



# 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

Union ups school asbestos campaign

Teaching union ATL is ramping up its awareness campaign on the dangers posed by asbestos in school buildings. The union says over 400 ATL members have so far signed its asbestos register, to indicate they may have been exposed at work. ATL says the number on the register “is growing daily”. As part of its health and safety training for reps ATL is using the Asbestos Forum’s DVD, ‘Mesothelioma: The human face of an asbestos epidemic’ ([Risks 295](#)). “We are also providing the DVD to our safety reps - which in turn give us an opportunity to highlight the risks of asbestos exposure at branch meetings,” said ATL safety adviser Doru Athinodoru. “The reps will then be required to find out about their employers’ asbestos policy and if asbestos is present in their workplace.” Health and Safety Executive (HSE) figures show 147 education workers died from mesothelioma in the decade between 1991 and 2000, 73 of them primary and secondary school teachers ([Risks 256](#)). Cumbrian coroner David Osborne last year called for asbestos to be removed from all schools to protect pupils and staff ([Risks 281](#)). He was speaking at the conclusion of an inquest into the death of John White, known as Ian, who was a former headteacher at St Cuthbert’s RC School in Botcherby, Carlisle. Mr White, who was 65, died of the industrial disease mesothelioma after coming into contact with asbestos during his time there ([Risks 248](#)). The Asbestos Forum’s mesothelioma clip has been viewed over 67,000 times on YouTube since its launch on 27 February 2007.

- [ATL news report](#). HSE guide: [Asbestos in schools](#). [HSE duty to manage asbestos webpage](#) and [general asbestos page](#).
- Mesothelioma: The human face of an asbestos epidemic, [YouTube video](#). Forum of Asbestos Victim Support Groups [ActionMeso website](#).
- [TUC asbestos webpages](#). [Hazards asbestos news and resources](#).

### Trained union reps make work work

Better trained, more effective union reps are good for workplaces, the TUC has said, as the government prepares to give its response to a consultation on facilities time for workplace reps. Sarah Veale, head of equality and employment rights at the TUC, told Personnel Today this week she was hopeful that union reps would be guaranteed minimum periods of time off for training. The government is set to report back on its consultation on the issue, 'Workplace representatives: a review of their facilities and facility time'. “I hope we will get a result,” said Veale. “We need to persuade employers that [union rep training] is in their interests. I think there is a short-term approach... employers panic because production goes down and then they won't give reps time off.” She said reps needed time for training on complex workplace issues such as flexible working and health and safety law. “Where union reps work well, they will keep disputes out of tribunals – good employers recognise this,” she said. Union safety reps already have the right to time off to undertake training necessary for them to perform their functions. The safety reps’ regulations give union reps the right to attend, in paid work time, union-approved safety courses. However, safety reps frequently report their employers refuse them time off for training. Employment tribunals have upheld these training rights, including attendance at all levels of TUC safety education and relevant specialist or single issue courses. Personnel Today speculates that a government minister may make an announcement on workplace rep time off and facilities at next week’s TUC Congress.

- [Personnel Today](#). [TUC health and safety training webpages](#). [Hazards briefing on union safety rep training](#). [TUC Congress 2007 webpage](#). [Workplace representatives consultation](#).

### Study reveals exploitation of migrant workers

Thousands of Polish and Lithuanian workers are being exploited at work in the UK, a new report

commissioned by the TUC has revealed. Since 2004 when 10 new states joined the EU, more than 475,000 Polish and Lithuanian workers have come to work in the UK. This study by Compas, a research unit based at Oxford University, shows that most found insecure and poorly paid employment, with more than half of those surveyed encountering problems at work. A quarter of the workers in the study reported having no written contract, a figure that rose to nearly a third amongst agency workers. The study also found migration has re-introduced the 'tied cottage' - where employers provide accommodation at a cost and use it to increase their control over migrant workers. Nearly a third of the workers in the report were living in accommodation provided by their employer, and as a result endured excessive hours - due to their employment being linked to where they lived - and poor living conditions. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "This study reveals systematic abuse of migrant workers which is tantamount to modern day slavery. Too many unscrupulous bosses are getting rich by exploiting migrant workers and the full force of the law should be used against those profiting from such appalling ill treatment." A new TUC guide, 'Living and working in the UK: Your rights', written with the Citizens Advice service, gives advice for new arrivals on living in the UK and on possible problems at work. The guide notes: "Everyone has worked in places where the boss tries to cut corners to keep costs down: union health and safety reps have the power to make employers protect their staff."

