



# Risks Newsletter



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Risks is the TUC's weekly online bulletin for safety reps and others, read each week by over 15,000 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

Warning on work-related suicides

Work-related suicides could be killing over 250 workers in the UK each year, according to a new report – more than die in workplace accidents. The news comes as a union-backed case at the House of Lords confirmed the widow of a worker depressed after a workplace injury and who subsequently killed himself should receive compensation. ‘Crying shame’, the report published this week in the union-backed Hazards magazine, said there are about 5,000 suicides every year in the UK in people of working age. Japan – where work-related suicide or “karojisatsu” in an officially recognised and compensated occupational condition - estimates five per cent of all suicides are “company related”, equating to over 250 deaths a year in the UK. The problem could be getting worse, the report said. Figures released by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in November 2007, showed a sharp upturn in cases of work-related “stress, depression or anxiety,” with the total affected up to 530,000 in 2006/07 from 420,000 the previous year. The number of new cases reported in HSE’s Labour Force Survey (LFS) analysis was up by 1,000 cases a week, to 242,000. A Hazards dossier included in the report highlights work-related suicide cases in sectors including education, manufacturing, the health service and fast food. The House of Lords this week upheld a March 2006 Court of Appeal ruling that IBC Vehicles was liable for the suicide of Thomas Corr, 31, who became depressed after a work accident which left him suffering headaches, tinnitus and severe depression. Mr Corr’s widow, Eileen, received legal support from his union, Unite. Confirming the company was liable, Law Lord Lord Bingham said: “In the present case Mr Corr’s suicide was not a voluntary, informed decision taken by him as an adult of sound mind, making and giving effect to a personal decision about his future. It was the response of a man suffering from a severe depressive illness which impaired his capacity to make reasoned and informed judgments about his future, such illness being, as is accepted, a consequence of the employer’s [actions].” He added: “It is in no way unfair to hold the employer responsible for this dire consequence of its breach of duty, although it could well be thought unfair to the victim not to do so.”

- [Crying shame: Hazards dossier exposes suicide crisis at work](#), Hazards magazine, Number 101, January-March 2008. [Rowley Ashworth news release](#). [The Times](#).

### Victory on offshore working time

Unions have hailed a “fantastic” tribunal ruling giving about 10,000 offshore workers two weeks' paid holidays. The decision, affecting drillers, caterers and sub sea workers, follows a long-running battle over offshore workers' rights under the Working Time Regulations. The unions claimed under the regulations they were entitled to four weeks' holidays over and above normal time off. The working time rules were introduced across the European Union as an occupational safety and health measure. The unions took their grievance to an industrial tribunal in Aberdeen in what is thought to be one of the biggest block actions of its kind seen in the UK. The key point of the tribunal ruling was that there should be an allocation of four weeks' paid leave on a pro-rata basis for time spent on and offshore. Graham Tran, regional officer with the union Unite, said: “The tribunal has ruled that all offshore workers are entitled to paid holidays under the Working Time Directive. This judgment should be viewed as a fantastic victory. The members stated in 2003 that they were entitled to paid leave and the tribunal has given them its full support.” He added: “I call on all companies to accept this ruling and to meet with the recognised unions and discuss how best to implement it. The significance of this is that never again can a company withhold paid holiday entitlement from their employees.” The workers involved in the tribunal, which began in October 2007, were represented by legal teams for the unions Unite, RMT and OILC.

- [Rowley Ashworth Solicitors news release](#). [Aberdeen Press and Journal](#). [BBC News Online](#).

