



Risks Newsletter



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Risks is the TUC's weekly online bulletin for safety reps and others, read each week by over 14,500 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](#).

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UNION NEWS

Union concern as work deaths soar

A dramatic increase in workplace fatalities has led to a union call for more safety reps and for harsher penalties on deadly employers. The call comes after Risks revealed last week that 124 workers had died in the six months from April to September 2006 ([Risks 300](#)). If this trend is maintained it would mean a 17 per cent increase on last year's fatality total of 212 worker deaths. Preliminary full year figures for the construction industry have revealed the deadly trend in that sector in fact accelerated in the second half of the year, from October 2006 to March 2007. Early indications are that 78 construction workers died in 2006/07, up from 59 the previous year – a 32 per cent increase. Commenting on the new figures, GMB construction national secretary Phil Davies said: "Employers have to be made to be responsible and someone should end up in jail where corners are cut." He added: "More must be done to include safety representatives in proper consultation to stop people being killed at work and to improve health, safety and welfare across all UK building sites." John McClean, GMB national health and safety officer, added "the involvement of trade union safety reps must be mandatory on all sites employing 50 or more workers. In addition the HSE need to redouble their efforts in monitoring all building projects. Now is not the time to propose further cuts to the HSE inspectorate." HSE is in the throes of a major austerity programme, with hundreds of jobs to be lost and a range of work programmes curtailed. It is also considering the closure of a number of offices. Internal papers seen by Risks show HSE's National Agriculture Centre at Stoneleigh in Warwickshire is to close, in a decision made without any consultation with staff or unions.

- [GMB news release](#). [Channel 4 News](#).
- [HSE fatal injury statistics update](#) and [tables](#).
- Hazards [deadly business](#) and [enforcement](#) webpages.

Union rejects port firm's drugs and alcohol

policy

The failure by ports giant Associated British Ports (ABP) to properly consult over its new drugs and alcohol policy and then not to listen to workforce concerns could spark a national row, the union TGWU has said. Graham Stevenson, the union's national organiser for transport, said ABP's approach was "entirely unsatisfactory", as the company was seeking to impose a new policy without consultation with the recognised union. "This isn't an issue of whether or not to have a drugs and alcohol policy, it's about having a policy which has been thought through, is credible, commands support and is seen to be both responsible and fair," he said. He has told local TGWU officers who deal with ABP that unless there is a serious move to address the union's 12-point list of concerns, they should consider not co-operating with the policy. "I'm sure this would greatly interest ABP's insurers and main board," he said. Among TGWU's concern are the company's refusal to include trade union safety representatives and committees in risk assessment, or to discuss the training or suitability of worker representatives designated as witnesses in the random testing procedure. TGWU is also angered by ABP's refusal to treat prescription drugs as a separate matter and its failure to state clearly "that compassionate rehabilitation comes before investigation, discipline and punishment, as used in the bus industry, for example."

- [TGWU news release](#).
- [Hazards drugs and alcohol news and resources](#).

Wales TUC calls for joint approach to smoke-free work

As the smoking ban comes into force in workplaces across Wales this week, the Wales TUC has called on employers introducing workplace bans to ensure they fully involve staff and don't persecute smokers. All Welsh

workplaces now have to display non-smoking signs at all entrances and in any company vehicles and get rid of smoking rooms. The issue of breaks for smokers who need to go outside to light up seems sure to be a hot issue. Wales TUC policy and campaigns head Derek Walker said: “Thousands of Welsh employees, especially those working in bars, restaurants, clubs and pubs, are set to gain from today's smoking ban. With thought and proper consultation, making a workplace smoke-free can be a fairly painless experience, even for the most hardcore smokers.” A ‘Negotiating smoke-free workplaces’ guide issued to safety reps across Wales in February says there is no need for employers to stop employees from smoking altogether, though companies might want to discourage groups of smokers from gathering outside, particularly if they are in company uniform. The guide also warns against using the ban as an excuse to stop employing smokers. It sets out the exemptions to the smoke-free regulations, suggests ways in which employers can help their staff quit and includes a draft smoking policy that employers can adapt to suit their individual workplaces. Landlords and company bosses who do not display adequate no-smoking signs will be fined £200. They will face a fine of up to £2,500 if they allow people to smoke on their premises. The workplace smoking ban started in Wales on 2 April, and be introduced in Northern Ireland on 30 April, with England following on 1 July. Scotland’s ban took effect in March 2006.

