



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

Latex payout but no job for young nurse

A young nurse who had to give up the profession after developing a potentially deadly latex allergy

has received a six-figure payout. UNISON member Tanya Dodd, 25, was a trainee nurse at Scarborough General Hospital when she developed type 1 latex allergy from gloves she wore routinely as part of her job. Contact with latex could now send her into anaphylactic shock, which can kill. She has to live in a latex free environment, including replacing everyday items such as hairbrushes, pens, mobile phones and shoes with latex-free alternatives. She has also been forced to change her diet to eliminate foods, which have similar proteins to latex, such as melon and grapes. UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis said: “Tanya Dodd had a promising career ahead of her as a nurse, but her life and career have been blighted by the negligence of her employers. No amount of money can adequately compensate Tanya for the damage to her health and the constant threat of serious illness hanging over her.” He added: “Employers must realise that they must take the health and safety of their staff seriously. The dangers of developing latex allergy are well documented, and the solution is simple – provide latex free gloves. Scarborough General Hospital did not.” Tanya Dodd said she was “devastated” at having to leave nursing. She added: “I was in the middle of training when I developed the allergy. The dangers of latex were not mentioned during my training and I wasn’t advised to minimise my exposure to it. The only type of glove available on the wards was latex based. I was told that if I was caught using latex-free gloves without special authorisation from occupational health and the ward sister, then this was a punishable offence.”

- [UNISON news release. BBC News Online. The Scotsman.](#)

School welfare facilities fail the test

Grotty schools are affecting the welfare of teachers and the quality of teaching, a survey has found. One in four teachers rated staff toilets as either poor or abysmal, according to the survey by teaching union ATL. Teachers commented that there were few toilets, they were not kept

clean and had sometimes to be shared with pupils. The survey found widespread problem with other welfare facilities in schools. Almost a third (32 per cent) of respondents said their school did not have a sufficient supply of drinking water. Teachers also said wheelchair access was limited - 40 per cent of teachers surveyed said their schools and colleges did not provide good access. Ventilation in schools also raised concerns among teachers, with over 40 per cent saying that their school did not have good ventilation and 28 per cent saying the premises suffered from damp. Less than a third thought the temperate in their school was “about right.” According to the survey, noise levels are affecting teaching and learning, with over a third of teachers saying it caused problems for lessons. ATL general secretary, Dr Mary Bousted, commented: “Teachers and lecturers strive to give their pupils a good education – but to be able to this, the buildings in which they teach must be fit for purpose. We can’t stress enough that in order for teachers and children to teach and learn in an effective manner, school buildings need to be safe, clean, and inspiring. Grotty toilets, damp and dirty buildings are not the right places to make our children feel they and their education matter.”

- [ATL news release.](#)

Warning on new incapacity test

Vulnerable workers could lose out as a result of changes to the current incapacity test, the government has been warned. The union GMB and safety professionals’ organisation IOSH issued separate alerts after chancellor Alastair Darling announced the new rules in last week’s Budget. GMB said the changes will mean over 2.5 million people currently on incapacity benefit in UK will be required to attend work capability assessments, after the chancellor said the requirement for new incapacity benefit claimants to undergo a tough new eligibility test was to be extended to existing claimants from 2010. GMB general secretary Paul Kenny commented: “The government needs to face up to the fact that in

today's labour market able bodied and fully fit workers get jobs ahead of those who are disabled and those not fully fit." He added that the government "should desist from threatening to penalise" workers unable to secure a job. Richard Jones, IOSH policy and technical director, said he organisation believed "this initiative may mean potentially vulnerable workers entering the workplace and resource needs to be available to support them in the long-term and to make sure their return to work is both safe and sustainable. We advocate a team approach to this, involving employers, workers, HR officers, doctors, nurses and health and safety practitioners, helping ensure any necessary reasonable adjustments are made to the workplace and working arrangements."

- [GMB news release](#). [IOSH news release](#).