### Call to protect workers from RSI

More needs to be done to protect workers from repetitive strain injury (RSI), physios' union CSP has warned. It says RSI rates have been rising in recent years and the problem now costs the UK economy £300m a year in lost working time, sick pay and administration. Health and Safety Executive statistics cited by the union show that there were 115,000 new cases last year - up from 86,000 on the year before. The figures, released ahead of the 29 February International RSI Action Day, revealed that rather than being a problem just for office staff using computers constantly, construction workers such as carpenters and painters were also at high risk. CSP is calling on the government to promote the use of occupational health therapists in the workplace, adding that businesses needs to make sure staff have regular breaks and risk assessments are carried out. It says workers should take measures including avoiding prolonged or repetitive tasks, using both hands for tasks and keeping warm to avoid strains. CSP spokesperson Bronwyn Clifford said: "Why do we let this situation continue? Many thousands of people are suffering and employers are losing hundreds of millions of pounds every year through RSI. This is totally unnecessary as RSI can often be avoided with advice on appropriate equipment and safe working practices from occupational health physiotherapists." She added: "Government and employers must do more to protect the health of employees and prevent a further increase in RSI. We urge the government to promote the use of occupational health physiotherapists more widely and to work with the HSE to ensure that current legislation is adhered to by all employers. "

- [CSP news release](#). [BBC News Online](#).
- [TUC RSI webpages](#). [RSI Day resources](#). Updated UNISON RSI guide [[pdf](#)].

### Bus driver attacked and sacked

A bus driver attacked by a drunken passenger then sacked for taking time off while injured has been awarded £75,000 in compensation. Robert Latimer was driving a London route notorious for assaults and abuse, when an aggressive passenger swung a bag of beer bottles at him. The 63-year-old, originally from Sunderland, said: "I pushed myself against the cab window as far as I could because I knew what was coming, but it didn't really help. He broke my arm in two places and damaged the muscle and ligaments in my shoulder. I kicked him in the face and kicked him out of the door of the bus." After the attack his doctor signed him off work and Mr Latimer sent letters from his GP to his employer, Travel London. The firm, however, stopped paying his salary and sick pay, kept contacting him to ask why he was not at work, and even though he was back in Sunderland demanded he attend meetings in London. Robert put in personal injury and unfair dismissal and disability discrimination claims. He was supported by his trade union, GMB, and Thompsons Solicitors. Tommy Brennan, GMB Northern secretary, said: "Travel London have behaved appallingly and have showed complete disregard for the law in treating Robert Latimer in this disgraceful way. He was a victim of a serious crime and yet not only did they try to paint him as the aggressor, they refused to talk to the GMB or to give our member the right of a grievance hearing and to appeal against his sacking."

- [Thompsons Solicitors news release](#). [Sunderland Echo](#).

### Lung destroying disease reaches the UK

A union organisation has repeated its call for global action on a lung-destroying occupational disease which has affected hundreds in the USA, after it was revealed the first case had been identified in the UK. Global foodworkers' union federation IUF said regulatory action and medical surveillance of food workers exposed to the flavouring ingredient diacetyl, the cause of bronchiolitis obliterans, have so far elicited no response by health and safety agencies in Europe.

A new report prepared by UK trade union journal Hazards in close cooperation with the IUF confirms that there is no room for complacency. In 2003, Martin Muir took a job at the Yorkshire factory of the transnational flavouring company Firmenich. Today, aged 38, the father of four has the lungs of an 80-year-old man. His symptoms were only spotted thanks to an alert and informed specialist aware of the US situation. According to IUF: “How many other Martin Muirs has the food industry scarred or destroyed? The symptoms of bronchiolitis obliterans are typically misdiagnosed as asthma or other lung ailments, letting the companies and the governments off the hook.” IUF added: “The Muir case suggests that we should be speaking of ‘food flavouring lung’ rather than ‘popcorn lung’.” A US study late last year suggested commercial restaurant workers cooking with diacetyl-containing butter substitutes could have higher exposures than those seen in microwave popcorn plants ([Risks 338](#)). And now an official US government agency has confirmed even low exposures to diacetyl can cause the disease.

- [IUF news release. Irwin Mitchell solicitors news release.](#) Seattle Post-Intelligencer on the [Martin Muir case](#) and [the new evidence of disease risks at low exposures](#).
- [I can't believe it's not deadly: Food flavour wrecks lungs](#), Hazards magazine, Number 101, January-March 2008.

