 298](#)). The number of HSE inspections, improvement and prohibition notices, safety prosecutions and convictions and inspector contact time have all dropped markedly in recent years.

- [HSE fatal injury statistics update](#) and [tables](#).
- [Hazards enforcement webpages](#).

Government 'failing' on nano safety

The UK government has failed to fund adequate research into potential health risks posed by nanotechnology, a report by its leading scientific advisers has warned. The Council for Science and Technology's (CST) 'Nanoscience and Nanotechnologies Review', published this week, bemoans a "lack of progress on research into toxicology, health and environmental effects of nanomaterials." Government funding to investigate the possible problems of nanotechnology was out-stripped by 150 times by government money spent promoting the industry. Professor Sir John Beringer, who chaired the CST sub-committee that carried out the review, said: "There is a pressing need for a strategic programme of central government spending into the toxicology, health and environmental effects of nanotechnologies." The

CST review examined progress on government commitments made in 2005 ([Risks 197](#)) in response to a 2004 report commissioned by the government from the Royal Society and Royal Academy of Engineering ([Risks 167](#)). Over the last five years, government has spent an average of just £600,000 per year on examining the impacts of nanoscience. In 2004 alone, it spent £90m on research and promoting commercialisation of nanoproducts. "The safe development of a new technology should not depend on whether an academic wins a highly competitive research grant," said Sir John. Science minister Malcolm Wicks welcomed the review and said government would "respond fully" to the report in time. Global union federation IUF has called for a moratorium on the use of all nano products in food and agriculture.

- [CST webpage](#) and Nanoscience and Nanotechnologies Review [[pdf](#)]. [FoE Australia news release](#). [IUF news release](#). [BBC News Online](#).
- [TUC nanotechnology factsheet](#). [Hazards nanotechnology webpages](#). [FoE Australia nanotechnology project](#).

Poor site management leads to fines

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has warned companies that they risk enforcement action where site safety is poorly managed. The warning followed the prosecution last week of two companies at Nottingham Crown Court. Bau GmbH, of Angelburg in Germany and Re-Construction UK Ltd of Quebec Quay in Liverpool were both sentenced for safety management shortcomings during the construction of a Lidl store in Nottingham. Bau GmbH was fined £100,000 and costs of £6,188. Re-Construction UK Ltd was fined £50,000 and costs of £6,188. HSE inspections of the site were prompted by nine complaints from members of the public. Three HSE prohibition notices were served to stop the most hazardous activities, including dangerous working at height and

vehicle and pedestrian segregation, safety of excavations, failure to wear the correct personal protective equipment (PPE), movement of loads around the site and fire safety. As well as the obvious risks to the safety of those on site, there were also potential risks to members of the public, said HSE. HSE inspector Martin Giles said: “Our inspections revealed a number of areas that were highly dangerous. The site was not being effectively managed and the contractors had highly cavalier attitudes that showed a reckless disregard of health and safety procedures and requirements.” He added: “What makes this site so unusual and so dangerously unsafe is the sheer number of the hazards - all of which would have been simple to resolve. Contractors are expected to organise health and safety effectively and take appropriate measures. Where standards are poor, HSE will prosecute those responsible, even if there has been no injury, as in this case.”

- [HSE news release](#).

BP under pressure to link board pay to safety

BP faces an April showdown with its shareholders over the failure of the oil giant to link the pay of its London-based global board to health and safety performance. The Local Authority Pension Fund Forum (LAPFF), an investment body whose members own 1.2 per cent of the group's shares, plans to vote against the company's remuneration report at BP's annual meeting on 12 April. LAPFF says it is voting against the remuneration report because of the failure to clearly tie executive rewards to safety performance ([Risks 249](#)). It has been in discussions with the company for the past six months and raised its concerns with BP's chair, Peter Sutherland, last year ([Risks 290](#)). PIRC, the corporate governance body which advises groups including LAPFF, is also advising shareholders to reject the report. In the wake of problems such as the Texas City refinery fire, the oil company has been facing questions about its safety record and in 2006 it docked the bonuses of some executives because of these issues. Councillor Darrell Pulk,

chair of the LAPFF, said: “It is plainly right that BP should not pay directors full bonuses in the wake of the highly critical Baker ([Risks 290](#)) and CSB ([Risks 299](#)) reports. But we do not see any linkage between long-term incentives and BP's stated desire to be a leader in process safety management.” Other investors are known to believe that there could be a greater link between the BP executives' pay and non-financial performance measures such as safety.

