



Risks Newsletter



Myth of
the month

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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

Musicians make a noise on noise

Musicians are being urged to speak up to protect their hearing. The Musicians' Union (MU) is urging its union reps and members to comment on a new guide on noise control in the music and entertainment industry, which from April 2008 will be subject to the Noise at Work Regulations 2006. The union is part of a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) noise working group. Commenting on a 'Sound advice' consultation kicked off last month on new guidance to the regulations, MU said "we urge all members to take a few moments to take part in this consultation exercise." It added: "MU activists, meanwhile, should make it clear that if they are responding as a safety rep or steward so that the Health and Safety Executive knows that you are responding on behalf of a workforce. This is your opportunity to have your say and to take part in an important issue. To ensure that your hearing is protected at work... we need to ensure that the guidance document contains good practical advice on noise control measures – so if you have knowledge on tried and tested noise control measures that are not contained in the document, please include that in your response."

- [MU news release](#) and [noise webpages](#). [Sound Advice consultation webpage](#).

Attacked nurse gets £21,500 compensation

A staff nurse at Broadmoor Hospital has received a £21,500 payout following two assaults by a patient. Trade union UNISON secured the compensation for Lucia Johnson, after she was assaulted in December 2002 and July 2003. During the first assault, Mrs Johnson's nose and left hand were injured when the patient threw objects at her. He was known to have a tendency to throw things at members of staff but objects had not been either removed from his room, locked away or fixed into position. In July 2003, Mrs Johnson entered the patient's room with three other colleagues as the patient was

attempting to kill himself. She said: "He punched me on the chin and on my right shoulder and as a result of my injuries, I had several months off work. He was often violent, but in spite of the complaints made by members of staff he was not removed to a more secure unit where more members of staff would have been available to supervise or medicate him." UNISON regional officer Eddie Jagers commented: "Our member Lucia Johnson was clearly put at risk by Broadmoor Hospital and as a result was assaulted twice by a patient known to be violent. Although searches had been regularly carried out in his room, the appropriate action was not taken. We are therefore very pleased with the compensation secured." In March 2005, John Reid, the then secretary of state for health, said he would "do everything within my power to stop NHS staff suffering from violence and abuse" and would work to provide lone workers with the 'Identicom' system which enables the individual to discreetly call for emergency assistance and which records verbal abuse for use in court ([Risks 197](#)). Thompsons Solicitors, who represented Ms Johnson for UNISON, said two years later only three per cent of trusts have invested in such a system.

- [Thompsons Solicitors news release](#).

Unions fears on workplace violence

Assaults on workers dealing with the public have reached record levels, unions are warning. They say anyone who serves the public seems to be vulnerable to outbursts of anger. The shopworkers' trade union, Usdaw, says that last year there were 10,000 physical assaults by customers on retail staff. "Shop staff have been attacked with iron bars, stabbed with hypodermic needles, customers have driven at trolley boys in the car park," said union spokesperson Paul Clarke. Verbal abuse of staff has reached "epidemic levels", from ranting and raving through to specific threats of violence. "It's incredibly destructive," Paul Clarke told the Guardian earlier this month. "Who wants to go to their workplace and have someone shouting in

their face?” NHS staff are also vulnerable to attacks - with 58,000 physical assaults last year. UNISON spokesperson Anne Mitchell said alcohol and drugs have played a “huge part” in the surge in attacks. A&E departments become very “distressing” places to be, with binge drinkers and drug users taking out their aggression on staff, she said. “Wearing a medical uniform used to be a protection, now it seems to make them a target.” Some believe the emergence of a “rights culture” is contributing to escalating violence. Patients want to be seen immediately and get violent if they are refused. “They're very clear about their own rights, but they don't want to think about anyone else having rights as well,” said Anne Mitchell. Customer aggression also reflects the poor attitude that some in the UK have towards the service industry. “People see retail staff as having non-jobs,” said Usdaw’s Paul Clarke. “So they behave in a way they wouldn't behave anywhere else.” He added: “There seems to be part of our culture that has lost any respect for public service.”