Cash van workers want EC help

Security workers' union GMB and trade body the British Security Industry Association (BSIA) have called on the European Commission (EC) to act to prevent violent attacks on workers moving cash as part of their job. In a presentation to a EC-convened occupational violence conference in Brussels last week, GMB and BSIA said they believed the joint involvement of the UK Home Office, the police, the industry and GMB "has been paramount in reducing the number of violent attacks on security staff in the last seven months of 2007, compared to the same month the previous year." But GMB and BSIA said they will be looking for guidance from Europe to bring the level of attacks down further. They said over three quarters (76 per cent) of cash and valuables in transit (CVIT) attacks recorded in the European Union occur in the UK. Gary Smith, GMB national secretary for security workers, said "there is a long way to go and that the current level of attacks in the UK is unacceptable and out of kilter with the rest of the EU. GMB has members whose lives have been destroyed by their experiences of violent crime while doing their security jobs." He added the union was

calling on the EC "to learn from the UK experience and to support our continuing programme." Tim Thomas, BSIA director of legal services, said: "The partnership work that we are now seeing in the UK is something that the BSIA and GMB have long campaigned for." He added they would be urging the EC "to support our work in combating cash-in-transit crime, which is certainly far from over."

- [GMB news release](#).

Tube safety talks founder

Attempts to kick start talks with London Underground (LUL) over a raft of safety and staffing issues foundered again last week, with rail unions condemning the company's insistence on retaining the use of agency and security staff and mobile supervisors. The unions said the company had earlier told TSSA and RMT negotiators representing more than 7,500 station staff and drivers it intended to renege on its pledge to ensure that all station staff are directly employed and fully trained to LUL safety standards. They added that LUL last week not only refused to budge from that position, but also signalled that it would not automatically be offering jobs at the new service control centres to existing skilled LUL signalling operators, turning existing agreements on their head. "Once more we are being told that agency and security staff are part of a new employment model and that the crazy concept of mobile station supervisors is here to stay, but now we are also being told that the career path for trained Tube staff is being blocked," RMT general secretary Bob Crow commented last week. "LUL have effectively unmade all the progress that was made at earlier talks, and have confirmed our fears that they are intent on tearing up the existing safety rule book." TSSA senior regional organiser John Page said the company had "merely confirmed that it intends to press ahead with its plans to casualise key safety-critical work and undermine safety standards." He added: "At Terminal 5 we are being told that it is OK to have agency staff working for a subcontractor to a subcontractor

undertaking safety-critical duties like train despatch, and that is no more acceptable to us this week than it was last week.”

- [RMT news release](#) and [dispute background page](#).

Rail strike breaking puts lives at risk

Rail union RMT has called for an urgent investigation into what it described as “another apparently blatant breach of safety rules during the second Lincoln signallers strike” earlier this month. The union says that “evidence that legal documents were falsified to cover the fact that a strike-breaking signaller worked two shifts without the minimum eight-hour break between them has been passed to the railways inspectorate (HMRI) by RMT.” RMT general secretary Bob Crow said: “It seems that Network Rail has once more put the lives of railway staff and passengers in second place to attempting to break a strike.” He added that the company had “moved staff out of rostered positions in boxes unaffected by the strike to cover those that would not be staffed during the strike, and as a result struggled to keep the unaffected boxes adequately staffed.” The union had evidence a non-RMT signaller worked two consecutive shifts in breach of rules, but had booked off for an hour between the shifts to disguise the fact he was working continuously. “There are no circumstances in which anything less than an eight-hour turn-around is permissible, and it would have to have been OK’d by a manager. We are asking HMRI to investigate whether false entries have been made in the Train Register Book, which is a legal document,” Bob Crow said. RMT is already awaiting the outcome of an investigation into what it describes as “another apparently serious signalling blunder” during the first strike day, which it says could have resulted in rail traffic being sent through engineering works ([Risks 346](#)).

- [RMT news release](#).

OTHER NEWS

Rethink urged over work and health

There is a need for an urgent and comprehensive reform of Britain’s approach to health and work, a government-initiated review has concluded. Launching ‘Working for a healthier tomorrow’ this week, national director for health and work Dame Carol Black said the report’s proposals focus on keeping people healthy at work, and also on helping them return to work if they get ill. It concluded ill-health was costing the country £100 billion a year – enough to run the entire NHS. But Dame Carol emphasised that although the economic cost was substantial, the human cost to families was immeasurable. “For most people their work is a key factor in their self-worth, family esteem and identity,” she said. “So if they become sick and are not helped quickly enough, they can all too easily find themselves on a downward spiral into long-term sickness and a life on benefits.” She added: “The aim of my review is not to offer a utopian solution for improved health in working life, but to identify factors that stand in the way and offer potential solutions.” The review found there was insufficient access to good work-related health support, with provision concentrated among a few large employers, leaving “the vast majority” of small employers without support. Key recommendations include: a new Fit for Work service, to be piloted for patients in early stages of sickness; the replacement of sick notes with electronic ‘fit notes’ stating what people can do, not what they can’t; and bringing occupational health into the mainstream of healthcare provision.