- [Wales TUC news release](#). [Negotiating smoke-free workplaces](#). [UNISON news release](#). [IOSH news release](#). [Western Mail](#). [The Guardian](#). [BBC News Online](#).
- [TUC smoking webpage](#). [Hazards smoking news and resources](#).

English employers should go smoke-free soon

With just under three months to go before all public places and workplaces in England must become smoke-free, the TUC is urging employers

to get their act together and introduce smoking bans into their shops, factories, offices, restaurants and bars. TUC this week published a guide for union safety reps to help them work with employers to bring in the ban ahead of the 1 July deadline. The TUC guide reminds employers that there is much to think about before any workplace can become smoke-free, especially because around a quarter of all UK workers smoke, though not necessarily at work. But despite the looming ban, around two million people are employed in places where smoking is still allowed everywhere, and another ten million can smoke at least somewhere on the premises. Employers should introduce smoking bans with the full involvement of staff and unions, says the TUC. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: “With less than three months to go before smoking is outlawed in all English workplaces and public spaces, employers don't have much time to get their act together. But with a little thought and forward planning, making a workplace smoke-free can be a fairly painless experience, even for the most hardcore smokers. The key is the involvement of staff and our guide sets out how to do just that.”

- [TUC news release and guide](#), Negotiating smoke-free workplaces [[pdf](#)]. [CatererSearch](#). [Smokefree England](#) website, including [guidance and other resources](#).

Payout for artist after slip in pigeon poop

A London artist has secured £20,000 compensation following injuries sustained when she fell on wet pigeon excrement whilst walking under a railway bridge in Battersea in May 2003. Lois Matcham, aged 64, secured the damages with the support of her union UNISON, despite the injury not being work-related and her being a retired member. Ms Matcham is an artist and does sculptures and print work. She said: “As a result of the accident, I fractured my left arm which has caused me a lot of pain. A local policeman witnessed my accident and also slipped and nearly fell on top of me himself whilst coming to my rescue.” She added: “I was

unsure what to do at first but then I was introduced to Thompsons Solicitors through my union UNISON. It's a miracle that I did call them! I could not have secured the damages without their help. For a start it meant taking on two huge organisations - the first being Wandsworth Council as the highway authority who are meant to brush and cleanse the streets on a regular basis so as to keep them safe, and the second Network Rail as they were responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the railway bridge.”

- [Thompsons Solicitors news release.](#)
- [Hazards compensation webpages.](#)

Teachers get heated over class temperature

Teachers are demanding the right to walk out of classrooms if the temperature exceeds 27 degrees celcius, claiming that staff are risking “dizziness, fainting, or even heat cramps” during the summer term ([Risks 279](#)). Members of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) say the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends 24 degrees as a maximum for comfortable working and regards anything above 26 degrees “as definitely unacceptable.” Safety law does not set a legal limit for workplace temperate. The temperature level will be discussed at the NUT annual conference which opened on 6 April. The motion is being put forward by Tim Lucas, a chemistry teacher and NUT branch secretary in East Sussex. It says schools can get so hot there is a “deleterious effect on the ability of teachers and pupils to concentrate.” In England, regulations require that new schools should be built so that temperatures do not exceed 28 degrees for more than 120 hours during the school year, but existing schools are exempt. “Schools are not suited to the warmer summers we have been enjoying,” said NUT general secretary Steve Sinnott. “Schools do not have air-conditioning. Those built more recently have a great deal of glass which can push the temperature up quite considerably.” A spokesperson for the Department for Education

and Skills said schools were included in the Workplace Regulations 1992, which state that “the temperature in all workplaces inside buildings shall be reasonable.”