- [TUC news release. BBC News Online.](#)
- Living and working in the UK: Your rights [[pdf](#)]. EU members? Migrant workers' challenges and opportunities to trade unions: A Polish and Lithuanian case study [[pdf](#)]. [TUC Commission on Vulnerable Employment.](#) [TUC migrant workers webpages.](#) [Hazards vulnerable workers webpages.](#)

### GMB to refuse refuse overload

Spiralling workloads and safety problems in Islington's domestic refuse and recycling programmes will not be tolerated, the union GMB has said. GMB members employed by contractor Accord on the London borough's household domestic refuse collection are being balloted for industrial action in response to management plans to impose new rosters and cuts in domestic refuse rounds from 10 September – the date the ballot results will be announced. Islington Council has asked the contractor to increase recycling and reduce domestic refuse collections. Staff support increased recycling, says GMB, but it says changes already introduced have left crews struggling to cope with increased workloads and longer hours. The union says Accord is now attempting to impose changes on domestic refuse crews, changes staff believe will lead to a worse service for residents, increased workloads and a "detrimental impact on health and safety." GMB organiser Gary Carter said: "GMB want to make it clear that our members are not standing in the way of increases in recycling, in fact, we put forward proposals to meet the needs of residents, the council and our members, which would allow for future growth to recycling which is completely sustainable. The company's proposals to reorganise all of the refuse rounds will make them chaotic. The employer Accord has refused to constructively discuss the issues or to take into consideration GMB member's bonus pay, or their finishing time agreement and GMB's increasing health and safety concerns."

- [GMB news release.](#)

## OTHER NEWS

### Blast report slams ICL and official oversight

The disaster at a Glasgow plastics factory was caused by years of neglect by the company that ran it and by the government safety watchdog meant to regulate it, according to a research report. Eight experts from four universities have condemned ICL Plastics and the Health and

Safety Executive (HSE) for failing to prevent the gas explosion on 11 May 2004, which killed nine workers and injured 40 ([Risks 321](#)). Conditions in the factory were poor, safety rules were broken and corners were cut to save money says the report, based on research and mapping exercises with former factory employees. Last week factory owners ICL Plastics and its subsidiary ICL Tech were together fined £400,000 at the high court in Glasgow after pleading guilty to safety charges. Report co-author Professor Andy Watterson from Stirling University said a low fine, a disregard of safety by the firm and poor official oversight “all point to a system that gives a nod and a wink to the most negligent employers that they can risk lives with virtual impunity.” He added: “The surprise is not that tragedy struck at ICL, but that it didn’t happen sooner. Neither HSE nor the firm took the action necessary to remedy problems over 20 years that had a clear potential for catastrophic failure.” The multiple deaths and injuries were not the result of an “accident”, but the inevitable outcome of a “dangerously dysfunctional” health and safety culture “blighted by faint-hearted regulators”, he said. The report calls for more resources for and commitment to official safety inspection and enforcement. The authors conclude: “It is imperative that the First Minister sets up a Committee of Inquiry into the ICL/Stockline explosion with a remit to consider the regulation and management of health and safety in Scotland to establish the broader lessons that we can learn from this tragedy.” The report has been backed by local Labour MP Ann McKechnie, who described as “very worrying” the allegations about ICL’s health and safety record. “There are also many questions to be asked about HSE’s involvement,” she said. Scotland’s First Minister Alex Salmond has given his backing to a public inquiry “to prevent a recurrence of this tragedy”. The Lord Advocate, Elish Angiolini, is consulting on what type of inquiry to hold and has promised to make a decision before the end of September.