- [Health Work and Wellbeing news release](#), ‘Working for a healthier tomorrow’ report [[pdf](#)] and summary of evidence submitted [[pdf](#)]. [The Guardian](#). BBC News Online [report](#) and [Q&A on the report](#).

Work plan won't work without resources

There are concerns about the ability of a resource-challenged NHS to take on the new role outlined in this week's 'Working for a healthier tomorrow' blueprint. David Coats, associate director of policy at The Work Foundation, said: "Most GPs have little understanding of the relationship between work and health and limited expertise in occupational health. GPs may be under-resourced and ill-equipped to take on the responsibilities envisaged in Dame Carol's proposals. There is a huge gap in GP training that needs to be addressed before these policies can succeed." The British Medical Association's Dr Hamish Meldrum said the success of Fit for Work "will undoubtedly depend on the government providing adequate resources" and added the fit note proposal needed scrutiny, "including the workload implications and the avoidance of any conflict of interest. The GP must continue to act as the patient's advocate, not a policing arm of the Department for Work and Pensions." He added: "Employers must also take more responsibility for promoting the health and well-being of their staff including much wider provision of proper occupational health services that specialise in health at work, rather than the patchy occupational illness services that we have at present." Judith Hackitt, chair of the Health and Safety Commission (HSC), said: "The challenge now lies in not only deciding what should be done in response but who is best placed to deliver on the various elements. HSE will be keen to underline the role it plays in prevention of injury and ill health due to work."

- [BMA news release](#), [IOSH news release](#), [HSC news release](#), [HSE Health Work and Wellbeing webpages](#), [Hazards work and health webpages](#).

Healthy work requires good work

Unions have said all workers need good jobs as well as comprehensive occupational health support if the workforce is to become healthier. Commenting on the publication this week of Dame Carol Black's review of health and work, TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "There is currently insufficient support for people who are off work because they are ill or injured and the TUC agrees with Dame Carol that more needs to be done to encourage those on long term benefits back into the labour market. This is best done by doing more to prevent workplace accidents and illnesses, and by giving ill or injured workers early access to rehabilitation." He added: "Ministers need to come up with practical solutions based on prevention, early access to rehabilitation, and universal occupational health coverage. The government must also look at how it can transform work into a more rewarding and less harmful experience, especially for the 2.2 million people who are currently suffering from an illness that was caused or made worse by their work." TUC welcomed the recognition in the report of the need for 'good work'. "But this will only happen if the government clamps down hard on employers who exploit their staff through bad conditions, long hours, or stressful workloads," said Mr Barber. "That means more resources for the Health and Safety Executive, local authorities and other enforcement agencies, and stronger legal protection for agency, temporary and other vulnerable workers." He added that the TUC was pleased to see the report recognising the importance of union safety representatives in delivering on occupational health in the workplace. Physios' union CSP called on the government to move quickly to establish a UK-wide NHS-based 'Fit for work' service, with "physiotherapy services at the heart." Construction union UCATT said the report had not taken into account the realities of many jobs, with too little done to recognise the needs of non-employees. UCATT also said it had reservations about the 'fit note' proposals. "Unless GPs receive far more training in what workers can and cannot do, there is a real danger that workers could be sent back to work and asked to perform tasks, of which they are not capable," the building union warned.

- [TUC news release](#). [CSP news release](#). [UCATT news release](#).