- [The Guardian.](#)
- [NUT school temperatures factsheet.](#) [TUC WorkSmart guide to summer heat.](#)

HSE ‘failure’ on consultation angers unions

The decision by the government’s safety watchdog not to recommend a duty on employers to consult with safety reps has been condemned by the unions TGWU and Amicus. The unions were speaking out after a discussion at the Health and Safety Commission’s March meeting of the findings of a major consultation into worker involvement ([Risks 299](#)), which found there is overwhelming support for a move to require employers to consult on risk assessments and to respond to representations from safety reps ([Risks 299](#)). A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) paper presented at the meeting, however, recommended no action to change the law. Bob Blackman, TGWU national secretary for construction, said it seemed that “if you're an employer your voice will be heard but if you're a trade union putting forward carefully crafted arguments you will be ignored.” He added: “These are harsh words for the HSE but when they ignore the 91 per cent who backed a duty to consult safety reps and the 96 per cent said there should be a duty to respond to representations from safety reps what else are we supposed to think?” Rob Miguel, Amicus health and safety officer, said: “It is an outrage that genuine consultation was literally being ignored. As well as overwhelming trade union support for changes in the consultation, 72 per cent of employers were also in favour of a duty to respond to representations from safety reps.” Amicus said it is also angry that the HSE paper failed to address the lack of enforcement of safety reps’ existing rights and other safety rules, despite evidence of this given during consultation. It has written to HSE asking it to

reconsider its position. The unions have been backed by Bolton North-east MP David Crausby. He said HSE's recommendation "is an incredibly embarrassing decision, in the light of such an overwhelming response in favour from the consultation. This change would have given health and safety reps real teeth, but it seems HSE has caved in to the CBI and the EEF." The meeting agreed there should be further discussions involving the TUC and CBI on whether changes could be made to either the regulations or the related approved code of practice to deliver a safety rep right to be consulted on risk assessments and to receive a response to safety queries. A further paper on legislative changes will be produced in the next few months.

- [TGWU news release](#). [Amicus news release](#). [Bolton News](#).

Cyber bullying threat to teachers

Teachers are calling for much tougher restrictions to protect staff from "cyber bullying" by pupils. The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) has warned of the distress caused to teachers by anonymous, malicious comments on websites. Such public attacks "belittle and bully" classroom teachers, says the union. ATL general secretary Mary Boustead said the public mockery of teachers "robs them of dignity and self-esteem". She said: "There are quite a few teachers who have had their lessons taped or videoed. Cyber-bullying is not just pupil-to-pupil, it is also pupil-to-teacher." She is seeking a meeting with mobile phone providers to see what action could be taken to stop the abuse of teachers by their pupils. But she added: "It is virtually impossible to regulate what is on the internet." A spokesperson for the Department for Education and Skills commented: "Teachers now have stronger legal powers to deal with cyber pests as part of our continued fight against bullying. They can now confiscate mobile phones which are being used in a malicious or disruptive way. We encourage them to make full use of this power." A survey

quoted by the union claimed that 45 per cent of teachers had received an attack by email, 15 per cent had received threatening texts - and that 10 per cent had been upset by messages written about them on websites.

- [ATL news release](#). [BBC News Online](#). [The Sun](#).

