

# Risks

TUC 

*e-bulletin*

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**HAZARDS**  
MAGAZINE

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**HSE Lives**  
Slips, trips & falls at work 

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**Risks** is the TUC's weekly online bulletin for safety reps and others, read each week by over 16,000 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](#)

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### **Strike threat over victimised safety rep**

Around 2,500 Tube infrastructure workers at Metronet are to be balloted for industrial action following the victimisation of an RMT safety rep. RMT is also angry at the company's "dangerous plans" to reduce signals maintenance and attempts to impose rosters. The union says Metronet "crudely engineered" the suspension of experienced health and safety rep Andy Littlechild for attempting to uphold the company's own health and safety policy. "Andy Littlechild has been fitted up on a bogus charge that would embarrass the Spanish Inquisition, and to add insult to injury he was thrown out of his depot at 3am with no means of getting home," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said. "Andy has spent more than two years trying to get Metronet's official safety policy applied, and it is the management that has brazenly ignored that policy that should be disciplined. Andy's diligence has clearly upset someone, because they have gone to the trouble of unilaterally altering a risk assessment in further breach of agreements with the sole aim of entrapping him, and it is as clear as day that he has been set up." Andy Littlechild is a safety rep in Metronet Rail Infrastructure Services, which does heavy maintenance and track renewals. He was suspended on 15 September after a 'fact-finding' meeting that the union says "pre-judged him guilty of refusing to wear a hard hat where one was required." In fact, the infrastructure company's blanket policy on mandatory hard hat use ran counter to Metronet's risk assessment, which deemed personal protective equipment was not necessary. "Indeed 'PPE is the last resort' is a Metronet slogan," said RMT. The union Metronet signals staff could be balloted in a row over proposed cuts in signals maintenance, a move the union says would "undermine safety" and is cost driven.

- [RMT news release](#). [BBC News Online](#). [Contract Journal](#).

### **Bonus scheme fingered in vibration case**

A council roadworker who was forced out of his job aged 25 after developing two related occupational diseases has received a £262,000 compensation payout. UNISON member Adrian Bideau, now aged 28, developed Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS – also known as vibration white finger) and carpal tunnel syndrome, a painful repetitive strain injury, as a result of using vibrating tools such as breaker packs, whacker plates and saws. A bonus scheme - which has now been scrapped - encouraged excessive working with the tools and greatly increased the risks. The former Norfolk County Council worker commented: "As well as HAVS, I was also diagnosed with carpal tunnel syndrome in October 2003 and I have not been able to work since then. I have difficulty with working outside due to my condition, which is much worse in cold weather." Mr Bideau added: "Despite having decompression surgery on both of my wrists, I have not been able to return to my former employment and I was retired on ill-health grounds in April 2005." UNISON regional secretary for the Eastern region, Greg Grant, said: "It is a real tragedy that Adrian has been forced out of a job he loved doing at such a young age. He has to live with the painful results of over-use of these tools." He said instead of exercising its legal duty of

care, the council "encouraged staff to work more hazardously, because of the bonus scheme they operated."

- [Thompsons Solicitors news release.](#)

### **Gloves off in vibrating tools campaign**

Urgent action to protect workers from Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) is needed, with dozens of workers affected at one council alone, public sector union UNISON has said. The union was speaking out after securing £3,000 compensation for Joseph Beale, a council worker from Bridgend. A Freedom of Information request to Bridgend County Borough Council found that more than 40 staff had developed the condition working at the council. Despite evidence proving that monitoring the time workers spend on vibrating tools or providing them with anti-vibration gloves would prevent injuries, the council has failed to provide staff with the necessary equipment or training. Joseph Beale developed the condition in 2004 after more than 10 years in a job requiring the use of road tools and other power tools, including gardening machinery, such as mowers, strimmers and hedge cutters. He said: "Despite having worked with vibrating tools for over 10 years the council did not warn me about the possible dangers, and now I have developed a disease that I did not even know existed." UNISON regional officer for Wales, Paul O'Shea said: "This case could well be the tip of the iceberg. Unless employers face up to their responsibilities to protect their workers they run the risk of facing many similar claims for compensation. Bridgend County Borough Council has a duty of care to their employees. They must make sure staff are aware of the dangers of using these tools over long periods of time, and put in place safe working practices to minimise the risks staff are exposed to."