- [PIRC news release](#). LAPFF news release [[pdf](#)]. [The Guardian](#).
- [Hazards BP safety news and resources](#).

New asbestos victims didn't do dirty jobs

A retired teacher and a retired housewife are among the latest victims of an asbestos cancer which is affecting people with relatively low exposures to the deadly fibre. Former West Midlands schoolteacher Margaret Worthington, 69, has been diagnosed with the deadly cancer mesothelioma. The former primary school teacher believes she contracted the disease after pinning and stapling her pupils' work to pinboards on the classroom walls. During her teaching career, from 1958 to 2001, Mrs Worthington worked at numerous schools within the Wolverhampton and Walsall area. As part of her job she regularly pinned children's work, posters and various thematic displays around the classroom onto pinboards and also outside the classroom down the corridor walls. These displays were changed every six weeks. Alida Coates from Irwin Mitchell solicitors explained: “Whilst we are in the very early stages of investigating Mrs Worthington's claims, we do know there have been a number of recent cases involving schoolteachers from other parts of the UK, who contracted mesothelioma after breathing in asbestos fibres released as a result of sticking pupils' work to classroom walls with drawing pins” ([Risks 274](#)). Mrs Worthington is currently undergoing further chemotherapy treatment and has also been prescribed the latest mesothelioma drug, Alimta. She said: “I have

two young granddaughters aged five and two. I don't have the strength now to pick up the youngest. She's too young to understand why her grandma can't lift her up and carry her around." Housewife Jean Marjorie Raschi, 71, died in January of the same cancer, caused by washing her construction worker husband's Fernando's asbestos-contaminated work clothes. An inquest heard Mr Raschi, who retired in 1991, had worked as a pipefitters' mate and steel erector. Recording a narrative verdict that Mrs Raschi died from mesothelioma, coroner Stanley Hooper said: "Mrs Raschi's husband and son obviously took home a considerable amount of asbestos on them. She was performing her maternal duties washing their clothes when she became exposed to it."

- [Sheffield Star](#).
- [Hazards asbestos webpages](#).

New review of the working nation's health

The government has announced a comprehensive review of the health of the working age population, which it says will assess current health levels and provide a benchmark against which to measure future workplace health improvements. Work and pensions secretary John Hutton said the review will increase understanding of the beneficial link between work and health, and help identify where the greatest improvements can be made to the health of those who are in or want to return to work. It will be led by Dame Carol Black, the national director for health and work, and was commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in conjunction with the Department for Health. Speaking at the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health's (IOSH) annual conference, where he also announced a new partnership with IOSH, John Hutton said: "Preventing people from becoming ill at work - and acting to support and rehabilitate those who do become ill - is not only right for individuals, it is also crucial for the success of business, for a strong economy and a

strong society." He added the review was important "not just to help change public perceptions about the links between work and health, but also to help us refine our approach and maximise the impact of the Health Work and Well-being Strategy." IOSH president Lisa Fowlie commented: "The health of the working age population has been a neglected topic for a considerable amount of time. Unfortunately, there are currently only a few thousand specialist occupational health doctors and nurses in the UK, which we believe is woefully inadequate to deal with the potential numbers who may return or join the workforce. However, with a little extra training, an additional 10,000 health and safety practitioners could play an increased and vital role in facilitating and supporting safe returns to work and long-term retention."

- [DWP news release](#). [IOSH news release](#). [Health Work and Well-being strategy](#).
- [Hazards work and health webpages](#).