JCB fined for two preventable deaths

Two companies forming part of the site plant manufacturer JCB have been fined after two employees, Darren Ellis and Paul McNamara, died in separate incidents while undertaking routine tasks. HSE brought the cases against JCB Earthmovers Ltd and JC Bamford Excavators Ltd before Stafford Crown Court last week. Both companies had pleaded guilty to charges at earlier court hearings. JCB Earthmovers Ltd was fined £200,000 and ordered to pay costs of £31,366 for safety offences relating to the death of Mr Ellis, 33, at its manufacturing plant in Cheadle, Staffordshire on 16 November 2005. Welder Mr Ellis was testing the fuel tank of an earthmoving machine for leaks. Investigations revealed that Mr Ellis was standing close to the tank when the inspection plate blew off, causing him fatal head injuries, after he connected a high-pressure airline instead of using low pressure. At an earlier hearing, magistrates heard that the low and high-pressure airlines were similar and with identical connectors. The Court also heard that Mr Ellis did not have enough training for the job. JC Bamford Excavators Ltd was fined £266,000 and ordered to pay costs of £31,701 for safety offences relating to the death of Mr McNamara, 43, on the company's site at Rocester, Staffordshire on 11 September 2006. Mr McNamara suffered fatal head injuries after being crushed by the boom of an excavating machine. HSE's investigation revealed it was common practice for workers to operate the controls for the boom whilst standing outside the cab of the machine and leaning through the back window. A fault on the hydraulic system resulted in the control lever not working properly causing the boom to carry on moving, trapping Mr McNamara and inflicting fatal injuries. HSE inspector Lynne Boulton said: "Both these tragic deaths were not only regrettable but also entirely preventable. Mr Ellis and Mr McNamara have each left behind two children and grieving

widows who have our deepest sympathies and our thoughts go with them for their futures."

- [HSE news release](#).

Site giant Alfred McAlpine fined £250,000

Road builder Alfred McAlpine Capital Projects Ltd has been fined £250,000 following the death of a motorcyclist at a roadworks site. The firm, which had entered a guilty plea at an earlier hearing, was also ordered to pay £5,859 in costs. The fatal incident occurred on 29 August 2005 on the former A228 old Ratcliffe Highway, when the motorcyclist hit temporary concrete crash barriers that had been laid in a line across the road. At the time of the tragedy, there were no longer warning signs or traffic cones along the route to warn drivers of the closure. HSE inspector John Underwood said: "This was a wholly avoidable incident which led to unnecessary loss of life. The 'Road Closed' signs and the traffic cones had been missing for more than eight weeks before the incident - yet the contractor was working in the area almost every day." He added: "The temporary traffic management system should have been checked at least once a day but this was never done properly. The barriers were only 450mm high and from a distance they could have been mistaken for a shadow or a change in the colour of the tarmac. It is clear the motorcyclist braked hard and tried to avoid the barriers but could not stop in time." He said in the last five years 12 members of the public have lost their lives in reportable incidents relating to roadwork construction activity. "It is vital that contractors provide clear information to the travelling public on the approach to road works," the inspector added. "Some of the original signs and cones may have been vandalised or damaged by construction traffic or used in other places by construction workers. Contractors must actively manage inspections and replace damaged and missing items."

- [HSE news release](#).

Bus firm fined after worker crushed

Bus company First Capital East Limited (First) has been fined following the death of an employee when he was run over and crushed at a bus depot. First was fined £120,000 and ordered to pay costs of £95,000 at Croydon Crown Court, after pleading guilty to safety breaches. On 11 January 2003, Brian Norman, an engineer, was crouching in front of a bus at Rainham bus depot to replace a headlamp, while the bus was queuing to be cleaned and refuelled. While he was doing this, an employee of First's contract cleaners climbed into the driver's seat, to move the bus forward. He could not see Mr Norman, and there was no other indication that anyone was working on the bus. The bus ran over Mr Norman, who died of his injuries at the scene. HSE inspector Charles Linfoot said: "Employers have a duty to organise their workplace so that vehicles and pedestrians are segregated, so far as is reasonably practicable. They should ensure that operations such as carrying out minor repairs and cleaning and refuelling, do not put employees and others at risk of injury or death." He added: "This sentence of a major bus company emphasises the need for operators of public bus services to properly manage the health and safety of their activities. This incident has highlighted serious shortcomings in many areas, such as risk assessment, supervision, monitoring, and co-ordination. In our view, the death was a wholly avoidable result of these failings." In his summing up, Judge Ainley stated that he was satisfied that the death of Mr Norman was a direct result of the breach by the company and it was quite foreseeable that such a situation could occur if the site wasn't supervised.