- [Thompsons Solicitors news release.](#)

### **Homicide charges call after tug tragedy**

Clydeport should face culpable homicide charges relating to the deaths of three tug crew, a top union official has said. Unite Scottish secretary John Quigley called for immediate action after the release this week of the Marine Accident Investigation Branch's (MAIB) report into the sinking of the Flying Phantom. The tug went down while assisting a bulk carrier in thick fog on the Clyde last December. The bodies of three crew - skipper Stephen Humphreys, 33, Eric Blackley, 57, and Robert Cameron, 65 - were later recovered. The other crew member, Brian Aitchison, 37, was rescued from the water after he managed to escape from the tug's wheelhouse. The investigation identified preventable factors that contributed towards the deaths of the crew members, including the failure to have a designated person in control of Clydeport's safety management procedures. Unite's John Quigley said: "As a result of this damning report Unite are calling for a public inquiry into this tragedy and for the Lord Advocate to bring charges of culpable homicide against Clydeport." He added: "Our members go to work to provide for themselves and their families - not to suffer injury or

death. Unite will not let this issue slip and we shall be urging action on this report from ministers at the Scottish and UK parliaments." Following the report, Unite also reiterated its call "for corporate killing legislation to be placed back at the top of the justice agenda."

- [MAIB report](#). [Unite news release](#). [BBC News Online](#).

### **Safer firefighters mean safer communities**

Firefighters' union FBU is stepping up its campaign to protect services. A lobby of the Westminster parliament on 12 November will press for action on the safety of firefighters and the public. FBU is urging every fire station and fire service workplace to send a representative to lobby their MP. The move comes amid concerns about rising firefighter fatalities and what the union sees as a lack of leadership from government on safety critical areas. FBU wants a national Fire and Rescue Service body to take responsibility for ensuring the lessons of fatal or other serious incidents are implemented across the UK. It says this body would be tasked with keeping adequate national records of incidents involving the deaths of or serious injuries to firefighters, and it should also be responsible for developing and agreeing safety critical national guidance based on the lessons learned from these tragedies. FBU general secretary Matt Wrack said: "Firefighters face considerable risks as they protect the public 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. New threats such as terrorism and climate change have heightened those risks." He added: "Planning and policy must be based on professional firefighting expertise not ideological fancy and penny pinching. We need a national Fire and Rescue Service body that will provide the joined up thinking and direction badly needed in today's fire service."

- [FBU news release](#).

### **Union victory for vicars**

Church of England ministers are set to get the biggest improvement in their terms of employment since the Reformation nearly 500 years ago. Clergy union Unite says the Church of England has conceded for the first time that its ministers are employed by the Church – and not by God. The legal milestone centres on the case of former policeman Reverend Mark Sharpe, a 41-year old father of four, the Rector of Teme Valley South in Worcestershire. According to the union: "During his three-year tenure, Unite member Revd Sharpe said that he has been subjected to constant verbal abuse; had his pet dog killed; and faeces smeared on his car and the tyres slashed. He lives in a vicarage infested by mice and frogs, with dangerous heating and electrical systems and where deadly asbestos has been found." At an employment tribunal in Birmingham, the reverend's employer, the Worcester Diocese, admitted the church "agrees that the claimant (Revd Sharpe) has the status of a worker for the purposes of this claim." Prior to this, the Church had maintained that priests are "office holders" employed by God and not the church authorities, so employment

law did not apply. Now employment status has been confirmed for one Church of England vicar, the precedent should apply to others in the Church. Revd Sharpe's claim seeks redress for "economic loss, damages for injury to health and to his feelings and aggravated damages." The case is now set for judicial mediation in the coming months. Unite officer for the community sector, Rachael Maskell, said: "We are poised for the biggest raft of employment benefits for ministers in the Church of England since it came into being under Henry VIII's Reformation in the 1530s. It will also have implications for other faith groups." She added: "We want to work with the Church of England to improve working conditions for Unite's members, but first of all, we need an independent review by the conciliatory service, ACAS as how best this can occur."