Safety survives as a council enforcement priority

Health and safety will remain one of the top regulatory priorities for local authorities, a government backed review has concluded. The final report of the Rogers Review, released last week as part of the Chancellor's budget statement and accepted by the government, has set five priorities for local authority regulatory services. Whittled down from an initial list of 60 functions, then a long list of 24 key policy areas, "improving health in the workplace" made the final five alongside air quality, food hygiene, fair trading and alcohol, entertainment and late-night refreshment licensing. A sixth priority, animal and public health, is recommended but only on a time-limited basis. Set up by the Cabinet Office in the wake of the Hampton Report which called for official regulatory inspections to be drastically curtailed ([Risks 208](#)), the review was asked to list the five areas of enforcement with the greatest impact on health. Peter Rogers, chief executive of Westminster Council, who chaired

the review, said a national approach would encourage a more proportionate approach to low risk issues and businesses would benefit from improved consistency of enforcement. “For the first time enforcement priorities have been based on the evidence of risk. For those in local government who make day-to-day decisions about enforcement, these priorities will help us best protect the health of our citizens and businesses' prosperity. They will help us tackle the biggest risks nationally as well as helping those who are regulated know what is expected of them.”

- [Treasury news release](#) and [full Chancellor's budget speech](#). National Enforcement priorities for local authority regulatory services – final report [[pdf](#)]. [Rogers Review webpage](#). [CIEH news report](#).

Action call on cash van attacks

Security sector union GMB has called for attacks on cash in transit staff to be re-classified as an attack on a person rather than a business crime. Commenting on a new Metropolitan Police report on the rise in attacks on cash vans in London, GMB's Bob Crosby, a senior shop steward in the cash in transit industry and a member of the GMB Central Executive Council, said: “GMB are very concerned with the growing number of attacks on our members who work in the cash in transit industry. Many of them have been seriously injured and some left severely disabled as a result of these attacks”. He added: “GMB with the security industry companies have lobbied parliament to get these attacks re-classified from being a business crime to being an attack on a person ([Risks 285](#)). Both ourselves and the companies have been asking for all the public authorities including national and local government, police forces and clients like banks and retailers to work together with the security companies and GMB to come up with concrete plans to tackle this rising crime and to protect our members from serious injury.” Mr Crosby concluded: “This plan will require resources to be targeted at taking out the criminal gangs as

well as dealing with the teenage elements involved in these attacks. It will also require new engineering solutions that leave the guards less exposed and leaves the stolen cash unusable.” The Met report said cash in transit robberies in London rose 137 per cent last year. Only a fifth of raids involved guns. Usually a gang of youths surround a guard leaving a van to drop off or collect money from a bank or supermarket. Cash boxes are no longer chained to guards' wrists after several attempts to cut off hands.

- [GMB news release](#). [The Sun](#).

Calls for return of kidnapped BBC reporter

Events have taken place this week in London and Gaza to mark two weeks since reporter Alan Johnston went missing while working as for the BBC in Palestine. The BBC set up a satellite link between Gaza and Television Centre so staff and supporters could exchange messages of support on giant screens. Director general Mark Thompson praised Mr Johnston's commitment for reporting from Gaza in very difficult conditions. “All of us in London and in Gaza want him home,” Mr Thompson told about 100 journalists and members of staff. Speaking for the Palestinian journalists' syndicate in Gaza, Shadi al-Kashif made a pledge directly to the missing journalist that their protests “will not stop until your release.” Gaza has already seen numerous demonstrations in support of the missing BBC correspondent. On Sunday more than 100 journalists, politicians, and others attended a rally in Gaza calling for his release and last Wednesday Palestinian journalists began a rolling strike. There have also been numerous international demands for his immediate release, including from the Arab League, the UK government, the EU, journalists' union NUJ and the International Federation of Journalists. The Congress of the European Federation of Journalists, with brought together 65 journalists representing 34 unions from 26 countries last weekend, passed unanimously a resolution condemning the kidnapping on 12 March. EFJ called on the Palestinian government to take

whatever action is necessary to secure Johnston's safe release. The meeting also applauded the action taken by Palestinian journalists, in particular the Palestinian Journalists Union, to help release the BBC reporter.