## OTHER NEWS

### Confused policy leads to fines mess

The government is “schizophrenic” on workplace health and safety enforcement, setting improvement targets and talking tough in the aftermath of major accidents but then espousing deregulation and less enforcement by a pared back Health and Safety Executive (HSE), according to a new report. “True, average fines continue to rise, and the level at which fines were once deemed ‘extraordinary’ - £100,000 and

above - is looking less unusual every month. But underlying this, most fines - particularly those imposed on larger companies - are unlikely to make much of a dent in their directors' annual bonuses, let alone the company's profits,” writes Health and Safety Bulletin editor Howard Fidderman. He adds: “To an extent, the sentencing mess that engulfs health and safety has to be seen against a government approach to enforcement that might charitably be described as schizophrenic: the early years of the first Blair government saw additional funding for the HSE, the Revitalising health and safety strategy and its 44-point action plan for reducing injuries and ill-health, and encouragement from ministers to ‘get tough’ in the immediate aftermath of successive major accidents. This has given way in recent years to cuts in the HSE's budget (5 per cent year-on-year over the next three years), knee-jerk reactions to a ‘compensation culture’ that the government knows barely exists and, most importantly, a ‘better regulation’ agenda striving to remove ‘burdens’ on employers that is generally perceived as stemming from a deregulatory agenda. Amidst such messages, it is no surprise that judges and magistrates are getting it so wrong so often.”

- [Health and Safety Bulletin](#).

### Workers unaware of asbestos dangers

Most tradespeople are unaware of the health risks linked to asbestos, a survey has found. The British Lung Foundation said just 12 per cent of the 399 building trades workers it questioned knew asbestos exposure could kill them and less than a third were aware asbestos can cause cancer. Nearly a third (30 per cent) wrongly believed most asbestos has been removed from UK buildings. Almost three quarters (74 per cent) had had no training in how to deal with asbestos and just over 25 per cent thought, wrongly, some levels were safe. The majority – 81 per cent - said they never, rarely or only sometimes asked if the site they were working on had been checked for asbestos before they started a job - even though it is a legal requirement for

them to be informed if it is present. Alan Ritchie, general secretary of construction union UCATT, commented: “The survey by the BLF demonstrates that most previous asbestos awareness campaigns have failed. There can be no half measures taken when asbestos is concerned. The message has to be don’t touch it, asbestos kills. If you think there is asbestos where you are working, stop work.” UCATT said it was “highly disappointed” with the Health and Safety Executive’s new ‘asbestos – the hidden killer’ awareness campaign ([Risks 344](#)). Alan Ritchie added: “The government and the enforcement agencies must ensure that employers know that if any of their workers are exposed to asbestos, they will be prosecuted. A zero tolerance approach must be adopted.” Campaigners nationwide mobilised on 27 February to mark Action Mesothelioma Day, to draw attention for the need for prevention, treatment and research for a cure for the asbestos cancer.

- [BLF news release](#). [UCATT news release](#). [BBC News Online](#). [Sky News](#). [Contract Journal](#).
- [Where can you find asbestos?](#) - check out the new HSE campaign tool. [Asbestos Forum Action Mesothelioma Day webpages](#).

### More evidence on wood dust cancers

Wood dust exposure at work greatly increases the risk of a range of cancers, a study has found. Wood dust is already rated as a cause of cancer in humans by the International Agency for Research on Cancer and is a well-accepted cause of occupational sinus and nasal cancers. Researchers have also linked it to a tripling of the risk of lung cancer in exposed workers ([Risks 206](#)). Now a study has linked occupational exposure to wood dust to “other upper aero digestive tract and respiratory (UADR) cancers”. US researchers examined the effect of self reported wood dust exposure on 1,522 males with these cancers (241 oral and oropharyngeal, 90 nasal cavity, nasopharyngeal and hypopharyngeal, 124 laryngeal, 809 lung and

tracheal and 258 cancers of oesophagus and gastric cardia) and compared them to an identical number of controls, correcting for other risk factors like smoking. The report, released online ahead of publication in the journal Occupational and Environmental Medicine, found “regular wood dust exposure was associated with a statistically significant increased risk of 32 per cent for all UADR cancers”. The increase was 69 per cent for lung cancer, almost double (82-93 per cent) for squamous cell, small cell and adenocarcinoma of the lung and more than twice the risk for squamous cell carcinoma of the nasal cavity, nasopharynx and hypopharynx. The greater the reported wood dust exposure, the higher the risk. The team found significant increases in the risk of laryngeal and lung cancers was observed in those with wood dust exposure for more than 20 years. They concluded “wood dust exposure is a potential risk factor for UADR cancers, especially for cancers of nasal cavity, nasopharynx, larynx and lung.” A major international occupational and environmental cancer prevention conference for trade union officers, union reps, cancer prevention activists, occupational disease victims’ advocates and others and featuring top experts from around the world is to take place in Scotland in April.