- [Unite news release](#). [Stronger Unions](#).

### **Pilots warn of laser beam crash risk**

Airline pilots have warned a serious crash is "likely" unless people are stopped from shining laser beams into the cockpits of planes during landing. Balpa, the pilots' union, said beams dazzled pilots and users were "effectively playing Russian roulette" with passengers' lives. Dozens of incidents have occurred during 2008, with some pilots handing controls over to co-pilots, Balpa said. Dave Reynolds, flight safety officer for Balpa, said a pilot would know his aircraft had been targeted when a spot of light began skipping around the flight deck. "It is a serious distraction at a critical phase of the flight and it is something the authorities need to take very seriously indeed," he said, adding laser incidents were becoming an "increasing nuisance" and it was "only a matter of time before an accident occurs." A pilot's ability to see can be impaired by flash blindness and pilots affected should go for a hospital check-up to ensure they have suffered no lasting eye damage, the union safety officer said. Balpa said it had advised police forces to be on the look-out for people hanging round near airports at night with lasers. A union spokesperson said: "It's like Russian roulette. So far the perpetrators have got away with it, but one day that cartridge won't be a blank. You're playing with the lives of hundreds of people in the air."

- [BBC News Online](#). [Daily Mirror](#).

### **End asbestos 'compensation limbo'**

Thousands of people with a condition caused by exposure to asbestos during their working lives are stuck in 'compensation limbo' as a result of a House of Lords ruling on negligence, according to the union Unite. It wants the government to overturn a disastrous 2007 Law Lords' ruling to end a 20 year right for pleural plaques victims to receive compensation. It says if the government will not do that, it should establish immediately an employers' insurance scheme to provide sick workers with compensation. The recommendations are set out in Unite's response to the Ministry of Justice's consultation on pleural plaques. According to Derek Simpson, Unite joint general secretary: "The Law Lords' ruling was

a disaster for working people. Overnight, thousands of seriously wronged workers were plunged into a compensation limbo - knowing they had a 1 in 20 chance of serious injury and death through their employer's negligence but now denied justice. This ruling must be overturned." He added: "There is only one cause of this disease and that is the widespread, indiscriminate use of asbestos throughout industry for years. No one protected our people from this exposure, and now they are suffering. Employers' insurers simply want to walk away leaving workers, whose lungs are now full of asbestos, facing a lifetime of worry and not a penny in compensation. This is not right." Union personal injury law firm Thompsons Solicitors echoed the Unite call. As well as seeing the Law Lords' ruling overturned, it says an Employers Liability Insurance Bureau (ELIB) would guarantee that workers injured or killed by negligent, uninsured employers have the same right to compensation as people injured or killed by uninsured drivers.

- [Unite news release](#). [Unite submission](#). [Thompsons Solicitors news release](#). Association of Personal Injuries Lawyers news release [[pdf](#)].

### **Unions united on pleural plaques**

Unions have taken a common line on pleural plaques compensation – the condition is caused by asbestos and caused by employer negligence, so should be compensated. In its submission to the Ministry of Justice's consultation on the future of pleural plaques compensation, which closed on 1 October, construction union UCATT argues that the Law Lords ruling should be completely overturned, as it is the only way that victims can win justice from employers who needlessly exposed them to the killer substance. Alan Ritchie, general secretary of UCATT, said "this is no time for timidity. The Law Lords decision is a total injustice for working people, it must be entirely overturned." GMB's preferred course of action is also a reversal of the House of Lords decision as soon as possible and a restoration of compensation to all those who have negligently suffered as a result exposure to asbestos. John McClean, GMB national health and safety officer, said: "The House of Lords decision was flawed in the extreme. The invasion of the body by a potentially deadly dust, the scarring of the lungs internally and the resulting anxiety, where many go on to develop more serious deadly asbestos related diseases all point to the need for a legal compensation system for all those diagnosed with pleural plaques. GMB lobbied parliament last January, we helped force the consultation process and we will not rest until justice has been restored."