- [IFJ news release](#). [NUJ news release](#). [BBC News Online](#).
- [International News Safety Institute](#).

RESOURCES

New IOSH occupational health toolkit

IOSH, the organisation for safety professionals – safety officers to you and me – has produced a new, free, online occupational health toolkit. IOSH says this new resource “brings together information, guidance, factsheets, case studies, training materials, presentations and more to help you tackle occupational health problems.” It adds that the resource, aimed at safety officers and still under development, can be used “to support what you do over the whole process – from learning the background to a health issue, through identifying and dealing with early symptoms, right to getting people back to work if they've been off ill.” Key areas covered are stress and musculoskeletal disorders. Information on inhalation and skin disorders is due to be added later this year. The resource targets safety officers and doesn't have information on worker involvement, but is still another useful tool for use by safety reps.

- [IOSH occupational health toolkit](#).
- [Hazards tools for safety reps](#).

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Australia: ABC breast cancer victims in compo bid

Eight of the 13 women who developed breast cancer in the last 11 years while working at the ABC's Toowong studios, in Brisbane, Australia ([Risks 289](#)), have filed workers' compensation claims. Roger Singh of Shine Lawyers said he hoped the group claims served on the ABC would be considered favourably and expeditiously so the women could get on with their lives. He said the claims were to recover medical and other expenses, and to seek some redress for pain and suffering. A report from an independent study late last year revealed that the breast cancer rate at the Toowong site in Brisbane was up to 11 times higher than normal. Staff vacated the premises in December 2006 after the independent assessment confirmed the breast cancer cluster at the site. Before that, members of the media union MEAA staged a mass walk-out in July as a protest against ABC inaction on the matter. ABC last week announced it will provide a breast screening programme for all female employees who have worked at its Toowong site since 1996. On the recommendation of Kerry McMahon, an expert on breast magnetic resonance imaging and diagnostic breast imaging, ABC managing director Mark Scott confirmed the company would introduce a screening programme for early detection of breast cancer, for which up to 480 women will be eligible. “I want to ensure that ongoing support and assistance is available to our staff affected by breast cancer and all other women who have worked at the former Toowong site,” Mr Scott said in a statement. “We want to make sure that in the toughest of circumstances, our staff are supported with the right medical care and that we can provide services for the early detection of breast cancer.”

- [ABC news release](#). [Courier Mail](#). [The Australian](#).
- [No More Breast Cancer campaign](#).

Canada: Firefighter won final cancer battle

A Toronto fire captain who died of work-related colon cancer this month was laid to rest last week with full honours. Gary Allen Wilson, 48, was found to have died in the line of duty after the Workplace Safety Insurance Board (WSIB) declared his cancer to be related to the chemicals and smoke he was exposed to on the job. Paul Atkinson, a representative for the Toronto Firefighters' Association, said Wilson's line-of-duty death is one of 170 claims which have been approved by the board. He said 120 of those claimants have died. "It was a long battle to get compensation for Gary," said the union rep, who helped Wilson secure benefits and a survivor's pension for his family. "If Gary had died two years from now, his family wouldn't have been covered." That's because WSIB only allows compensation for firefighters diagnosed with colon cancer if they are under the age of 50 and have been on the job at least 20 years – Gary was 48 when he died and had 24 years service. "Gary was the first firefighter with colon cancer to qualify – certain types of cancer still aren't recognised," he added. "There have been more than 600 claims since 1998. I get a claim virtually every day." Figures show two-thirds of firefighters will contract some form of cancer. A study released in the 1990s, which analysed data from more than 5,000 Toronto firefighters over the span of 40 years, showed they are at an elevated risk for brain, bladder, kidney and colon cancer, among others. Atkinson said protective gear had become more sophisticated over the years, but the equipment still doesn't protect against chemicals and carcinogens that seep through the gear and are absorbed into the skin.