- Vijay Jayaprakash and others. Wood dust exposure and the risk of Upper Aero-Digestive and Respiratory Cancers in males, Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Published Online First: 8 January 2008. doi:10.1136/oem.2007.036210 [[abstract](#)].
- [Global union zero cancer campaign. Occupational and Environmental Cancer Prevention - from research to policy to action at international, national and workplace levels](#), Friday, 25 April 2008, University of Stirling, Scotland. Further information, including [conference programme, contact details and fees \(including union reductions\)](#).

### Temporary workers bill moves forward

Unions have welcomed strong parliamentary support for a backbench bill to give temps new rights at work. Under current employment law temporary workers can miss out on sick leave, flexible working, holiday and other employment rights. Temporary work has also been linked to higher rates of occupational injuries and illnesses ([Risks 344](#)). Labour MPs including heavyweights John Prescott and Peter Hain threw their support behind Andrew Miller's bill when it went before parliament on 22 February, voting by 147 to 11 to ensure it received a second reading. The bill aims to secure decent minimum standards for all employees. If successful, the bill would make it illegal for employers to discriminate against the UK's 1.4 million agency and temporary workers in terms of pay and basic working conditions. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said the vote was "an important milestone" and "puts even more pressure on the government to drop their opposition to effective rights for agency workers." Speaking after a subsequent meeting between the prime minister and a TUC delegation, he said: "The prime minister recognised the importance of the issue and the problems that many agency workers face. Gordon Brown reassured us that he wants to make progress on this vital issue. We need to consider very carefully the best mechanism to achieve this." UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis said: "All employees should have equal treatment, and following the overwhelming support for this bill the government must now legislate to protect temporary and agency workers." And Billy Hayes, CWU general secretary, said: "When we get this bill through, we won't find any MPs who'll admit to having been opposed to it. It is a quintessential piece of Labour legislation which we look forward to implementing and enforcing for the good health of British employment."

- [Temporary and Agency Workers \(Equal Treatment\) Bill 2007-08. TUC news release. UNISON news release. CWU news release.](#)
- [Institute of Employment Rights seminar: Agency workers - Social justice long overdue, Monday 21 April 2008, 1:30- 4:15pm, UCU Conference Centre, Britannia Street, London.](#)

### **Labourer gets payout after face injury**

A Sheffield labourer has been awarded compensation of £19,000 after being injured at work when a piece of scaffolding fell three storeys, hitting him in the face. Neil Ringrose, 42, was working for Rowland Scaffold Company Ltd at a Woolworths Store in Redcar when the incident occurred. David Urpeth of law firm Irwin Mitchell represented Mr Ringrose. He said: "A sway brace fell from the scaffolding and caused serious injuries including displaced fractures of the left cheekbone, a tear in the retina of his left eye and lacerations. He has also suffered psychologically as a result of the incident." Mr Ringrose had to undergo surgery to treat the fractures and laser treatment to repair the tear. He said: "Since it happened I have some double vision, I have scars on my face and suffer from numbness in my cheek and upper lip. The brace weighed about 25lbs and hit me directly in the face. The results were agonising and I am still recovering from it." His lawyer, David Urpeth, added: "Employers need to ensure that steps are taken to prevent employees from being struck by falling objects. On this occasion, failure to do so had serious consequences for Mr Ringrose."

