

Risks

TUC 

e-bulletin

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**HAZARDS
MAGAZINE**



**Asbestos -
The hidden killer**

Hazards at Work

updated second edition
now available

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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Union win in rail fire regulation fight

New fire safety regulations for sub-surface rail stations are a vindication of a five-year trade union campaign, the rail union RMT has said. It said the government decision to retain standards imposed in the wake of the 1987 King's Cross fire, which claimed 31 lives, is a 'huge victory' for the union. The new Fire Precautions (sub-surface railway stations) (England) Regulations 2009 will come into force on 1 October. The government had planned to scrap the existing 1989 'Section 12' regulations altogether, replacing them with a less specific 'Fire Safety Order' which would have relied in part on a voluntary system based on risk assessment. However, in the wake of the RMT-led campaign, the government first postponed scrapping Section 12, and has now incorporated its key provisions in a new regulatory framework. The government acknowledged the new law "recognises that a level of prescription is still required for sub-surface railway stations." RMT general secretary Bob Crow commented: "This is a huge victory for commonsense which recognises that fire safety in underground stations should not be down to the discretion of employers but requires strict regulation and enforcement. RMT members who campaigned long and hard to retain the 1989 sub-surface fire safety regulations will be delighted that their key provisions will remain in place." The union leader added: "The King's Cross Fire stands as a constant reminder of the need for the best possible safety regime, and it is fitting that after a rigorous process we have reached a regulatory framework that will maintain the essential standards put in place after the tragedy." Announcing the new measures, fire minister Sadiq Khan said: "I welcome the positive and constructive working relationship we have had with the RMT and other key stakeholders on this important piece of work which simplifies and modernises the regulations and recognises the importance of fire safety on underground railway stations."

- [RMT news release](#). [DCLG news release](#).

Action call on high concern chemicals

Unions are calling for hundreds of the most hazardous workplace chemicals to be subject to tight control under the European Union's chemicals law, REACH. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) this week presented to the European Parliament its list of priority chemicals for authorisation under REACH. Using the REACH definition, the union body has identified 306 'substances of very high concern' (SVHC). It says it is especially concerned about the 191 substances that cause recognised occupational diseases, and says all should be subject to authorisation under the REACH rules. The list includes carcinogens, mutagens and reprotoxins and other persistent and highly toxic chemicals. ETUC says its research has established about one in three of the new cases of occupational disease recognised each year in Europe is the result of exposures to hazardous substances. It says it "aims to contribute to the practical implementation of REACH – the new EU law on trade in chemicals – and to the authorisation procedure in particular. The idea of authorisation under REACH is to identify the most hazardous chemicals currently on the European market, control risks arising

from their use and replace them with safer alternatives." ETUC confederal secretary Joël Decaillon commented: "Only if the most dangerous chemicals currently on the market are replaced at the earliest opportunity by safer alternatives will the fight for innovation and competitiveness be won, bringing more and better jobs with it." TUC head of safety, Hugh Robertson, is backing the ETUC initiative. He said TUC said British trade unions "applaud the work of the ETUC in drawing up a list of priority chemicals that must be considered at the earliest possible date under the new European chemicals regulation, REACH. Many of these chemicals have no place in the workplace at all and are amongst the most dangerous to workers, including a number of carcinogens. The TUC has already called for much higher awareness of cancer-causing chemicals and said that no worker should ever be exposed to any known carcinogen."

- [ETUC news release](#) and [Trade Union Priority List for REACH authorisation](#) and related documentation. [ChemSec news report](#). [TUC chemicals webpage](#). [HSE REACH webpages](#)..

School asbestos exposure killed teacher

The widow of a senior teacher who died after exposure to asbestos in school science labs has been awarded £290,000 in compensation. The former chemistry teacher, who taught at the same school in East Sussex for 34 years, died from mesothelioma in September 2007, aged 61, just a year after retirement. The ATL member was exposed to asbestos in equipment used for science experiments and demonstrations in class. His widow, who has chosen to remain anonymous, is urging all school staff to be vigilant in protecting themselves against risks and to seek urgent medical help if they have concerns. The compensation payout from East Sussex council comes as renewed emphasis has been placed on the dangers of asbestos in school buildings. The Department for Children, Schools and Families is surveying local authorities on whether they are following rules to minimise the chances of pupils and teachers being exposed to asbestos. ATL general secretary Mary Bousted described the East Sussex case as "desperately sad". She said: "Although no amount of compensation can turn the clock back or bring back loved ones, at least this member's family has got some justice. We are seriously worried about the continuing risk to school staff and pupils from asbestos because so little is known about where it is." Dr Bousted said the ATL had 400 members nationwide who knew they had been exposed to asbestos and were living in fear of developing health problems. Even these figures are the "tip of the iceberg" because many people are unaware that they have been exposed to asbestos until they become ill, she added. Health and Safety Executive (HSE) figures record 182 people working in education in Britain who died from mesothelioma between 1980 and 2000. The real number is likely to be significantly higher, as HSE does not have an occupational breakdown on mesothelioma cases where the person who died was over 74 years of age. The rate of death from the condition is much higher in people over retirement age, and highest in the 75 and over age group.