OTHER NEWS

Dockers win asbestos appeal

Hundreds of former dock workers can sue the government for compensation for asbestos-related illnesses, thanks to court victory this week. The Court of Appeal upheld a High Court test case decision last year that the government is liable to compensate former dock workers ([Risks 292](#)). The test case was brought on behalf of Robert Thompson, a 65-year-old former docker with asbestos-related disease, and Winifred Rice, whose docker husband Edward died in 2000 of mesothelioma, aged 67 ([Risks 259](#)). Lawyers for the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) took the case to the Court of Appeal in an attempt to reverse the high court ruling. A successful appeal would have blocked the dockers' compensation claims. The appeal decision will allow hundreds to be compensated by the government instead of them hunting in vain for liable dock employers that no longer exist. Kevin Johnson, a partner at law firm John Pickering and Partners who acted for Mr Thompson and Mrs Rice, said it is right that the DTI, the government department acting on behalf of former dock labour boards, has been made to take responsibility. "The Court of Appeal has given former dock workers and their families the lifeline to financial security that they so badly needed," he said. "By the time these men become ill through asbestos, they can't trace and pursue many of the private dock companies that employed them. But the dock labour boards knew they were exposing the men to harm by allowing them to work unprotected."

- [John Pickering and Partners news release.](#)

More asbestos deaths as dangers remain

Workers are continuing to be killed by asbestos exposures – but employers continue to take deadly risks putting a new generation in danger. An unnamed widow from Chorley, Lancashire, has received £295,000 in compensation after her husband, who was exposed to asbestos as a 15-year-old apprentice engineer for British Rail, died of the asbestos cancer mesothelioma. She said: “I took on the case after his death and Amicus and Thompsons have been very supportive. I am glad it has come to a close now. No amount of money can bring him back, but it means things will be a little easier.” Another ex-railway worker, Frederick Allen, has been awarded damages of £128,500 after being diagnosed with mesothelioma. The 70-year-old’s former employers, British Rail and Swindon Pressings, agreed to settle the case before it went to trial. Mr Allen, of Wootton Bassett, was represented by Brigitte Chandler of Charles Lucas & Marshall. She said: “Due to Mr Allen's illness we had to progress this claim very quickly. We were able to obtain early judgment against the defendants who finally agreed to settle the night before the trial, when the damages would have been assessed.” GMB this week warned that former workers at a North Shields firm, Smiths Shiprepairers, based in North Shields, may have to wait for years for compensation for asbestos-related conditions because the firm and its insurers are in liquidation. Normally under these circumstances the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) would meet the liabilities of the employer, but says it will not payout until the receivers have confirmed there are no other assets available for the company to meet the asbestos claims. The union is also concerned that workers continue to be placed at risk by asbestos cowboys. The warning from GMB Northern came after North East Environmental Ltd, based in North Tyneside was fined £4,600 at North Shields Magistrates Courts for not holding a licence for the removal

of asbestos. Regional secretary of the GMB, Tom Brennan said: “Unscrupulous companies think they can avoid the red tape and extra costs by not applying for a licence to remove asbestos when one is needed. GMB members should protect themselves by ensuring their employers are disposing of asbestos correctly. They should report any incidents of the incorrect disposal of asbestos to their union health and safety representative.”

- Thompsons Solicitors news releases on the [Chorley compensation delays](#) and [asbestos cowboys](#) stories. [Gazette and Herald.](#)
- New resource: Teaching union NUT has produced a [new NUT online guide on asbestos in schools.](#)

Network Rail fined £4m for Paddington crash

Network Rail was fined £4m last week after a court found it responsible for a catalogue of failures that resulted in the Paddington rail crash, which left 31 people dead and 400 injured ([Risks 236](#)). The company, which maintains Britain's railways, had admitted health and safety errors before the incident, in which a Thames Trains local service went through a red light and hit a London-bound First Great Western express train in 1999. Arriving at the £4m figure, the judge at Blackfriars crown court, Mr Justice Bean, allowed a one-third discount on the fine because Network Rail pleaded guilty. But the company was ordered to pay £225,000 towards prosecution costs. In his judgment, he said that the accident had been the result of “incompetent management and inadequate process”. In court, Mr Justice Bean said: “The fine must be a constant and lasting reminder to the management of the company and to others involved in the railways of the paramount importance of safety and to prompt attention to any identifiable risk. It must mark the seriousness of the risk involved in the breach of duty, a seriousness underlined by the disastrous consequences,” but added it must also reflect the guilty plea. The judge also said he recognised