- [The Guardian. Usdaw Freedom from fear campaign.](#)

Tesco pays out to injured employees

Supermarket giant Tesco has had its safety approach called into question after two workers were compensated for workplace injury. The Unite members worked at a Tesco Distribution Centre in Purfleet, Essex. Robert Child secured a £7,000 payout following an incident which led to severe neck and back injuries. And Terry Finch, from Stanford Le Hope, Essex, secured nearly £4,000 after slipping on a loading bay ramp and injuring his finger badly. In August 2006, 32-year-old Mr Child was driving a reach truck along the aisle of the distribution centre. As he drove past one of the aisles, a “Rollop”, a ride on vehicle that can pull up to three roll cages, came out of the aisles and hit the truck he was driving. Terry Finch’s accident took place in September 2006. He was working in the warehouse and was unloading a lorry that had

docked in the loading bay with an electrically powered pallet truck. He slipped because both the ramp and canopy were wet and slippery, and as a result needed stitches in his finger. A year on, his finger remains scarred and tender when used. Ian Maidlow, regional officer, with their union, Unite’s Amicus section, said: “We’re pleased with the compensation secured for both of our members. We hope that it serves as a warning to Tesco and to other employers – large and small.” William Seymour, from Thompsons Solicitors, who represented both men, said: “It is unacceptable for a major brand and a leading employer such as Tesco to put employees at risk by not providing a safe working environment. All employers have a duty of care to their employees.”

- [Thompsons Solicitors news release.](#)

OTHER NEWS

Abusive gangmaster's licence is revoked

A firm that failed to pay migrant agricultural workers for 35 days has had its licence revoked by the Gangmasters Licensing Authority (GLA). The GLA said 40 Bulgarian workers had to scavenge for food in the fields where they worked because Cornwall-based Baltic Work Team Ltd had not paid them, placing the workers health and welfare at risk. The firm had its licence revoked in February without immediate effect by the GLA and, at an appeal hearing, was allowed to continue trading until 24 August. But in a statement, the GLA said a second investigation had found a significant threat to the health and welfare of the 40 workers which led to the licence being revoked with immediate effect. Paul Whitehouse, chair of the GLA, said: “Revoking a licence with immediate effect is a serious decision and is only taken when we find significant non-compliance. The GLA was set up to curb the exploitation of workers and in the case of Baltic Work Team Ltd, we had to take action immediately to protect the workers. It is unacceptable that the

workers were left to scavenge in fields for food as they had not been paid for 35 days. It was only through the intervention of the GLA that the workers finally got their money.” Baltic Work Team Ltd now has a right of appeal against the revocation of its licence. Jack Dromey, deputy general secretary of Unite, welcomed the GLA action. “Such incidents are an appalling indictment of the way some bad employers think they can get away with the levels exploitation and abuse we thought this country had seen the back of,” he said. “By acting quickly to make the gangmaster pay the workers before axing the licence, the Gangmaster Licensing Authority has shown that the Gangmasters Act has muscle.” TUC deputy general secretary Frances O’Grady said the case demonstrated that other sectors needed similar protection. “This case brings home the loophole that allows rogue agencies to work in sectors other than the few covered by the GLA without any supervision or licensing,” she said. “This company claims to provide labour to the construction sector as well, and the Health and Safety Executive and HMRC should now investigate whether they are breaching employment laws in other sectors.” She added “the only long term solution is for the government to close this loophole and get tough with rogue agencies in whatever sector they work, and give agency workers new rights against the exploitation that is all too common in the sector.”

- GLA news release [[pdf](#)]. [Unite news release](#). [TUC news release](#). [The Guardian](#). [BBC News Online](#). [TUC migrant workers webpages and safety guide](#). [Hazards vulnerable workers webpages](#).