- [Universities of Strathclyde and Stirling news release](#) and [ICL/Stockline disaster website](#).  
ICL/ Stockline disaster: an independent report

on working conditions prior to the explosion, [executive summary](#) and [full report](#). [ICL Plastics/ICL Tech response](#). Lord Brodie’s sentencing statement [[pdf](#)].

- Sunday Herald [feature](#) and related [editorial](#). [Glasgow Sunday Mail](#). [The Herald](#).

### **Mother in legal action over inquiry delay**

A grieving mother is taking legal action against Scotland’s Lord Advocate over delays in mounting an inquiry into her partner’s death two years ago. Karen Thomson, 46, has been fighting for more than two years to learn the facts surrounding the death of her partner of eight years, Graham Meldrum. The couple had a daughter Heather, now eight. The agency driver, 40, was unloading empty breadbaskets when he became trapped by a truck tailgate at Allied Bakeries in Glasgow. Her lawyer, Frank Maguire of Thompsons Solicitors, is supporting Ms Thomson in taking the Lord Advocate, Elish Angiolini, to court for so far failing to hold the inquiry. A petition lodged at the Court of Session this week claims the Lord Advocate is in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Fatal Accidents and Sudden Deaths Inquiry (Scotland) Act and seeks a judicial review. Logistics company TNT faces health and safety charges in relation to the accident in July 2005. Ms Thomson, a mother-of-four, said: “I just want to have basic facts so we can learn from it and move on.”

- [The Herald](#).

### **Inspection cuts could cost lives**

Proposals to limit on-the-spot safety inspections could result in increased workplace deaths and injuries, the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) has warned. Safety professionals’ organisation IOSH is also concerned that cuts in Health and Safety Executive (HSE) staff, due to budget restrictions

next year, could hamper the organisation in meeting its statutory obligation to enforce health and safety law. The Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) in its draft code of practice for regulators proposes that random inspection should only be a small element of a regulator's programme, used to test its processes, and recommends that regulators "allow or even encourage economic progress and only intervene when there is a clear case for protection." The code covers regulators including HSE. Richard Jones, IOSH's director of technical affairs, said: "It's important to remember that just because companies don't report accidents and their workers don't complain to the authorities, this doesn't necessarily mean they're OK. They could be under-reporting and their workers could feel intimidated. In some of the poorest workplaces, an inspector's visit 'out of the blue' may be the workers only hope of improvement." He added: "Random inspections are an important element, as 'rogue' organisations need to be deterred by the prospect they could get caught." Commenting on the draft code, TUC deputy general secretary Frances O'Grady said: "There is an implication that on-the-spot inspections should be very limited. This means in reality that the chances of bad employers being detected are very slim - unless they actually kill someone. Not only is this intrinsically dangerous, but it gives out a signal to employers that they can probably get away with bad practices." David Bergman of the Centre for Corporate Accountability said that whilst the impact of the code "would be to 'reduce burdens on business - it is neither good for safety nor accountability.'" He added: "It needs serious amendment."

- [IOSH news release](#). [Financial Times](#).
- A Code of Practice for Regulators – A Consultation, Cabinet Office: draft code [[pdf](#)] and [Better Regulation Executive](#) webpages.