that “in reality, every pound they are fined will be one pound that cannot be spent on railway safety”. Thames Trains has already been fined £2m for the inadequate training of its driver, Michael Hodder, 31, who had only been qualified for 13 days and died in the crash ([Risks 151](#)). Officials from Railtrack, which was replaced by Network Rail, were warned at least five years before the collision that a set of signals was badly laid out and was so difficult for drivers to interpret that a serious incident was likely to happen.

- [The Guardian](#). [Financial Times](#). [BBC News Online](#).

Train bosses should pay for Paddington

Unions have described the £4m imposed on Network Rail after its safety blunders contributed to the 1999 Paddington rail crash as “an insult”, with the penalty for crimes committed by a now defunct private company Railtrack being paid from the public purse. ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman called for the fines imposed on Network Rail to be taken from the bonuses of senior managers. “If the managers are not fined personally, it means the fines will be paid by the public,” he said. “This would be a terrible injustice to passengers who would end up having to pay for being killed, maimed and injured.” RMT general secretary Bob Crow said: “The Railtrack executives whose negligence led to the Ladbroke Grove crash walked quietly away a long time ago. Until we have an effective corporate manslaughter law that puts bosses whose negligence leads to unnecessary death and injury in the dock and facing the prospect of prison, justice will not be done, no matter how big the fines.” Gerry Doherty, TSSA general secretary, said: “This tragic case revealed that Railtrack put profits before safety when it was running the railways. Now there is clear evidence that Network Rail is putting performance before safety when it comes to operating a safe railway” ([Risks 300](#)). STUC safety officer Ian Tasker said the penalty was “an insult”, adding: “On this

occasion it is disappointing that this fine will have to be paid out of the public purse for an accident that happened when the rail infrastructure was operated by privately owned Railtrack.” Safety professionals’ organisation IOSH said that the sentence did not go far enough. Lisa Fowlie, president of IOSH, said: “A conviction for corporate manslaughter, involving a severe fine, enforced remedial safety measures and the stigma of associated negative publicity would have sent a clear message to current managers and directors to ensure that they put health and safety at the top of the agenda.”

- [ASLEF news release](#). [RMT news release](#). [TSSA news release](#). [STUC news release](#). [IOSH news release](#). [BBC News Online](#).

Unions press for action on Buncefield lessons

Unions have welcomed a report identifying many safety improvements that need to be made at UK oil storage sites. The Buncefield Major Incident Investigation Board’s report into the December 2005 explosion, published last week, highlights the need for many safety improvements, particularly relating to training, fatigue, shifts and working hours. Amicus said that it expects all companies that own or operate fuel storage sites in the UK, or are part of the fuel storage sector, to implement all the recommendations in full. Union officials will be seeking meetings with companies in the sector to ensure the recommendations are acted upon and there is full involvement and consultation of the workforce in ensuring that high standards of health and safety are met and maintained. Amicus national officer Linda McCulloch said: “The lessons of the Buncefield explosion and the 2005 Texas City explosion ([Risks 300](#)) must be learnt. Amicus is dedicated to ensuring the lessons are not simply talked about, but are put into practice.” She added: “We want firm assurances concerning the safe operation of major fuel and chemical sites and the protection of workers on those sites. For us, the minimum initial requirement is the full implementation of the recommendations arising from Texas City

and Buncefield disaster.” Ron Webb, TGWU national secretary for transport, said: “The TGWU, representing many thousands of members who work in oil refineries and as oil tanker drivers, strongly welcomes this report, which makes a series of thorough and important recommendations for action. It is now absolutely critical that this report doesn’t just gather dust, but it is implemented rigorously and with urgency. Health and safety regulation and enforcement exists to avert disasters, small and large scale, and implementation needs to be fully resourced if the government is serious about workers’ health and safety.”