Cancer increase highlights work risks

Renewed calls have been made for further funding from the government for the treatment of asbestos related disease, mesothelioma. Wallsend widow Chris Knighton, who founded the Mick Knighton Mesothelioma Research Fund, made the call after a new study found mesothelioma was the UK’s third fastest

increasing cancer. The study by Cancer Research UK (CRUK) and the UK Association of Cancer Registries (UKACR) looked at cancer figures over the 10 years to 2004. It found that cases of mesothelioma, caused by exposure to asbestos, have risen by 31 per cent in men and by 38 per cent in women between 1995 and 2004. The figure for the number of people diagnosed with mesothelioma is not expected to peak until between 2010 and 2015. Chris, who founded the Mick Knighton Mesothelioma Research Fund following the death of her husband, said “those suffering from mesothelioma cannot do anything to avoid the onset of the disease. They were exposed to cancer-causing asbestos without being told about the dangers.” She added: “The government now needs to fund further research into mesothelioma to find ways to treat the disease and perhaps eventually to cure it.” The study found the two most rapidly increasing cancer incidence rates were for malignant melanoma and prostate cancer. Both of these cancers have strong occupational links, with malignant melanoma related particularly to sunlight exposure in outdoor workers and prostate cancer linked to workplace cadmium, arsenic, pesticide and other chemical exposures, with higher rates reported in occupational groups including farmers and pesticide applicators. All the most common cancers identified in the new CRUK figures have strong occupational links. Unions this year launched a global “occupational cancer/zero cancer” campaign ([Risks 300](#)). In the UK, the Health and Safety Executive was criticised this summer for seriously under-estimating the extent of the UK’s occupational cancer problem ([Risks 312](#)).

- [Thompsons Solicitors news release](#). [Cancer Research UK cancer statistics](#).
- Cancer campaign resources: Occupational Cancer/Zero Cancer: A trade union guide to prevention [[pdf](#)] (also available in other languages).
- [Hazards occupational cancer webpages](#) and new [Work cancer prevention kit](#). [IMF occupational cancer webpages](#). [BWI occupational cancer webpages](#).

Safety call for motorway workers

Eighty per cent of roadworkers have been verbally or physically abused by motorists, according to a new survey. The RAC Foundation research released this week for National Motorway Month found 40 per cent of workers are abused on either a daily or weekly basis. And almost 80 per cent of ‘near misses’ recorded at roadworks in the last 12 months were due to poor driver behaviour. Despite motorway and trunk road maintenance being a vital service for road users, the survey of roadworkers employed by Amey and BEAR Scotland, reported that 81 per cent of them were frequently abused by motorists, either physically or verbally. To tackle the serious issues of roadworker safety and roadworker abuse, motorway operating companies Amey and BEAR Scotland, have joined forces with the RAC Foundation during national motorway month. They are asking drivers to consider the dangers roadworkers are up against with vehicles rushing past at speeds often topping 70mph. National Motorway Month is an initiative jointly promoted by the RAC Foundation, Amey, BEAR Scotland, Transport Scotland, the Highways Agency, the Freight Transport Association, the Suzy Lamplugh Trust and the RAC, to encourage safer driving on motorways. Bruce Donaldson, Amey’s unit manager for southwest Scotland said: “Can you imagine trying to do your job with cars flying past at 70mph in all weather yet all you have to protect you is a plastic cone, a hard-hat and high-vis clothing?” He added: “Short-term and overnight works are where they are often at their most vulnerable.” The groups say roadworker safety is a serious issue for the highway maintenance industry, as 3,000 to 4,000 roadworkers are employed on motorways and major roads at any one time. Last year in England alone, two roadworkers were killed and 19 seriously injured whilst at work. In the previous year, five roadworkers were killed nationwide.