### **Rail firm admits Grayrigg crash blame**

The faulty points that caused a fatal crash in Cumbria should have been inspected five days earlier, a rail industry report has revealed. An 84-year-old woman was killed and 22 people injured when the London to Glasgow Virgin Pendolino plunged off the track at Grayrigg in February ([Risks 305](#)). A Network Rail report, released this week, found systematic failures in track patrolling and management. It revealed that a visual inspection of the points, scheduled for 18 February, was not carried out because the inspector decided "to finish early." Network Rail said the inspector's records clearly showed that, but the inspector's supervisor then failed to pick up that the inspection had been missed. Iain Coucher, chief executive of Network Rail, said: "The report makes for difficult and sobering reading. Mistakes were made and there are important lessons for all of us at Network Rail." Gerry Doherty, general secretary of the rail union TSSA, commented: "Clearly there has been a systems failure and this has been recognised by Network Rail which is now proposing wide ranging improvements to the whole of the points maintenance system to make sure there is no repetition of this unfortunate tragedy. This will in effect amount to a new nationwide system. Lessons clearly have been learned which will benefit the national network as a whole not just in the Cumbria area." He added: "We also welcome Network Rail's open acceptance of responsibility for this tragedy. All too often in the past the industry has played the blame game and passed the buck." A Rail Accident Investigation Branch inquiry into the crash is ongoing.

- [Network Rail news release](#) and report summary [[pdf](#)]. [TSSA news release](#). [BBC News Online](#). [North West Evening Mail](#).

### **Developers fined over dumper truck death**

A construction company has been ordered to pay £43,715 in fines and costs after one of its employees died on a Salisbury building site in 2003. Castleway Developments Ltd admitted at Salisbury Crown Court last week to failing to

ensure the safety of its employees, after 62-year-old George Rogers was killed when he was catapulted from a dumper truck, which then ran over his body. The case was brought by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Ian Dixey, prosecuting for HSE, said the delay in bringing the matter before the court was due to a lengthy joint HSE and police investigation and an inquest, which did not take place until January, 2006. He said the company's failings included inadequate training for employees on using plant and machinery, no adequate system of checking plant and machinery - three of the truck's tyres were severely under-inflated - no training verification system, no site traffic plan or control of speed on site machinery and no adequate system for controlling use of plant or machinery on site. Fining the company £30,000 and ordering them to pay £13,714 costs, Judge Keith Cutler said the company's failings had been "contributory to a degree" to Mr Rogers' death.

- [Salisbury Journal](#).

**HSE warns HGV operators after injury fine**

Heavy goods vehicles operators risk a fine if they don't take safety seriously, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has said. The warning came after Tow Law-based WE & I Wright Limited was prosecuted following an investigation into a serious injury sustained by an employee who was crushed between reversing heavy goods vehicles. The company was fined £4,000 at Durham Magistrates Court and was ordered to pay £2,500 in costs after admitting safety offences. HSE inspector Richard Bishop told the court that his investigation found the company had been alerted to the risks less than a year before the accident, when it commissioned the Road Haulage Association (RHA) to carry out risk assessments at its premises. However, the precautions identified by the risk assessments were not implemented, meaning that the company had almost no physical or organisational measures in place to control workplace transport risks. Speaking after the case, Mr Bishop said: "Vehicles are a part of

everyday life, and as a result their dangers are often overlooked - complacency can be a real problem. But workplace transport continues to be the second biggest cause of fatal accidents at work. In 2004/05 there were 70 deaths and over 2,000 major injuries involving vehicles at work. Reversing alone caused about a quarter of the fatal accidents." He added: "An employer's first consideration should always be to try and eliminate reversing at their premises. But where reversing cannot be avoided, there is clear guidance that spells out how to plan for safety, which should involve taking sensible, cost-effective measures to ensure a safe site, safe vehicles and safe drivers."

- [HSE news release](#) and [workplace transport webpages](#).

**Bosses want 'business focused' sick policing**

Employers want their occupational health advisers to be more "business focused" and proactive in managing sickness absence, according to new research for the publication Employment Review. When 57 employers – with a combined workforce of 260,000 employees – were asked about issues that arise when using their organisation's occupational health teams, 26 per cent said occupational health advisers should be more business focused. They said they should avoid one-sided consultations giving only the employee's view. Nineteen per cent of employers said advisers should provide greater help in getting staff back to work, as employers have accused advisers of sitting on the fence being unprepared to make any decisions for fear of being responsible for actions taken. The findings were criticised by unions and workplace health experts. TUC head of safety Hugh Robertson said "the experience of many trade unionists is that, far from reflecting the employee view, they find that their employer's occupational health adviser is simply there to manage sickness absence and get people with a long-term condition off the books as soon as possible." He added that employers and workers both benefit if firms "have a comprehensive