- [CTV News](#). [Toronto Star](#).
- [Hazards work cancer webpages](#).

China: Safety drive for deadly small mines

The United Nations has launched a project to improve safety for China's coal miners, who average 13 deaths a day working in one of the world's deadliest jobs. The United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP) said the US\$14.4 million (£7.3m) plan will train and educate miners in five provinces where numerous fires, floods and other disasters strike mines every year despite repeated government promises to improve safety. Khalid Malik, the UNDP's representative in China, said the four-year project will focus on small-scale town and village mines, where the fatality rate is almost twice the national average, and set up training centres for more than 1,000 miners and their families. The project will be conducted in the major coal-producing provinces of Anhui, Guizhou, Henan, Liaoning and Shanxi. "Being a coal miner in China is one of the world's most dangerous jobs," Malik said. In one of the latest tragedies, 15 miners were confirmed dead in a flooded coal mine in central China's Henan Province, rescuers said late on 24 March. The miners were trapped at the flooded Shangjiuwu coal mine in Ruzhou city, southwest of the provincial capital Zhengzhou. A high density of gas and lack of oxygen led to the deaths, according to Li Jiucheng, director of Henan Coal Mine Safety Administration. The incident occurred on Thursday 22 March, when 52 miners were working inside the mine. In a second incident this month, a gas blast on 18 March killed 21 miners at a coal mine in north China's Shanxi Province. China's coal mines killed 4,746 people in 2006, according to the State Administration of Work Safety.

- [The Standard](#) plus [article on the Henan deaths](#). [People's Daily Online](#). [China Daily](#).

USA: Regulation by litigation is the new order

Legal action is becoming the major factor forcing safety action in the US as the official safety watchdog is revealed increasingly to have little appetite for the job. The claim, by Professor David Michaels of the George Washington University School of Public Health and previously a top US occupational health expert in the Clinton administration, comes after a report on the BP Texas City refinery blast by the US Chemical Safety Board (CSB), which

censured the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) for its failure to inspect refineries or require safety improvements ([Risks 299](#)). The report said OSHA should recruit more inspectors and undertake more inspections. According to Professor Michaels: “I’ve heard it said many times that if you go behind closed doors and ask a CEO which one he fears most – OSHA or lawsuits – the answer always is lawsuits.” He added: “Inspections by OSHA and the CSB may help keep workplaces safe and employers honest, but neither can hold a candle to the power of litigation as a way to encourage the safe operation of factories.” The US House Education and Labor Committee this week heard witnesses including lawmakers, experts, bereaved family members and unions criticise both BP and official safety watchdog OSHA for failing to act on obvious warning signs prior to the March 2005 Texas City explosion. Democratic Representative Phil Hare said Congress needed to “take a long look at OSHA and its effectiveness” and “start kicking some OSHA people in the kneecaps.” Retired US Navy Admiral Frank ‘Skip’ Bowman, who served on the Baker panel, told the committee that OSHA’s reactionary approach to oversight was “incredible” to him. “We are constantly shooting behind the duck,” he said. Responding to recommendations in this month’s CSB report, OSHA has now agreed to train up more inspectors to enforce refinery safety and is to dramatically increase its inspection programme.

- [The Pump Handle](#). [CSB news release](#) and final Texas City report [[pdf](#)]. [USW news release](#). [Houston Chronicle](#). [The Pump Handle](#). [Washington Post](#). [San Antonio Express-News](#). [KLTV Channel 7](#).
- [Hazards BP safety news and resources](#). [Hazards enforcement webpages](#). [Remember The Texas City 15 website](#). [Project on Scientific Knowledge and Public Policy](#)
- [Beyond Prison? Just how deadly does a director have to get to be jailed?](#) Hazards magazine, number 97, January-March 2007.

EVENTS AND COURSES

TUC courses for safety reps

HEALTH & SAFETY COURSES

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