- [Buncefield Major Incident Investigation Board news release](#) and full 5th report [\[pdf\]](#). [Amicus news release](#). [HSE publication note](#).

Two fined just £12,000 for deadly crimes

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has reminded businesses of the need to take precautions at all times when working below overhead power lines. The warning came last week after a Southport company and a self employed Kirkby man were fined a total of £12,000 and ordered to pay costs of £5,245 after pleading guilty to three criminal charges brought by the HSE following the electrocution of 48-year-old Robert Davies. He was electrocuted at the Guys Industrial Estate in Burscough, Lancashire on 19 August 2005 when a vehicle mounted crane came into contact with overhead electricity cables during the repositioning of portable buildings. HSE Inspector Michael Clarke, who investigated the incident, said: “Operators of vehicle mounted cranes must not take chances when required to work near overhead high voltage cables. They must make sure that the cables are not live or where that is not possible take extra precautions to prevent contact with the cables. Furthermore, occupiers of sites with overhead high voltage electricity cables must take appropriate measures to control lifting activities and prevent inadvertent contact with such cables. The tragic death of Mr Davies was avoidable.” Mr Davies’

employer Guy Leasing Ltd of Kensington Road in Southport pleaded guilty to a criminal safety offence and was fined £8,000. Self-employed James Walsh of Aspen Close pleaded guilty to two criminal charges and was fined a total of £4,000.

- [HSE news release](#).

UNISON wants an end to NHS overwork and violence

The majority of UK health workers are working unpaid overtime the annual NHS staff survey has revealed. And despite a range of initiatives from health trusts and the Department of Health around a third of health workers are experiencing violence or abuse from patients. Commenting on the Healthcare Commission report, UNISON national secretary for health Karen Jennings said: “It’s time to say ‘enough is enough’. NHS workers are seeing their pay packets and personal safety gradually deteriorate.” She added: “Despite well-meaning initiatives in the health service to tackle violence against workers, this survey confirms that a much more robust deterrent is needed to crack down completely on abuse and attacks on health staff.” The findings of the annual NHS staff survey, published last week, are based on the views of more than 128,000 workers across 326 health trusts. The Healthcare Commission conducted the survey during October 2006. It found 31 per cent of staff suffered from violence and abuse from patients – a figure that has remained constant over the past four years. Although work-related injuries, illness and stress have fallen by a fraction, over one in three ambulance workers still report suffering from work related injuries or illness.

- [Healthcare Commission news release](#). [UNISON news release](#).

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Australia: Suicide blamed on job burnout

The family of a young Australian call centre worker wants to sue telecommunications giant Telstra for allegedly contributing to her suicide. Sally Sandic, 21, took her life in January this year after months of mounting pressure on staff at a Telstra facility. Ms Sandic's family and work colleagues have described how the once top salesperson with a vibrant personality was turned into a nervous wreck by unrealistic performance targets. Telstra allegedly rejected a plea from her psychiatrist to cut her working hours so she could get back on track. Ms Sandic's grieving father, Nick, said that despite winning big sales awards, Sally had been abandoned by Telstra. "I think the company is responsible for what happened to my daughter," he said. "If Telstra had been responsible she'd still be around. But they don't care, it's all about the dollar, they treat you like a machine." Family and friends noticed a dramatic change in her mood about a year ago when Telstra started to restructure the centre and raised performance targets by as much as 300 per cent. Ms Sandic, who first attempted suicide late last year, resigned from Telstra on 29 December. She enrolled in a university course, but was on medication for depression and less than a month later killed herself. Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union communications division state secretary Len Cooper said there was no doubt Telstra contributed to Ms Sandic's death. "The union will not rest until this is stopped and we demand proper guidelines to ensure targets are realistic," Mr Cooper said. A report in 2002 identified work-related suicide as a major under-reported problem in Victoria, Australia – the state in which Sally worked. A Finnish report last year concluded job burnout was the most significant risk factor for depression ([Risks 281](#)).