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

Campaign welcomes progress on crane safety

The Battersea Crane Disaster Action Group has welcomed progress made at last week’s industry-led Strategic Forum for Construction crane safety summit in London and have called for good intentions to be translated into real action ([Risks 318](#)). Group member Julia Brandreth, who represented BCDAG at the summit, said: “We think this meeting is a good start in terms of the industry working together to end tower crane fatalities. However, there’s clearly a long way to go and improvements will need to be judged by results.” BCDAG secretary Liliana Alexa added “action is what’s important. We’re now looking for clear and decisive action from the tower crane industry. Words alone are not enough.” However, the Forum’s action plan fell short of certain key demands spelled out in BCDAG’s crane safety charter, Julia Brandreth said. “One key area we raised at the meeting is that there should be no victimisation of workers who raise legitimate health and safety concerns or refuse to operate hazardous equipment. Such workers should be seen as a help not a hindrance to the industry – a huge cultural change is required on this issue and we’re looking for the Strategic Forum to do all in its power to drive through this change.” She added: “We’re also disappointed that the Strategic Forum’s action plan doesn’t include reference to age and usage of cranes. This was a key issue at the meeting and is a key area of concern for the public. We’d like to see clear industry guidelines in this area. There’s going to be a huge increase in building work in London over the next 10 years. No-one – building workers or members of the public – should be killed in this work.” The Strategic Forum agreed measures including: Site-specific inductions on crane erection, operation and dismantling, with an emphasis on risk assessment; ensuring robust examination and maintenance regimes, with all work undertaken by competent operators; and ensuring adequate welfare arrangements and working hours for staff. HSE figures published last month revealed there was a 28 per cent increase in construction worker fatalities in 2006/07 ([Risks 317](#)).

- [BCDAG news release. Contract Journal.](#)
- [Strategic Forum for Construction.](#)

Extra screen breaks are healthy and productive

More frequent breaks from screen-based work reduce fatigue and increase productivity, US government researchers have found. A team from the US National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) reached this conclusion after observing a group of 51 data entry clerks. All the workers spent four weeks with 'conventional' breaks - two 15 minute breaks per day - and 4 weeks with an extra four 5 minute breaks per day. Results showed eyestrain and discomfort were significantly reduced by the supplementary breaks. Reporting last month in the American Journal of Industrial Medicine, the researchers wrote: "Data-entry speed was significantly faster with supplementary breaks so that work output was maintained, despite replacing 20 min of work time with break time." They concluded: "These results provide further converging evidence that supplementary breaks reliably minimise discomfort and eyestrain without impairing productivity." NIOSH researchers in 2002 linked repetitive work in a wide range of manual jobs to arthritis of the hands and wrist ([Risks 79](#)).

- Traci Galinsky and others. Supplementary breaks and stretching exercises for data entry operators: A follow-up field study, American Journal of Industrial Medicine, volume 50, issue 7, pages 519–527, 2007 [[abstract](#)].

Workers 'stressed out' by emails

More than a third of workers say they feel "stressed out" by the number of emails they receive in the office and the pressure to respond promptly. Researchers in Scotland found some workers are viewing their inbox up to 40 times each hour, leaving them tired and frustrated - as well as unproductive. Only 38 per cent of

workers were apparently relaxed enough to wait a day or longer before replying to an email, according to the study of 200 people carried out at Glasgow and Paisley universities. "Email is the thing that now causes the most problems in our working lives," said lead researcher Karen Renaud, a computer scientist. "It's an amazing tool but it's got out of hand." Experts suggest a simple stress-beating strategy: check your email less often. The advice is to set aside two or three dedicated e-mail reading times each day. A catastrophic email meltdown put this week's Risks in jeopardy for a time. The problem was resolved, but only after much cursing and coffee consumption. Risks editor Rory O'Neill, who receives thousands of emails a day, commented: "Send a letter. Talk to someone. Write a post-it. Step away from the keyboard and give yourself a break, before the keyboard breaks you."

- [Glasgow University news release. The Observer. BBC News Online. The Times. The Telegraph.](#)

Young farmworker killed by power lines

Young workers are continuing to face deadly risks while working. Farmworker Edward Andrew Pybus died last week after being electrocuted when the combine harvester he was driving clipped power lines. The 21-year-old Nottingham University graduate was working a field at Crystal Palace Farm, in Wiltshire. He was employed by contractor Velcourt at the farm located at Upper Chute, near Ludgershall. As he worked in fields at the farm the combine he was driving hit the power lines. Paramedics tried in vain to resuscitate Mr Pybus on site. The paramedics risked injury themselves as the combine was still touching the live power lines. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is working jointly with Wiltshire Police to investigate the reasons behind the fatal incident. An inquest last month recorded a verdict of accidental death in the case of the 16-year-old who died in February last year after a fall through a factory roof. Sixteen-year-old Ashley Saunders fell 25 feet (5.3m) trying to retrieve a

football from a warehouse roof during a lunchtime game at Cartwright Haulage and Trailers in Stockport. The apprentice was taken to Manchester's Wythenshawe Hospital after the fall on 7 February 2006 and was later transferred to Hope Hospital where he died the following day.