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

### **Start a starter safety rep course online**

New trade union safety reps now have the option to get their starter training online. The health and safety stage 1 course is the first stage in the TUC health and safety training programme. "It is designed to help you build the skills, knowledge and confidence you need to carry out your work as a safety rep," TUC says. The next

round of the 60 hour course, delivered free online over six months, kicks off on 6 October. TUC says safety reps should be able to undertake the course in paid work time, as is the case for reps undertaking the course at a college. It adds that online learning "should not be seen as an alternative to paid release from work. The law still applies, whether learning takes place away from work or in work, at a workstation or in a company learning centre."

- [TUC course briefing](#). For further information contact [Craig Hawkins](#), Unionlearn online learning officer, telephone: 020 7079 6947.

## *Other news*

### **Inquiry over mercury poisoning**

An investigation is under way after workers at a West Yorkshire recycling firm were exposed to mercury. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) said staff at Electrical Waste Recycling Co Ltd in Huddersfield had been put at risk of mercury poisoning. Part of the firm's operations include removing mercury from fluorescent light tubes, a process HSE said the firm had stopped voluntarily until the investigation concludes. The safety watchdog added: "HSE has taken enforcement action to stop any further mercury recovery operations from fluorescent light tubes and to require decontamination within the factory premises." It said its investigation "involves both occupational health and occupational hygiene specialists. Most of the company's employees have already consulted with an occupational health practitioner, occupational hygienists are currently carrying out a risk assessment at the site and specialist cleaning of the unit and office facilities is under way." Company director Craig Thompson said of the factory's 50 staff had been given clean bills of health after medical checks. However, mercury exposure can cause chronic as well as acute health problems in exposed workers, and low doses can be dangerous. Symptoms of mercury poisoning can include memory loss, mood instability, headaches and visual and hearing problems. Long term effects can include damage to the immune system and kidneys. Exposures have also been linked to brain and other nervous system cancers.

- [BBC News Online](#). [Huddersfield Daily Examiner](#).

### **University radiation cancer probe begins**

An occupational health specialist is to investigate a possible cancer cluster in a Manchester University building. Professor David Coggon from the Medical Research Council will carry out an independent review of health risks at the university's Rutherford Building. The deaths from cancer of five people have been linked with the building, which is where Nobel prize-winning nuclear physicist Ernest Rutherford experimented with radon and polonium in 1908. A spokesperson for the university said: "The University of Manchester has engaged Professor David Coggon to lead an independent review into the possible health risks associated with ionising radiation in the university's Rutherford Building." The Health Protection Agency has also been commissioned to assist with

the review. Fears about the building emerged following the deaths of two lecturers in the university's psychology department, which occupied the building until recently. The Manchester Evening News this week revealed that colleagues wrote a report revealing their fears that the deaths of Dr Hugh Wagner and Dr John Clark were caused by residual radiation from Rutherford's experiments. Dr Wagner died of pancreatic cancer last year aged 62 after working for some years in room 2.62 - the one used by Rutherford. Dr Clark, who occupied the room directly below it, died from a brain tumour in 1993. The paper also revealed another academic, Dr Arthur Reader, 69, had died from pancreatic cancer on 18 September and that Manchester coroner Nigel Meadows had ordered an inquest into his death. It also reported that the death of university computer assistant Vanessa Santos-Leitao, 25, who died of a brain tumour in February this year, may be linked to the probe. Relatives of Moira Joy Hayward, who died from cancer in 1984 aged 48, have also expressed their concerns. She worked as lab assistant in the building when she was a teenager.