- [The Herald Sun. Hazards worked to death webpages](#) and details of the [Australian work suicides report](#).

Australia: Asbestos cancer deaths under-

estimated

A deadly asbestos cancer sparked by exposure to asbestos will strike far more Australians and peak years later than first predicted, a new report has concluded. The study into the impact of the fatal asbestos-related cancer, mesothelioma, offers a new and much grimmer picture for the future of the disease. Researchers at the Australian National University say their results are based on increased estimates of asbestos exposure and have "important implications" for asbestos-related disease liability schemes. A previous model developed by the auditing firm KPMG estimated that the number of mesothelioma cases would keep rising until 2010, when they would start to drop off. It predicted 3,530 cases among NSW men between 2006 and 2060. But the new analysis by Dr Mark Clements, from the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, predicts that 6,430 cases of the fatal disease would be recorded over that period, and it won't peak until as late as 2017. "This has far reaching consequences for actuarial predictions, where the number of cases out to 2060 may be in excess of 35 per cent higher than the number predicted by KPMG's model," Dr Clements said. The increase was based on changes on exposure levels and would therefore have implications for other asbestos-related diseases like asbestosis, lung cancer and pleural disorders.

- [Australian National University news release. Sydney Morning Herald. ABC News.](#)
- [International Ban Asbestos Secretariat.](#)

USA: OSHA digs a hole for its deregulation push

A US law designed to make removal of protective legislation easier has instead proven that safety laws do in fact save lives. US Department of Labor safety watchdog OSHA evaluated the impact of the construction standard on excavations. "Our regulatory review found that

the 1989 Excavations Standard has reduced deaths from approximately 90 per year to 70 per year. In addition, overall construction industry activity when adjusted for inflation has increased 20 per cent,” said assistant secretary of labor for OSHA Edwin G Foulke Jr. “As a result, the OSHA Standard will remain in effect, although we will be looking to issue some improved guidance and training materials to help employers keep their employees safe.” The US, which has a pretty poor safety record compared to many other wealthy industrial nations, has been the model for health and safety deregulation worldwide, and has pushed the development of voluntary programmes, alliances and partnerships as an alternative to enforcement, as well as the cost-based assessments of regulations. George Taylor, who used to head the safety department of the US national union federation AFL-CIO and who died aged 95 earlier this month, was famously contemptuous of this approach. He said it was “an arid exercise in controlling lives,” adding: “you don’t make policy concerning human lives based on dollar costs.” He concluded: “If there is a reasonable belief that a large number of people are going to be put at risk, you try to prevent it. You don’t wait until you can count the last pair of lungs on the dissecting table.”

- [OSHA news release. Washington Post.](#)

EVENTS AND COURSES

What are you doing on 28 April?

Workers’ Memorial Day, the 28 April event each year when workers worldwide remember those killed, maimed and sickened by their jobs and resolve to fight for safer, healthier workplaces, is drawing close. TUC is urging workers everywhere to participate in related activities. TUC’s Workers’ Memorial Day webpages already detail an impressive list of events around the country – but if you are planning anything, make sure TUC knows. This year’s UK theme is ‘Health and safety needs not just regulations, but

also enforcement’. Unions in over 100 countries will mark Workers’ Memorial Day this year, highlighting both the enforcement theme and a cancer prevention theme.

- [TUC Workers’ Memorial Day webpage](#) and [2007 events listing](#). [Email TUC](#) with details of your event.
- Global activities and resources: [Hazards 28 April homepage](#), [country listings](#), [background](#) and [images](#).

TUC courses for safety reps

HEALTH & SAFETY COURSES

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