- [The Argus](#). [TES](#). [Asbestos in Schools website](#). [HSE mesothelioma statistics including breakdown by age](#).

Firefighter hurt in training drill

A training exercise led to a firefighter suffering from whiplash injuries after his employers ignored important health and safety advice. FBU member James Attenborough still suffers from neck pain after the accident which happened during a rope training exercise for Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service. The firefighters were trying out new equipment on the drill tower, with firefighters lowered on a harness to the ground to simulate the rescue of a casualty. Mr Attenborough was being pulled back up the tower when he was dropped a short distance on three occasions causing his head to snap back. The fire service had been warned by a specialist fire safety trainer to ensure lightweight climbing helmets were used during the exercise but none were provided on the day. Instead participants had to wear their heavier standard issue fire helmets. Additionally those providing the rope training had not been fully trained in the safety and equipment requirements for the drill. Mr Attenborough, who received an out-of-court compensation settlement with FBU backing, commented: "I decided to get in touch with my union because I was concerned this type of accident would happen to someone else. We should be using the correct equipment at all times to ensure our safety and the safety of those we are trying to rescue. I felt the only way I could get this message across was by taking legal action. Fortunately we now have the correct equipment." Tony Smith from the FBU said: "This incident shows how important it is for employers to carry out a risk assessment and then to put it in action."

- [Thompsons Solicitors news release.](#)

'Dangerous' rail maintenance cuts slammed

Network Rail is trying to spin its way out of controversy over dangerous cuts to its track-renewals programme, rail union RMT has charged. Commenting as the government-funded rail-infrastructure company launched a media campaign emphasising its spending plans, RMT renewed its call for a reversal of a 'dangerous squeeze' that demands 22 per cent "efficiency" savings up to 2014 – including a 28 per cent cut in track renewals this year. "No amount of spin can disguise the hard reality that Network Rail (NR) is under a huge financial squeeze and has shelved nearly a third of the track renewals projects it had already scheduled for this year," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said. "Added to cuts in track inspection and signals maintenance frequencies, that not only threatens to undermine safety, but it also puts at least 1,000 skilled engineering jobs at risk, and there will be no let-up in our campaign to get these cuts reversed. That would be simply wrong at any time, but during a recession it is scandalous – not least when NR is government funded and the government has said it will help the economy weather the worst of it by spending money on public projects."

- [RMT news release.](#)

New warnings on piracy crisis

Anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden need to be maintained well beyond the end of this year, UK seafarers' union Nautilus has warned. Addressing a conference last week on the problem, assistant general secretary Mark Dickinson said it is crucial that countries keep up the coordinated naval presence to deter attacks on shipping off Somalia. Both the European Union and the United States point to the success of the operations - with the proportion of successful attacks dropping to 17 per cent this year, compared to more than 60 per cent only six months ago. The number of ships and seafarers being held hostage was less the half the number last year, he said. Urging governments and ship owners to continue the patrols beyond the end of 2009, he said: "If there is one thing that we can learn from the patterns of piracy over the past 25 years, it is that this is a multi-headed beast that has an amazing ability to regroup and regenerate. When it is suppressed in one part of the world, it seems to have a marked tendency to pop up in another part."

- [Nautilus news release](#)

What are you doing on 28 April?

Workers' Memorial Day – the 28 April event where unions and campaigners each year commemorate those killed at work and pledge to press for health and safety improvements – is drawing close. TUC's updated webpages note: "It is our day, workers and our families and our trade unions, to focus on health and safety at work, both in our workplaces, and at events locally, nationally and worldwide. Every year there are thousands of events across the world on WMD attended by millions of people. There are hundreds in the UK." TUC adds that the day's purpose is two fold: "To remember the dead and also to fight for the living." The TUC webpages include resources and pointers for those organising local events, and links to other sources of useful information.

- [TUC briefing](#) and [Workers' Memorial Day webpages](#). [International events and resources](#).
- More resources for reps. The Hazards Campaign can provide Workers' Memorial Day posters (free), forget-me-knot ribbons (£25/100) and bumper stickers (£1 each). Contact: [Hazards Campaign](#), c/o GMHC, Windrush Millennium Centre, 70 Alexandra Road, Manchester, M16 7WD. Tel: 0161 636 7557. Email: mail@gmhazards.org.uk