- [Irwin Mitchell Solicitors news release.](#)

### **Hot oil burns firm to pay £8,750**

A teenager was left badly scarred after slipping into a pan of extremely hot oil left on the floor of a busy restaurant. A year later Claire Swainger can still not stand for prolonged periods because of injuries sustained in the accident at Hull restaurant The Omelette. Owner George Tambaros, 46, and The Omelette were ordered to pay £6,250 in fines and £2,500 costs after pleading guilty to five breaches of health and safety law following the incident last February. Ms Swainger, who was 19 at the time, had been working a split shift at the restaurant and was

due to finish at 8pm that evening. At 6.30pm, while the restaurant was still in service, the head chef drained the oil from one of the deep fat fryers into two pans so it could be cleaned. The oil – which would have had a temperature of around 350 Celsius – had only been left to cool for half an hour when Ms Swinger, who was carrying salads, slipped, putting one leg into the pan full of oil. As she fell, she hit the other pan with her other leg, sending hot oil spilling across the floor. She burnt her feet, ankles, legs, bottom and lower back and was admitted to hospital. She later had to have damaged tissue removed and skin grafts and has been left with “significant” scarring. Norma Cottis, of Hull City Council’s environmental health and safety team, which brought the prosecution, said: “The incident occurred as a result of a long established practice of draining oil from a fryer while it was still extremely hot. This demonstrates a continuing state of affairs at the restaurant rather than an isolated lapse by the company. This, coupled with the other offences made by Mr Tambaros and The Omelette, could have been avoided if they had safe working practices for procedures such as this in place for the safety and well-being of their employees.”

- [Hull City Council news release](#). [Yorkshire Post](#). [Hull Daily Mail](#). [BBC News Online](#).

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### Canada: Government continues death fibre defence

The World Health Organisation says white asbestos – chrysotile - is a health hazard and recommends its use be stopped to prevent cancer. So does the International Labour Office, the Canadian Cancer Society, and other respected public health agencies. But not Health Canada, the Canadian government’s official health agency. Canadian national newspaper the Global and Mail last week revealed the federal body had quietly begun a study on the dangers of chrysotile, the last remaining variety of the

asbestos in widespread commercial use. Canada is home of the global asbestos trade’s main lobbying organisation, the Chrysotile Institute, and mines the mineral in Quebec. In an emailed statement to the newspaper, Health Canada said it was undertaking the research “to help further Canada’s knowledge of chrysotile asbestos fibres in relation to human health.” Critics say the government hopes the research might help sway opinion at key international talks, known as the Rotterdam Convention, which are scheduled for later this year and will discuss placing chrysotile on the ‘pror informed consent’ list of the world’s most hazardous substances. Canada led efforts to scuttle the listing at the last round of these UN-sponsored talks two years ago, following a similar success two years before that. “It would make sense that they would want to bolster their argument since it’s coming up again this fall,” said Larry Stoffman, a Vancouver-based union health and safety specialist and chair of the National Environmental and Occupational Exposures Committee, an independent, cancer-prevention organisation funded by Health Canada. He said that chrysotile should be listed because “the overwhelming evidence is that this material is very dangerous” and that Canada would risk further damage to its international reputation by undermining efforts to control the product. Health Canada didn’t publicly announce the study, but its existence was revealed in February by the Quebec Federation of Labour, which used the ongoing federal review to persuade the national union federation, the Canadian Labour Congress, to delay a vote supporting a ban on the material. Most of Canada’s major unions have policies in favour of a ban. About 95 per cent of Canada’s domestic output is exported, mainly to developing countries. Exports to some of these countries are known to have increased in recent years, and global union organisations report Canadian claims the carcinogen is being used safely are “laughable”.

- [Global and Mail](#). [ETUI-REHS news report](#). [Seattle Post-Intelligencer](#).
- [Health Canada’s \(appallingly complacent and error-ridden\) asbestos guide](#).

### China: Life sentences for mine officials

Three people have been sentenced to life in prison by a Chinese court for their roles in a mine explosion that killed 105 people last year. Twice as many people as permitted were working in the mine at the time of the blast, the official Xinhua news agency reported. The company operating the Xinyao Coal Mine in Shanxi province's Linfen city had also expanded the area of production without authorisation ([Risks 336](#)). The underground explosion on 5 December was caused by a build-up of gas. Those sentenced to life included the mine's production manager and an investor. The court sentenced 14 others to shorter jail terms for their role in the blast. "To conceal their illegal operation, the company even built a secret pass between the two coal beds and shut the entry during authorities' inspection," said the Xinhua report. The company was also fined 185.2m yuan (\$13.1m) for illegal trade in explosives, illegal work on an unapproved coal bed and tax evasion. An average of 10 miners died each day last year in China's coal mines.