- [Northern Echo](#). [This is Cheshire](#). [TUC](#) and [Hazards](#) young workers' webpages.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Canada: Union bounty on violent thug

A Canadian union has posted a Can\$2,000 (£940) reward for information leading to the conviction of a man who carried out a vicious assault on a transport worker. CAW, the union representing TransLink transit operators in Vancouver, says the bus driver was attacked on 26 July. Steve Sutherland, president of CAW Local 111, said: "The bus driver was punched in the head 10 times, then kicked in the head when he was knocked to the ground - all for simply asking the rider to see proof of fare purchase. The attacker also made extremely racist comments about the driver, adding to his distress." The union leader added: "We are determined as a union to put a stop to these vicious and cowardly assaults on our members - assaults which not only seriously injure bus drivers but put all passengers at risk as well. We believe that the Can\$2000 reward we will post every time such a driver assault occurs will help discourage such attacks." The union is also concerned that TransLink's complicated multi-zone fare structure causes problems for drivers when passengers are asked to pay more. In June, CAW 111 called for a new law to protect workers from violent assaults.

- [CAW news release](#). [CAW Local 111](#).

China: Many workers dead after bridge collapse

Dozens of people were killed and dozens injured when a bridge collapsed this week while under construction in the town of Fenghuang, in China's Hunan province. The bridge had reportedly been scheduled to open later this month at what is a popular Chinese tourist spot. There were 123 workers on the bridge removing scaffolding at the time of the incident, according to the Chinese news agency Xinhua. On 15 August the death toll was put at "at least" 29. Rescuers reportedly managed to save 86 people from the wreckage of the bridge, including 22 people who were injured in the accident. "The whole thing collapsed," said Nong Xiaozhong, one of two survivors in a 12-man construction team on the bridge. "There was no time to warn the other workers and I just managed to run a few steps before I was covered under the stones," he told the Associated Press from hospital, where he is being treated for injuries to his abdomen. The 320m (1,049ft) bridge was being built to span the Jiantuo River, connecting the hilly Fenghuang County with neighbouring Guizhou Airport. Xinhua said the workers had been busy "dismantling steel scaffolding erected during the construction process" when the collapse occurred. According to local media sources, most of those working on the 12m yuan (£785,000) bridge were local farmers who had been recruited for the project. The bridge's construction manager and project supervisor have been detained for questioning, Xinhua reported. It said Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao had issued an order to local governments and relevant departments "to do the utmost to carry out rescue and treatment work and handle properly the aftermath of the accident." Wen also told them to "find out the cause of the collapse and severely punish those responsible."

- [Xinhua](#). [BBC News Online](#). [ABC Online](#). [CBS News](#). [CNN](#). [Time](#).

Somalia: IFJ condemns 'savage' killing of journalists

The International Federation of Journalist (IFJ) has demanded urgent international action to confront the targeting and killing of journalists in Somalia following a brutal double attack in which one media chief was shot dead and another killed only hours later in a car bombing while returning from the funeral of the first victim. Ali Iman Sharmarke, managing director of HornAfrik Radio, died when his car was blown up as he and colleagues in a convoy of media mourners were returning from the burial of Mahad Ahmed Elmi, Director of Radio Capital Voice, who was shot dead earlier the same day in Mogadishu. A second journalist was injured. The deaths are the latest in a series of attacks that has claimed six media lives in Somalia this year says the IFJ. “These savage killings are an indicator of the perilous conditions facing journalists in Somalia, where political chaos and lawlessness threatens all independent journalism,” said Aidan White, IFJ general secretary. “It’s time for the international community to focus again on the crisis in Somalia. So long as journalists are targeted no-one is safe.” The deepening safety crisis prompted action by the International News Safety Institute, which last week organised a training session for Somali journalists which was supported by Somali journalists’ union NUSOJ ([Risks 318](#)). “In this divided country it is vital that the community of journalists is united against violence and intimidation,” said Aidan White.