- [HSE news release.](#)

Shell hit with fine after 'lucky' escape

Oil giant Shell was fined £266,681 last week for allowing toxic fluid and gas to leak from a pipe at one of its refineries in what the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) described as a 'narrow escape', which could have led to a major explosion. Twenty tonnes of the mixture escaped from the corroded pipe at the Stanlow petrochemical plant in Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, in 2003. The firm, which pleaded guilty to a breach of the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations (COMAH), was also ordered to pay £37,131.62 costs at Warrington Crown Court. The incident, which happened on 29 May 2003, when 20 tonnes of isobutane mixed with 150 kg of hydrogen fluoride escaped into the atmosphere. Because of the quantities released, the incident was reported to the European Commission, a requirement of the COMAH regulations. HSE experts inspected the site after the incident and concluded that Shell had lost control of corrosion processes within the pipe to such an extent that a failure became inevitable. Shell, in one of its own reports, estimated that such an incident could have resulted in multiple fatalities and damage to buildings over a significant area; secondary explosions could have resulted in a major fire leading to catastrophic damage. HSE inspector Alan Graham said: "Although there was no ignition on this occasion, in different circumstances there could have been an explosion." HSE's deputy chief executive Justin McCracken said: "The company was lucky that this incident did not have very severe consequences." Judge Roger Dutton said the fine would have been £400,000 if Shell had fought the case. The company said it had since spent £5.5 million improving the plant.

- [HSE news release.](#) [Ellesmere Port Pioneer.](#) [The Mirror.](#) [International Herald Tribune.](#)

Firm pays £3,000 after worker loses leg

A North Yorkshire firm has been fined £3,000 for safety offences that cost a worker his leg. The incident occurred at the Pauls Malt factory in Malton in August 2007, when process operator

Paul Sellers fell through a machine guard, catching his leg in a rotating screw conveyor. As a result, the 52-year-old's leg had to be amputated above the knee. The malt production company was found guilty last week at Scarborough Magistrates Court of a charge under the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations. The company was also ordered to pay £2,098 costs. HSE inspector Paul Robinson said Mr Sellers was on a conveyor, which transfers barley, to try to move a slide, which was sticking. He tapped the slide but it didn't move and while he was getting down to call an engineer his foot fell through a stainless steel mesh guard, which was covering the top. His foot was dragged into the machine but he managed to get out and crawl 60 yards to the control room. However, his leg had to be amputated. Mr Sellers, 52, said he had been trained by the company in the past in health and safety matters but he had not seen any instructions saying not to stand on the top of the conveyors while running. HSE inspector Paul Robinson commented: "This was a tragic and entirely avoidable incident. The employer failed to ensure that proper measures were taken to protect the worker and the consequences of that will affect him for the rest of his life." He added: "Throughout Britain machinery causes around 800 injuries each year in food manufacturing, of which over 100 are very serious or even fatal injuries. The main causes of injury on machines are well known and in most cases are preventable if adequate guarding and other safeguards are in place. Nearly one-third of injuries occur on conveyors of various types so it is particularly important that these are provided with strong and secure guards at points where injuries could occur."

- [HSE news release. Scarborough Evening News.](#)

Taylor Wimpey fined after teen site death

Construction giant Taylor Wimpey Developments Ltd has been fined £25,000 after a teenage apprentice was killed. The firm was also

ordered to pay costs of £25,000 at Stoke Crown Court last week after to a safety offence. Grant Meyrick, 18, a self-employed bricklayer and 'modern apprentice' attending Stoke-on-Trent College, was working on a housing development site on 8 August 2003. The vehicle that moved buckets of mortar around the site to the bricklayers was not available as its tyres were punctured. Instead, workers loaded tubs filled with mortar into the front bucket of a tractor loader. Mr Meyrick and a colleague were waiting at the bottom of the mortar silo. As the tractor loader approached the silo, it skidded to a stop and the bucket trapped Mr Meyrick against one of the silo's supporting legs. Mr Meyrick sustained internal crush injuries and died on 26 August 2003. Speaking after the case, HSE inspector Dave Brassington said: "Any company or individual in control of construction sites needs to assess the movement of vehicles and personnel around the site then implement appropriate controls to prevent people being struck by moving vehicles." He added: "Had basic health and safety precautions been observed and risk assessment undertaken then it is most unlikely that such a fatality would have occurred. It is the responsibility of companies and individuals to protect both employees and non-employees from the evident risks. 18-year-old Grant Meyrick had a promising life and career before him." A Taylor Wimpey company was fined £300,000 in November 2007 after sub-contractor Neil Dunstan, 41, was crushed to death on site ([Risks 333](#)).