- [Xinhua news report](#). [Shanghai Daily](#). [BBC News Online](#).

### India: Computer-based workers feel the pain

Call centre and other computer-based workers in India are paying a high price for the job, with significant numbers suffering musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), according to a new report. Dr Deepak Sharan, the medical director of the RECOUP Neuromusculoskeletal Rehabilitation Centre in Bangalore, conducted a study of information technology (IT) professionals in the city over the last seven years. He found that 75 per cent of the 30,000 individuals in his ongoing study in India's 'Silicon Valley' are afflicted with musculoskeletal symptoms related to their work. Dr Sharan said most Indian computer users first hear of RSI (repetitive strain injury), only after

being severely afflicted by it, sometimes several months after losing their jobs because of it. "Some Indian companies have dangerous working conditions and it is not unusual to have medical transcriptionists working all night without breaks hunched over on dinner tables and non-adjustable plastic chairs or stools, sometimes using their feet to operate the mouse once their hands are crippled by pain," Sharan said. Indian employees can't seek compensation for RSI injuries, he added, so companies don't feel pressure to consider improvements in work ergonomics. When they do, they follow Western practices that were designed for typically taller people. Global union federation UNI's Indian affiliates ITPF and UNITES are pressing to improve the well-being of India's new, elite workforces.

- [The Inquirer](#). [Times of India](#). [Ergoweb](#).

### Iraq: Union leader dies after terrorist attack

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has expressed deep regret and shock at the death of the president of the Iraqi Union of Journalists in Baghdad who has succumbed to wounds sustained in a targeted attack by gunmen last weekend. Shihab Al-Timimi, 75, suffered a heart attack and died in the hospital where he was taken after sustaining wounds to the stomach, shoulder and face when his car was hit by a hail of bullets in the attack. His son Rabei was also in the car and was slightly injured. "This assassination of a courageous and veteran champion of journalists' rights causes deep pain for all of us," said Aidan White, IFJ general secretary. IFJ has worked with the Iraqi union to improve safety for the country's media in response to more than 250 killings of journalists and media staff since the conflict started in 2003. An IFJ delegation visited Baghdad in January to discuss with Al-Timimi and the union's secretary general Moaid Al-Lami – both of whom had received numerous death threats from extremists – plans to strengthen media freedom and levels of protection for journalists. The IFJ has called on the Iraqi authorities to find the killers, who

struck just after a meeting where union leaders had put the finishing touches to plans for a seminar on the safety of journalists. Commenting after the shooting but before Shihab's death, TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "This latest attack upon Iraqi trade unionists is a reminder that the main force for a secular, democratic and non-sectarian Iraq - the trade union movement - is under threat. Meanwhile, the Iraqi government continues to persecute trade unionists when it should be protecting and supporting them." He added that the TUC was working with Iraqi unions to press for better employment and trade union laws in the country.

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

### Turkey: Dockyard strike against 'work homicides'

Thousands of Turkish dockyard workers took strike action on 27 February in protest at a rash of workplace deaths in Tuzla's dockyards. The strike, called by dockworkers in the DISK trade union, came after 18 deaths in eight months. The incidents - called 'work accidents' by the employers and 'work homicides' by the union - triggered a wave of anger among the dockyard workers. Tuzla dockyards, the heart of Turkey's shipmaking business, were paralysed by the action. The union reports workers and union reps faced heavy-handed police repression in response to the action, with 75 arrested and many beaten. Union placards proclaimed: "The heaven of cheap labour is hell for workers" and "Heaven or hell, trade union or death." The action has already had a positive impact. The Turkish parliament's general assembly this week said it would investigate the deaths, with transportation minister Binali Yıldırım noting that the objective was to eliminate work-related deaths in the region.

- [Turkish Daily News](#). [Atilim](#).