- [University of Manchester news release.](#) [Manchester Evening News.](#) [Education Guardian.](#) [BBC News Online.](#)

### **Call for tighter ship cargo rules**

Accident investigators have called for hazardous cargo on ships to be more tightly regulated following the deaths of two seafarers in the Channel. The pair suffocated when oxygen levels dropped in a storage area of their vessel, the Sava Lake, in the Straits of Dover in January this year. The Latvian-registered vessel was transporting ferrous metal turnings. A report by the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) in cooperation with the Latvian authorities said the ship was banned from carrying such a cargo. The report said the turnings were liable to self-heat and therefore there was a possibility of the cargo hold's oxygen levels dropping. The ship loaded parcels of the metal in Denmark before heading for Portugal. The report also stated that action by an earlier crew had created a direct air path from the cargo hold to a forward store and air from the hold "almost certainly migrated" there. The Sava Lake diverted to Dover after the two bodies were found on 18 January at the bottom of the access ladder inside the forward store. The MAIB report recommends a series of measures, intended to ensure hazardous or potentially hazardous cargoes are in future properly identified and described in cargo documents.

- [MAIB report.](#) [BBC News Online.](#)

### **Inadequate training led to forklift death**

Two firms have been fined after a poorly trained worker was killed when the forklift truck he was driving overturned. Shane Neal, 34, was killed on 2 May 2003 when he was crushed by a truck in Hangar no.1 at the former RAF Cardington, Bedfordshire. The truck overturned at the Building Research Establishment (BRE) site while he was manoeuvring it to dismantle a fire test rig. A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation found that Mr Neal was not

adequately trained to drive the BRE provided truck. Welwood Roofing Services Ltd of Corby, which is now in administration and who it is believed was Mr Neal's employer, was fined £50,000 and ordered to pay costs of £25,000 at Luton Crown Court last week, after being found guilty of safety offences. BRE was fined £17,500 and ordered to pay £12,000 costs, after pleading guilty to breaching the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER). HSE inspector Alison Ashworth said: "I hope this tragic accident makes it clear to employers that they need to take positive action to manage risks, particularly where the work involves using forklift trucks. Mr Neal's death could have been avoided had the companies involved carried out checks to confirm whether or not he knew of the dangers of forklift trucks and how to drive them safely."

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

### **Director banned for asbestos crimes**

A company director has been banned from running a firm for four years after removing and transporting asbestos without a licence. Robert McCart must also pay over £44,000 in fines, costs and compensation after being prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Environment Agency (EA). The court heard a householder employed his firm, Sussex Asbestos Solutions, to remove wall boards from a ground floor workshop after finding it in the Yellow Pages. The insulating board contained brown asbestos. McCart quoted £1,800 plus vat for the work, which he carried out himself over a weekend in November last year. Afterwards, the customer found an open white sack containing broken pieces of asbestos insulating board in his yard, and debris from the boards on the floor. An enclosure around the area from which the asbestos was removed, designed to contain asbestos debris and airborne fibres, had not been used. The client had to pay £2,115 to Independent Asbestos Surveys Ltd to environmentally clean the workshop, something he was told would have cost far less if they had carried out the original work. A statement from the householder said McCart let him and his family back into the workshop after the first day's work, meaning they could have inhaled asbestos. The EA and HSE prosecuted both McCart's company and him as an individual. The company director, who is three years from retirement, pleaded guilty and was fined £3,000 for each of 12 offences. He must also pay £1,000 costs to the Environment Agency, £3,000 to HSE, and £4,000 compensation to the man for whom he carried out the work plus a £30 victim surcharge, making a total of £44,030. He was disqualified from holding the position of director of a company for four years.

- [HSE news release](#) and [asbestos licensing webpages](#). [Eastbourne Today. Construction News](#).

## **Tories will 'sweep aside' safety laws**

Conservative plans for education that include "sweeping aside" health and safety legislation have been condemned by teaching union NASUWT. In a speech this week to the Conservative Party's Birmingham conference, shadow spokesperson for children, schools and families Michael Gove said Tory policy would make children more active by increasing expeditions, school trips and competitive sports. But he added "many of these activities are made almost impossible by red tape. So we will act to give teachers the power to take children beyond their comfort zone by sweeping away absurd health and safety regulations which attempt to squeeze all risk out of life." The shadow spokesperson said: "Uniting everything we will do is one principle – cut out the guff, the bureaucracy, the box-ticking and get common sense back into the classroom." NASUWT general secretary Chris Keates said the speech was low on detail, but "tinged with chilling references to failed Conservative policies of the past." She added: "The absence of any acknowledgement or thanks to the school workforce for their hard work, dedication and commitment was stark and will not go unnoticed. References to sweeping aside health and safety legislation may play well with the Party faithful, but they will cause deep alarm to any right minded person. It is nothing short of reckless to pledge to remove regulation which is fundamental to the health and welfare of young people and adults."