occupational health service which aims to provide support and, where appropriate, rehabilitation to staff who become ill through work, and at the same time take steps to ensure that lessons are learned and other workers are not made ill through the same cause.” Stirling University occupational health expert Professor Andy Watterson said: “The best way of avoiding sickness absence is for employers to create and maintain healthy and safe workplaces. That should be the 'business focus' for employers rather than trying to pressure occupational health advisers to do the employers' bidding.” Sheffield University expert Simon Pickvance said: “From my current experience it is hard to imagine occupational health advisers being more involved in sickness absence management than they currently are. Occupational health services spend far too little time on prevention of ill-health caused by work - if they were more focused on prevention, many cases of sickness absence would not arise.”

- [Personnel Today](#).

### Work 'the biggest sleep robber'

Time spent at work is the single most important lifestyle factor that impacts on sleep, a new study has reported. US researchers found the more hours you work the less sleep you get. Those who got less than four-and-a-half hours sleep a night worked an average of 93 minutes longer on weekdays and 118 minutes more on the weekend. Commuting time ranked second, above socialising and leisure time, for eating into sleep time. The study in the September issue of the journal *Sleep* included nearly 48,000 US participants. They were surveyed on three different occasions - in 2003, 2004 and 2005 - and asked how they spent their time between 4am the previous day and 4am that day. Those who slept 11-and-a-half hours or more worked an average of 143 minutes less on weekdays and 71 minutes less on weekends than the average sleeper. The age group that slept the least and worked the most was 45- to 54-year-olds, Dr Mathias Basner, of the University of

Pennsylvania, and his colleagues found. Dr Basner said more work was now needed to measure what impact long working hours encroaching on sleep might be having on health. Jessica Alexander from The Sleep Council commented: “Survey after survey confirms that people are burning the candle at both ends more and more, with no let-up on increasingly global working environments that demand long working hours and 24/7 leisure opportunities.” She added: “Eventually business, government and the medical profession will have to give sleep as much priority in their healthy living messages as diet and exercise - if not more.”

- [American Academy of Sleep Medicine news release](#). Mathias Basner and others. American Time Use Survey: Sleep time and its relationship to waking activities, *Sleep*, volume 30, issue 9, pages 1,085-1,095, 2007 [[abstract](#)]. [Washington Post](#). [Time](#). [BBC News Online](#).

### Stress is top threat to workers

Stress is still seen as the biggest threat to the welfare of UK workers, according to research by health benefits provider HSA. More than four in 10 senior human resources professionals surveyed singled out stress as the main health concern of the workforce. This far outstripped other concerns such as increasing workloads (15 per cent) and obesity (11 per cent). However, the number of human resources professionals that believed stress was the top threat to employee health has fallen dramatically from last year, when 97 per cent cited it as their primary concern. Lee Nicholls, employer brand manager at HSA, said stress remained an issue. “Stress might not be the same type of concern as an accident in the workplace, but it should still be at the forefront of employer thinking on employee wellbeing.” Stress is a bigger worry in the public sector than at private firms, the survey found. Half of public sector human resources professionals said stress was their greatest concern, compared with 39 per cent in the private sector. Of the 593 human resources

professionals surveyed, 82 per cent said the NHS did not provide adequate support to employers in managing sickness absence. TUC's safety reps' survey last year confirmed that stress remained the top workplace health and safety concern ([Risks 281](#)).

- [Personnel Today](#).