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

Sweden: Criticism of new drive to slash sick leave

New official guidelines aimed at reducing sick leave in Sweden have come under heavy criticism from a top government psychiatrist. Jörgen Herlofson, who devised the criteria by which burnout is defined by Sweden's National Board of Health and Welfare, said stress-related illnesses were not being taken seriously. Under the new recommendations, due to come into

effect in October, people with burnout or mild depression would not be given sick leave at all. Herlofson said the National Board of Health and Welfare had chosen an “anti-humanist” ideology. He added that the main reason was clearly to save money. “I and many others are deeply disappointed, worried and suspicious,” Herlofson wrote in a newspaper commentary. The guidelines have caused controversy since they were released earlier this month. The Swedish Medical Association, Läkareförbundet, backed the new rules, while many patients' groups have been critical. Jan Larsson, who chairs the committee that drew up the new rules, admitted the clampdown, which he says has no firm scientific basis, would particularly affect conditions such as burnout and chronic pain. Burnout is one of the major causes of absence in Swedish workplaces. People diagnosed currently stay off work for an average of 199 days. Under the new plans, they will often not be given any leave at all. Instead of taking people with these symptoms out of work entirely, they should instead be advised to “stop working so much,” Larsson said. Reduced sick leave periods and revised guidelines on expected work capacity are to be applied to around 90 diagnoses. “We can't say that we have a good scientific basis for the new guidelines,” said Larsson. “Nonetheless, if we tried to skirt round the difficult diagnoses it would feel pointless to bring out guidelines.”

- TT/The Local on the [sick leave changes](#) and the [related criticism](#). [TUC](#) and [Hazards](#) sickness absence webpages.

USA: Latest disaster exposes lax mine safety

Former US mine safety officials believe the work methods used at a Utah mine where six miners have been trapped underground for over a week were so dangerous that they question why federal regulators approved them. The prospects for six coal miners, trapped underground since the 6 August cave-in, look increasingly slim. As of 15 August, nothing had been heard from the men, who were working more than 1,800 feet underground at the Crandall Canyon mine

outside Huntington, Utah. Tony Oppedard, a former senior adviser at the federation mines safety agency MSHA and Kentucky mining regulator, is one of a series of former mine safety officials who have been critical. He said the “retreat mining” being done at Crandall poses serious risks, and given the conditions in the area raises questions about the thoroughness of the MSHA review. The questions about the agency's performance come on the heels of MSHA administrator Richard Stickler's acknowledgement in June that there were “deeply disturbing” problems in its enforcement programmes leading up to the 2006 disasters at the Sago ([Risks 239](#)), Aracoma ([Risks 254](#)) and Darby mines that killed 19 miners. “These three reviews show an unacceptable lack of accountability and oversight that will not be tolerated,” Stickler said in a memo to MSHA employees. “The internal reviews identified several significant deficiencies in MSHA's accountability and performance that must be corrected.” The Crandall Canyon mine was nearing the end of its life and mine owners were trying to extract the last deposits by cutting out the coal pillars that were holding up the massive amount of rock above the main tunnels. An editorial in The Militant newspaper, which has produced a four-page special supplement on unionisation and mine safety, said: “The truth must be told about the unsafe conditions facing miners at Crandall Canyon and elsewhere, why such disasters are caused by bosses' profit-driven disregard for safety, and why the only way to enforce safe conditions on the job is through workers organising into unions.” Three days after the Crandall incident on 9 August, three coal miners died when they fell 50 storeys to their deaths in the shaft of the Gibson County Coal mine on the Indiana/Illinois border.

- [Salt Lake City Tribune](#) and [story update](#). [The Militant](#). [The Pump Handle](#). [NPR](#). [Occupational Hazards](#). [Evanville Courier Press](#).
- [More on the union safety effect](#).