- [Speech by Michael Gove MP](#). [NASUWT news release](#).

## *International News*

### **Australia: Hardie 'set out to mislead investors'**

Former directors and executives of Australian building giant James Hardie issued inaccurate, misleading and deficient public announcements about the company's ability to compensate asbestos victims, the country's corporate regulator has claimed. The Australian Securities and Investments Commission this week launched its assault on former Hardie directors and executives in the NSW Supreme Court, which was overflowing with dozens of asbestos victims and their supporters. In a civil case the regulator hopes will set a precedent governing the actions of all company directors, ASIC alleges 10 James Hardie directors and executives misled investors as to the size of a compensation fund for asbestos sufferers. ASIC alleges that action in 2001 allowed James Hardie to hive off the part of the company that had an obligation to pay sufferers. Two years after James Hardie restructured and told the market its Aus\$293million fund to compensate sufferers was "fully funded", that fund was found to be short an estimated Aus\$1.3 billion. ASIC lawyer Tony Bannon told the court that statement allowed James Hardie to hive off its compensation obligations, restructure and move its headquarters to The Netherlands without adequate scrutiny from "the government, unions and claimants". A 2001 expert report on asbestos compensation prepared by Trowbridge Consulting for James Hardie to justify the "fully funded" claim had "a very great capacity to mislead", David Minty, one of its two authors, told the court. And the company had "fibbed" to its consultants about the purpose of the report, its second author, Karl Marshall, said. Among the defendants are James Hardie's former chief executive Peter Macdonald, former chief financial officer Peter

Shafron and former chair Meredith Hellicar. Each defendant faces maximum penalties of Aus\$200,000, if found guilty of various breaches of the corporations law and corporations act, and possible banning from managing a corporation.

- [The Australian](#) plus [follow up story](#). [Sydney Morning Herald](#).

### **Global: Unions say no more to transport pressures**

Transport workers are facing increasing pressures as a result of attempts to speed up the movement of goods, a top global union leader has said. ITF general secretary David Cockroft told delegates at a United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) conference in Greece last month that pressure to deal with growing volumes of international trade were translating into "intolerable pressures" on transport workers. He warned delegates: "We are only too well aware of the desire for ever more flexibility. Well if that means, longer hours, more unsocial hours, less rest and exhausted workers struggling to deliver goods at exactly the appointed hour even if they occasionally fall asleep at the wheel, forget it." He added: "We live it a world of just in time production, of a supply chain which has become so sensitive to even small delays that it is putting intolerable pressures on ordinary workers, be they seafarers, portworkers, barge crews, truckers or even rail workers." These problems could be avoided, however, if there was proper dialogue with workers and the presence of democratic worker-controlled trade unions, he said.

- [ITF news release](#).

### **India: Stressed Indians leave call centres**

A 23-year-old man, barely out of college, has been recovering from a heart attack in hospital. According to a report on the BBC News website, his doctor lays the blame with stress and odd hours of work at a Mumbai call centre. Stress, long hours and low pay are driving highly skilled young Indian workers out of the call centre industry. Even before the impact of the economic crisis could be felt on India's US\$11bn business process outsourcing (BPO) industry, which gets 70 per cent of all the outsourced work from the US, it was in the grip of a crisis of its own. Several companies, mostly smaller ones unable to maintain international standards, have shut down in Mumbai and Delhi. Shabana Pavaskar, a senior employee at a reputable call centre in Mumbai, feels it is not a career, just a job. "I have been working here for many years but there's no promotion, no motivation and the hours are extremely demanding," she said. "Overtime is not an option but a compulsion." Mark Kobayashi-Hillary, author of a new book - 'Who moved my job?' - and a director of the UK National Outsourcing Association, says the rapid growth in other sectors in India is making different industries attractive for young graduates, while the need for a rapid 24/7 responses had driven a lot of companies to recruit on their own doorsteps. The industry has responded by creating cool recreational facilities and improving infrastructure, but that has failed to stop

workers leaving for greener pastures. "Where's the time to use their damn gym or cafeteria or other facilities?" said Ms Pavaskar.