### **Baggage handling firm picks up a fine**

A firm that last year failed in an employment tribunal bid to wriggle out of an improvement notice issued because of inadequate airport manual handling measures ([Risks 254](#)) has now been fined for ignoring a Health and Safety Executive manual handling notice. Manchester Airport ground handling company Menzies Aviation (UK) Ltd pleaded guilty this week to safety offences and to failing to comply with an improvement notice. At Trafford Magistrates Court the firm was fined £11,000 and ordered to pay £10,986 costs. HSE inspector Christina Roberts said: "An aggravating feature of this case is that many of the unsafe practices referred to in the charges had been brought to the attention of the company previously, but insufficient action was taken to remedy the concerns. I had also served an improvement notice - this is an important enforcement tool and companies must ensure they fully comply with them, otherwise they will know to face prosecution." Following an inspection in 2005 an improvement notice was issued because of HSE concerns about the how the company loaded and unloaded luggage. A timetable for the introduction of conveyor belts was agreed between Menzies Aviation and the HSE, but when further checks were carried out after the agreed date it was discovered that conveyor belts were not used on all occasions. The second charge relates to problems identified during a series of visits to the company in July and August 2006. These included the manual handling of aircraft steps, the movement of baggage carts to and from aircraft and the danger of falling from height for baggage handlers working in the holds of aircraft.

- [HSE news release](#). [HSE back pain webpages](#).

## **INTERNATIONAL NEWS**

### **Australia: Ex-James Hardie boss in criminal probe**

The former managing director of James Hardie, Peter Macdonald, has been revealed as the target of a criminal investigation over compensation to asbestos victims. He is first to be named as being investigated by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission since it flagged a criminal investigation in February into the scandal that cost Mr Macdonald his job ([Risks 295](#)). Mr Macdonald's barrister, Steven Finch, disclosed the investigation in the NSW Supreme Court last month as he argued that his client should be excused from giving ASIC any information during a civil penalty case. Mr Finch said ASIC had written advising "a criminal investigation is under way" but gave no further details. Mr Macdonald, who led James Hardie from California where he oversaw the successful expansion of its housing products business in the US, has made no public appearance in Australia since a torrid stint in the witness box at the 2004 special commission of inquiry into the under funded asbestos disease compensation scheme. He resigned from the company during the furor after the commission's final report in which David Jackson QC said there appeared to be evidence of criminality.

- [Sydney Morning Herald](#). [ASIC James Hardie webpage](#).

### **USA: Massive asthma rate in Ground Zero rescuers**

A new health peril is hitting the estimated 40,000 rescue and recovery workers who dug through the deadly rubble and toxic debris at

Ground Zero of New York's World Trade Center. A survey has found they are developing asthma at 12 times the normal rate for adults. The study, from the New York City Health Department, shows 3.6 per cent of Ground Zero workers report they have developed asthma after working at the site following the 11 September 2001 attacks. The study was based on the responses collected by the World Trade Center Health Registry. Some 25,000 of the estimated 40,000 rescue workers have registered with the group. The study found that workers who arrived at the disaster site on the day of the attack and stayed more than 90 days reported the highest rate of new asthma - 7 per cent. Firefighters accounted for roughly 14 per cent of the reported cases. Thomas Frieden, New York City's health commissioner, commented: "The dust from the World Trade Center collapse appears to have had significant respiratory health effects at least for people who worked at the site." Last autumn, a study by Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York City found that 70 per cent of the Ground Zero workers suffered lung ailments and other problems from their exposure to "a complex list of toxic chemicals" from asbestos to jet fuel to PCBs ([Risks 274](#)).

- [New York City Department of Health news release. AFL-CIO Now.](#)

**USA: Mine tragedy was 'an unnatural disaster'**

The coal mine collapse last month that killed six miners and three more workers involved in a rescue attempt ([Risks 321](#)) was 'an unnatural disaster', a US commentator has said. The Mountain Eagle's Tom Bethell, in a 29 August editorial, said: "Robert Murray, a mine owner obviously in need of clinical help, insisted from day one that the August 6 cave-in at his Crandall Canyon Mine in Utah was a natural disaster, triggered by an earthquake that no one could have anticipated. More than two weeks later, after all efforts to locate six trapped miners had failed and after three rescuers had died trying to reach them, Murray was still trying to pin the blame on an 'evil mountain.' Every coal miner in