## RESOURCES

### Work cancer's deadly history

Since the Nixon era, successive US administrations have claimed to be fighting a 'war on cancer'. A new book, however, says for much of its history, the cancer war has been fighting the wrong battles, with the wrong weapons, against the wrong enemies. 'The secret history of the war on cancer', a heavyweight publication by US academic Devra Davis and described in a Lancet review as "a rattling good read", says while campaigns have targeted the disease, they've singularly failed to address the causes. High on this list, alongside tobacco and alcohol, are occupational and environmental exposures to carcinogens. Davis, director of the Center for Environmental Oncology at the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute, says not only did authorities overlook how the world in which we live and work affects our chances of getting cancer, information making the links was routinely suppressed. There was a simple enough reason for this – the official cancer effort was directed by leaders of the industries that generated a host of cancer causing materials and products. Davis says the economic interest lay in making the disease less deadly, but never in preventing it altogether. The high and increasing death toll in the UK from occupational cancer would certainly appear to prove her right.

- *The secret history of the war on cancer*. Devra Davis. ISBN 978 0 465 01566 5 2. £16.99. [Basic Books](#).

### 28 April: Workers' Memorial Day resources

New and inspiring Workers' Memorial Day resources are now available online. US campaign organisation United Support & Memorial For Workplace Fatalities (USMWF) has created a YouTube page for the 28 April global event.

USMWF says: “The purpose of this channel is to make others aware of what you are doing, what you want changed, make others aware of WMD,” and is urging any individual or organisation to send in a two to three minute video clip. It says the clips may contain a personal message, calls for health and safety improvements and new rights for bereaved families and details of Workers’ Memorial Day events. US union federation AFL-CIO has also produced an up-to-the-minute resource kit for union reps, available online and including a flyer, poster, proclamation, background document and information in English and Spanish.

- [TUC Workers’ Memorial Day webpage](#). [Global 28 April webpage](#).
- [Workers’ Memorial Day In The Works](#), volume 2, number 3, 1 March 2008. [YouTube Workers’ Memorial Day resources and video clips](#). [AFL-CIO Workers’ Memorial Day, 28 April, online resource pack](#).

### Every safety rep needs Hazards!

There’s no excuse for not reading Hazards – it’s award-winning (beating the BBC to a major award already this year), it’s a bargain and it is the only magazine written with trade union reps in mind. And union reps get it at less than half the full price, with further massive discounts for orders of five or more copies. The latest issue, out now, shows how it highlights new issues – stories in this week’s Risks, for example, illustrate its detective work exposing popcorn lung’s first appearance in the UK and the unaddressed suicide risk from bad work. It is also packed with news and resources to make a safety rep’s job easier and our workplaces safer and healthier.

- [Subscribe to Hazards](#). For further information contact the Hazards subscription hotline by [email](#) or phone: 0114 201 4265.

## EVENTS AND COURSES

### TUC organising for safety, 10 March 2008

TUC is making a further push to establish health and safety as a key organising activity for trade unions. It says despite health and safety being “one of the major reasons why workers want unions in their workplace, it is all too often seen as a specialist area and sometimes separate from other union activities.” It adds: “In fact, an ultimate measure of dignity and respect on the job is the degree to which workers are provided with a work environment that will not rob them of their health, their limbs or their lives. In an organising campaign, it all comes down to whether this is an issue around which workers can be mobilised and provide leverage with the employer. The workforce, with the help of the union, resolving health and safety issues for themselves has tangible results not only in terms of improving working conditions but also in raising awareness of the union.” The TUC has developed a ‘suite’ of tools which set out to show how union organisers, union officers and safety reps “can use health and safety as a tool in a campaign for union recognition as well as to develop activists and grow the union in already organised workplaces.” The package will be launched at a seminar on ‘Health and safety and organising’ on Monday 10 March at TUC London HQ. There will also be the opportunity to discuss the role of health and safety in organising and to network over lunch with colleagues from other parts and disciplines of the union movement.

- Health and Safety and Organising seminar, Monday 10 March, 11.00am, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London. If you would like to attend, contact [Joanne Adams](#) in the TUC’s Organisation and Services Dept, by Friday 7 March, tel: 020 7467 1361. [TUC](#) and [Hazards](#) health and safety and organisation webpages.

### **TUC courses for safety reps**

#### **COURSES FOR SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 2006**

- [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/](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](#).
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