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

Death fines below 0.2 per cent of turnover

Most large companies convicted of safety offences involving a workplace death are fined at less than a 700th of their annual turnover, a new study has found. If individuals earning an average annual income of £24,769 were sentenced at this level, they would be fined just £35. The research by the Centre for Corporate Accountability (CCA) also shows fines imposed

on most of these companies after workplace deaths are only 1 per cent of their gross profits. CCA looked at the companies convicted for 'death-related' health and safety offences since 1 January 2006 and compared the fines imposed with the convicted companies' turnover and gross profits. CCA executive director David Bergman said: "The fines that the courts currently impose upon companies for the most serious health and safety offences are so low as to be almost irrelevant to these companies. A key purpose of these prosecutions is deterrence - yet fines which are the equivalent of £35 for the average person simply have no impact upon a company's wealth." He added: "Companies can be fined up to 10 per cent of their turnover for breaching competition law - and this is when the company has not even been convicted of a criminal offence, and no person injury yet alone death is involved." He said CCA believes "the threat of fines of between 15 to 40 per cent of turnover is the kind of punishment appropriate to the seriousness of the offence and will create a real deterrent effect against companies needlessly placing the lives of workers and members of the public at risk."

- [CCA news release](#), including link to the full report, The relationship between the levels of fines imposed upon companies convicted of health and safety offences resulting from deaths, and the turnover and gross profits of these companies, CCA, March 2008.

Survey call after teacher's asbestos death

Teaching union NUT has called for all schools in Wales to be checked for asbestos after the death of a retired teacher from an asbestos cancer. Renee Blodwen Eden, 69, from Anglesey, was most likely to have died from exposure to asbestos in a school building, an inquest heard. Coroner Dewi Pritchard Jones has now taken the unusual step of writing to Flintshire County Council because of the possible risk to others. Recording the cause of death as mesothelioma due to asbestos exposure, Mr Pritchard Jones told the inquest last week: "I will be writing to

Flintshire Council that it's more than likely that it was from exposure to asbestos in their schools." Mrs Eden taught in three schools in Flintshire before retiring in 1998. She had been fit and well before being diagnosed with mesothelioma last April. Consultant pathologist Dr Tony Caslin, who carried out the post mortem examination, said Mrs Eden could have been exposed if she worked anywhere where asbestos was being "broken up or disturbed". David Evans, secretary of NUT Cymru, said many more teachers, pupils and anyone working in or visiting schools, could have been affected. Local education authorities should check all schools, he said. "We want local authorities to assess the full problem in schools in Wales. To do that they will have to carry out a survey. This is a real wake-up call to the potential number of people who might have been, or might be, affected. It's not just teachers but pupils and all people in schools." The case is one of a spate of recent teacher deaths linked to school asbestos exposures ([Risks 344](#)).

- [Western Mail](#). [BBC News Online](#).

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

South Africa: Unions secure World Cup 2010 commitments

Three South African construction unions have made headway in their campaign to ensure decent employment and safety standards in the run-up to the 2010 World Cup. Joseph Blatter, president of FIFA, the world football confederation, gave the unions a commitment that he would bring their concerns before the government of South Africa, which will host the event, and the FIFA organising committee. Global building union federation BWI said the football supremo also "agreed to include trade unions in his next inspection visit in the worksites and promised to continue the social dialogue and trade union engagements even in other continents where major football event will be held." The meeting was part of a one-week