America knew better... There was nothing even remotely natural about it. The cave-in was caused not by an earthquake but by Murray's mining plan, which called for removing coal pillars that should have been left in place – as the mine's previous owner had prudently done." The editorial is critical of collusion and complacency by the industry and the official safety watchdog MSHA, with Bethell contrasting the US experience with the response to the 1986 Moura No.4 mine disaster in Australia in which 12 miners died. In the wake of that disaster, the Australian government launched a programme to spur development of through-the-earth communication and tracking technology. A system based in US technology was developed and adopted by most of Australia's coal mines. The editorial notes that when it came to similar technology available to mine owners in the US "sales were never more than minimal." In 2003, MSHA gave this Federal Register-recorded reason for not requiring mines to use the personal emergency device (PED). "MSHA believes that the PED system is generally effective and encourages its use. However, since technology is constantly changing, newer systems that may be as, or more, effective than the PED may be developed." In his editorial, Bethell comments: "Read that last sentence again. We've never seen a worse excuse for fatal inaction or a better example of what's wrong with the coal industry and mine safety enforcement. Evil is where you find it. Bob Murray finds it in a mountain. We find it in the Federal Register: Volume 68, page 53041."

- [The Pump Handle](#). Federal Register, volume 68, page 53041, 9 September 2003 [[pdf](#)]. [AFL-CIO Now update on Senate hearings into the Crandall mine disaster.](#)

**USA: Committee maps out deadly work causes**

A top US government committee has called for a national commitment to stop occupational injuries and ill-health. US Representative George Miller, chair of the House Education and Labor Committee marked Labor Day, 3 September,

with the launch of a new interactive online map that enables people to learn about many of the workplace fatalities that have occurred in their own communities this year. “Each year, thousands of American workers die on the job. Sixteen workers are killed in workplace accidents each day. Ten times that many die of occupational diseases caused by hazards (or hazardous substances) like asbestos. And every 2.5 seconds, a worker is injured in the United States,” said Miller. “There are simply too many American workers, from all walks of life, who get injured, sick, or killed on the job. On this Labor Day, we should commit ourselves to doing everything we can to improve safety in the workplace.” Miller also called for better workplace safety regulation and enforcement. “In hearings held earlier this year, witnesses told the committee that both the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the US Mine Safety and Health Administration are not doing enough to update basic workplace safety standards and that the agencies have shifted their focus from enforcing the law to providing companies with so-called voluntary compliance assistance,” said Miller. “It is well past time that the Bush workplace safety agencies stop fiddling while workers die. They must aggressively enforce the laws they swore to uphold. We must do more to defend the right of all workers to a safe workplace.”

- US House of Representatives’ [Committee on Education and Labor news release](#). [Interactive map of work fatalities](#).

## EVENTS AND COURSES

### Euro health and safety week, 22-26 October

TUC is urging safety reps to get involved with European Health and Safety Week, to run from 22-24 October. The main theme will be musculoskeletal disorders. TUC says new materials for the week are being finalised by the Health and Safety Executive and will be published next month, including checklists for

safety representatives. Four two-day regional TUC training courses on musculoskeletal disorders are to run in October ([Risks 318](#)). The Wednesday of Euroweek, 24 October, is National Inspection Day.

- [More on the TUC Education training courses](#). Courses: London - 22/23 October at Congress House; Manchester - 22-23 October at City College; Glasgow - 24-25 October College, Stow West Campus; South Wales - 24-25 October in Bridgend College. [TUC course briefing](#) and application form [[pdf](#)]. [TUC 21-26 October 2007 Euroweek webpages](#). [TUC RSI webpages](#). TUC guide on inspections [[pdf](#)]. Inspection and report forms are also available on the [HSE safety reps’ webpages](#).

### TUC courses for safety reps

#### COURSES FOR SEPTEMBER 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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