Success in any business largely depends on a safe and healthy workforce, an editorial in the 12 August issue of the Times of Zambia concludes. It adds: “Besides just facing the law, failure to adhere to laws governing health and safety leads to unnecessary costs and damage to business caused by workplace injury and illness.” It says the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) is “dismayed that most employers in Zambia do not pay attention to healthy and safety of employees” because they “consider this to be a cost.” The union body's recent occupational health and safety workshop reported a deterioration in workplace health and safety. The editorial continues: “The solution, no doubt, lies in the labour movement working hand in hand with the government. The proposed recruitment of an occupational health and safety officer by ZCTU affiliates to help reduce exposure of trade union members to hazardous and risky workplace needs to be vigorously explored. ZCTU has called on the government to strengthen the capacity of the inspectorate division of the Mine Safety Department, the Environmental Council of Zambia (ECZ) and the factories department at the ministry of labour and social security.” The editorial adds that it is not just traditional industries that are causing the problems. “There have been complaints about hazardous working conditions in many new industries and yet none of them have been prosecuted. This has been attributed to lack of understanding of the laws governing health and safety. As a result, ZCTU is calling for an extension of awareness programmes to law enforcement wings so that they take an interest in cases dealing with employers who expose their workers to dangerous conditions.”

- [Times of Zambia](#).

RESOURCES

Asbestos plague reaches Asia

Zambia: Workplace safety is 'critical'

As asbestos markets shrink in Europe, the cancer-causing product is finding new markets in developing countries. A new report, 'Killing the future: Asbestos use in Asia', warns that although major international agencies agree that exposure to asbestos is deadly, the consumption of white asbestos (chrysotile) is increasing throughout Asia. It says half of current asbestos consumption is in Asian countries. The beautifully designed book, produced by the International Ban Asbestos Secretariat (IBAS) and published with the support of global union federations and campaign groups, exposes the horrific occupational disease tragedy unfolding across the continent. Graphic photographs show the reality of asbestos use with no protection, no safety oversight and no compensation or support when the inevitable deadly disease occurs. Laurie Kazan-Allen, author of the report and coordinator of IBAS, commented: "Millions of global asbestos victims have learned that when it comes to asbestos the polluter rarely pays; the real costs of using this toxic substance are borne by individuals, families, communities and countries. The best way to reduce the burden of asbestos-related disease is to ban asbestos; asbestos is yesterday's material and should be relegated to the dustbin of discredited technologies and discarded materials." The book is an excellent, well researched and produced resource. And buying a copy will help support the work of the groups providing advice to those developing, or bereaved as a result of, asbestos disease. These groups, with few resources, have developed a first class international campaign.

- IBAS news release [[pdf](#)]. Killing the future: Asbestos use in Asia, IBAS, 2007 [[pdf](#)]. [Further information](#).
- Print copies. UK orders: £5.50 voluntary sector, charities and trade unions; £10.50 others. Details from Joanne Carlin, by [email](#) or phone, 01246 231 441. International orders: Contact IBAS by [email](#) or [online](#).

EVENTS AND COURSES

Safety reps' seminar, 23 November, London

SERTUC and the Health and Safety Executive are to run a free, 23 November joint seminar for union safety reps in London, the southeast and east of England. For HSE the free seminar continues its involvement in "working together" collaborative initiatives with SERTUC. TUC's southeast region organisation, SERTUC, wants to get across its "stronger reps, safer workplaces" message. The keynote speech will be from safety minister Lord McKenzie. Presentations from HSE and trade union safety reps will showcase their work and afternoon workshops will cover: Managing health and safety in a diverse workforce; dealing with asbestos; moving goods safely; safety reps and the law; musculoskeletal disorders and better backs; and promoting good health in your workplace.

- [SERTUC/HSE safety reps' seminar](#), Friday 23 November 2007, 9.30am to 4.30pm, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS. There is no charge for attendance, lunch and refreshments. To register, email [Darren Lewis](#) at SERTUC, providing your name, union, address and email.

TUC courses for safety reps

COURSES FOR AUGUST TO NOVEMBER 2007

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

USEFUL LINKS

- **Visit** the TUC http://www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/ website pages on health and safety. See what's on offer from [TUC Publications](#) and [What's On in health and safety](#).
- **Subscribe** to [Hazards](#) magazine, supported by the TUC as a key source of information for union safety reps.

- **What's new** in the [HSC/E](#) and the [European Agency](#).
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