- [BBC News Online. Who moved my job? More on work-related heart attacks.](#)

### **Pakistan: The darker side of glittering bangles**

Behind Pakistan's burgeoning glass bangles industry, is a story of child labour, poverty, deprivation and hardship. Bangle production is centred on the city of Hyderabad, most of it for the domestic market. Dawn newspaper in May 2007 estimated that some 7,000 boys and 3,000 girls worked in the industry nationwide. And the International Labour Organisation (ILO) reckons 30,000 families are supported by the industry. An occupational health and safety study in the industry commissioned by the ILO for the government's Centre for Improvement of Working Conditions and Environment found children worked an average of nearly 12 hours a day. The study highlighted the risks of working in proximity to the furnaces used in the moulding and joining processes, and also from toxic chemicals during coating and painting. Children would sit hunched for hours over hot stoves while shaping the trinkets, putting their health at risk, it said. The glass bangle industry is just one sector of the economy exploiting child labour. Some 3.3 million children aged 5-14 years are engaged in full-time work, according to the Pakistan government's Federal Bureau of Statistics. Non-governmental organisations such as the Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC) say the real figure could be three times higher.

- [IRIN News. ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour \(IPEC\).](#)

## *Resources*

### **Toolkit to tackle retail violence**

The Health and Safety Executive has published an online toolkit to help reduce the risk of work-related violence in licensed or retail premises. HSE says: "The toolkit provides practical advice on how to conduct a risk assessment and take action to prevent or control work-related violence. It contains information on a wide range of possible control measures and good practice that other businesses have found effective." Addressing employers, the safety watchdog says: "The main focus is on tackling work-related violence towards your employees, but some of the control measures could also help to reduce the risk of violence to customers and members of the public on your premises, and reduce the risk of crime against your business." The online resource and accompanying leaflet provide a detailed backgrounder, and make welcome incursions into common sense areas often missed in official safety guidance. On staffing levels, for example, it says: "Wherever possible, make sure you have at least adequate staffing levels for surveillance and to meet customer demands." There's additional detail about the safety implications of inadequate staffing. And on trade unions it says where they are present, employers "should consult the union's health and safety representatives." It adds: "Union representatives will consult members, which can help you work together to identify

issues and create strategies to reduce risks of violence." The initiative was welcomed by retail union Usdaw. General Secretary John Hannett said: "The launch of the HSE web-based toolkit comes at a good time with Usdaw's next Respect week timetabled for early November. We are pleased that the HSE has taken onboard much of the guidance and advice we produced as part of our Freedom from Fear campaign." He added: "The HSE toolkit provides practical advice to employers on the steps they need to take to protect their workers. It is a timely reminder that violence is a significant risk for workers in shops and licensed premises, but it is a risk that can be controlled."

- [HSE violence toolkit](#) and summary leaflet [[pdf](#)].

### **Health and safety and agency workers**

A new health and safety briefing from the union Unite provides detailed guidance on health and safety and agency workers. It gives a useful explanation of what constitutes an agency worker – there's legal case law here – together with what the Health and Safety Executive has to say when it comes to determining just who is employing someone and who is responsible for their safety. There's a detailed summary of relevant health and safety law, too, and how this relates to other employment laws. On top of this, there are case histories, a listing of sources of further information, a detailed checklist for union safety reps and a pin-up-at-work 'make sure you're protected' poster to direct workers to these reps.

- Unite health and safety briefing: Focus on agency workers [[pdf](#)].  
[Unite agency workers campaign](#).

### *Events and Courses*

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

COURSES FOR SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 2008

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

### *Useful Links*

- Visit the TUC [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.
- 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.

The person responsible for the Risks e-bulletin is Hugh Robertson  
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