study visit in Switzerland by BWI affiliates NUM, BCAWU and SABAWO. In a meeting at FIFA House, the unions outlined problems including the challenges of protecting sub-contracted workers and “the continuing threats to occupational health and safety.” In a memorandum handed to the FIFA boss by Cosby Moni of NUM and Crecentia Mofokeng of BWI, the unions noted “construction workers in South Africa need a living wage, safe working conditions and social security. This being guaranteed, the FIFA World Cup 2010 will also contribute to social development in South Africa.” FIFA president Mr Blatter expressed concern that the builders and other workers involved in constructing the World Cup projects were all treated fairly. “Although FIFA is not the employer or the builder responsible for constructing the stadiums, it is well aware of its social responsibility in connection with the 2010 World Cup in South Africa and is also keeping an eye on it,” he said. He added he had visited several stadiums in South Africa to see the situation for himself. “We sent a signal of hope and trust in the abilities of South Africa and the entire African continent when we awarded the 2010 World Cup,” he stated. “The FIFA World Cup is intended to have an enduring and positive effect on the economy and generate social change.”

- [BWI news release](#). [FIFA news release](#).

Sri Lanka: Intruders attack journalist’s family

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has condemned an attack on the family home of journalist Munusami Parameshwari in which her father and sister were seriously injured. According to the Free Media Movement (FMM), an IFJ affiliate, several intruders armed with clubs forcibly entered the home in Gampola on 14 March. The attackers reportedly surrounded the house and prevented family members from seeking medical attention. The group warned the family that Parameshwari would risk death if she returned to Gampola. The Gampola police eventually rescued the family. Parameshwari has

been in hiding after recent threats against her life. Both her and her family have been targeted with vicious attacks since she was arrested by the Terrorist Investigation Division (TID) while working as a crime reporter for the now closed Mawbina Sinhala-language newspaper in November 2006. Newspaper reports alleging she was carrying explosives, as well as public statements by government ministers linking her to terrorist groups, proved to be fabricated. Three weeks after Parameshwari was released without charge on 22 March 2007, she was kidnapped by uniformed men who assaulted and threatened her with death if she continued to report on crimes or conduct investigations into abductions. On 14 June 2007, two people disguised as police officials took her passport and national identification at gunpoint. “The horrendous treatment of Munusami Parameshwari and her family as a result of Parameshwari’s efforts to uphold press freedom as a much-needed democratic value in Sri Lanka is appalling. The Sri Lankan government must act immediately to ensure the perpetrators of this vile attack are brought to justice,” said IFJ Asia-Pacific director Jacqueline Park.

- [IFJ news release](#).

USA: Watchdogs probe diacetyl threat to cooks

A US federal investigation into the hazards facing cooks exposed to diacetyl, a sometimes deadly artificial butter flavouring, is under way in New York City restaurants. Meanwhile in Seattle, the state safety watchdog is starting a similar inquiry. These health evaluations come as two major federal studies confirm that even short exposures to the artificial flavouring can cause tissue damage. Teams from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) took samples last week of the cooking oils and sprays being used and the air inhaled by cooks and other kitchen workers employed by Aramark, an international corporation running 3,500 food service operations in the US. NIOSH launched the investigation at the request of Unite Here, a union representing 440,000 hotel,

restaurant and hospitality industry workers. “A government study like this is long overdue,” said Eric Frumin, director of occupational safety and health for the union. “Cooks throughout the country are breathing oil mist for hours every day. It's unknown how much diacetyl they're inhaling with it and that's what we hope NIOSH will determine.” The union requested the study after the Seattle Post Intelligencer published in December the results of laboratory analysis the newspaper commissioned of almost two dozen butters, margarines, oils and sprays used by home and professional cooks. Cooking was simulated and the air coming off the skillets and grill surfaces was collected and measured for diacetyl. The chemical flavouring agent was found in everything tested, with the highest level in the oils, sprays and butters used by professional cooks ([Risks 338](#)). “The request was made by Local 100 of the union. They were concerned about their members being exposed to diacetyl, and we agreed to come,” said Dr Kathleen Kreiss, chief of the Respiratory Disease Field Studies Branch of NIOSH. Local 8, the Seattle chapter of Unite Here, requested that SHARP, the state Safety and Health Assessment and Research for Prevention programme, do the evaluation instead of NIOSH. Hazards magazine revealed in February that a case of the diacetyl related lung disease bronchiolitis obliterans has been identified in a UK food flavouring worker and warned many more cases could be being missed or misdiagnosed ([Risks 345](#)).

- [Seattle Post Intelligencer. Confectionery News. Unite Here December 2007 news release.](#)
- [Hazards guide to diacetyl risks.](#)

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