Other news

Business 'stunt' attacks safety laws

A business lobby group has attacked safety and employment regulations, saying they cost industry tens of billions each year. The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) claim was dismissed by the TUC, which described it as a "tired stunt". BCC's 2009 Burdens Barometer says the cumulative cost to business of new regulation since 1998 has risen to £76.81 billion. Included on its 'burdens' list are regulations on working time, chemicals, asbestos, work at height, vibration and noise, as well as occupational exposure limits and the corporate manslaughter act. But it is only in the small print that BCC mentions its calculation is "net of the benefits that accrue

to business." Ignoring the potential benefits of having fewer dead, sick or injured workers or of the near universal recognition that light touch financial regulation ushered in the current recession, BCC director general David Frost said: "The government needs to get serious about reducing the massive burden of regulation on business. Cutting unnecessary burdens and announcing a moratorium on new regulations set to come in this year, is one way of providing instant and inexpensive help to British firms." STUC assistant secretary Stephen Boyd responded: "Given that the current economic crisis is the result of weak and ineffective regulation in the financial sector, it is a somewhat strange time for the Chambers to proceed with publishing its 'Burdens Barometer'." He asked whether BCC's hope was for business to be "free to jeopardise workers' health and safety" and other protections. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "This tired stunt is well past its sell-by date." He added: "I suppose we should be grateful that the BCC haven't added in the cumulative costs of the abolition of slavery and stopping children cleaning chimneys."

- [BCC news release](#) and Burdens Barometer 2009 [[pdf](#)]. [TUC news release](#). [STUC news release](#). [BBC News Online](#).

PM promises pleural plaque action

Gordon Brown has promised action within weeks to help asbestos victims. At Prime Minister's question time, he signalled compensation is on the way for people suffering from pleural plaques. He is expected to overturn a ban imposed by peers on victims being able to claim, with a statement expected from justice secretary Jack Straw after the easter break. Labour MP Stephen Hepburn raised the issue with Mr Brown. He said: "The Prime Minister knows that many unfortunate people in this country have been negligently poisoned in the workplace through exposure to asbestos. Every time that their right to compensation has been challenged in the courts by employers, it has been this Labour government who have stood by them and helped them. What does he intend to do about the thousands of predominantly working-class pleural plaques sufferers who have been robbed of their compensation by unjust decisions in the law courts?" Mr Brown responded: "It is right that we look again at this as a result of legal actions that have been taken about the obligations of insurance companies. The Justice Secretary will make a statement on this when we return after easter." An International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) expert working group last week indicated that as well as causing lung cancer and mesothelioma, asbestos should also be recognised as a cause laryngeal cancer and ovarian cancer.

- [Hansard, 1 April 2009](#). [Daily Mirror Asbestos Timebomb campaign](#).

NHS sick rate criticism dismissed

Health service unions and employers have rejected a "dinosaur" think-tank that claimed money was being wasted on NHS sick pay. Right-wing policy institute Reform claimed that taxpayers' money was being squandered because health staff take an average of 12

days off sick a year, compared to workers in the private sector only taking 7.2. It accused health workers of setting a "poor example." Reform director Andrew Haldenby, commenting on its new 'Fit for Recovery' report, said: "The NHS is a dinosaur presiding over a sickness absence rate 50 per cent higher than the private sector," adding: "The out-of-date practices of the NHS impose costs that the nation can ill afford." Unions and employers in the sector, however, pointed out that NHS staff work in extremely difficult and hazardous conditions. "If you spend a large part of your day with sick people you are more likely to get ill yourself," said UNISON head of health Karen Jennings. She accused Reform of "having the brains of a dinosaur if it thinks that sickness rates for NHS workers can be compared with those in the private sector." Unite's lead officer for nursing Barrie Brown added that the "risk such workers face every day is clearly higher than workers in, say, a bank." And a GMB spokesperson said: "Far from being healthy, working in the NHS can seriously damage your health." She added: "Almost everyone working in the NHS will have to do some sort of lifting and handling, be it a nurse moving a patient or porter pushing a trolley, but it is clear that Reform don't understand this." NHS Employers joint director Sian Thomas said that it was "obvious" why NHS workers had a high sickness absence rate. "NHS staff will inevitably get ill more often since they share their working environment with patients," she said. "The sickness absence rate in the NHS is as low as it has ever been and staff health and welfare compare well with private sector companies." She added: "Major contributing factors to NHS sickness absence are stress and musculoskeletal problems, and significant effort has gone into managing both in recent years."

- [Reform news release](#) and Fit for recovery report [[pdf](#)]. [NHS Employers staff survey](#). [Morning Star](#). [Personnel Today](#).

Company restructuring is bad for you

Working for a company undergoing restructuring is bad for your health, a study has found. Researchers from the University of Bremen, Germany, undertook the research. One hospital and four major private companies – British Telecom, St Gobain, Ericsson and TeliaSonera - were surveyed as part of the research, which also involved workshops and interviews. The authors found workers in firms undergoing restructuring suffered physical and psychological health problems as a result of job insecurity. The report notes: "Companies restructure in order to become more competitive, productive and efficient. However, survivor-of-layoffs will react with withdrawal, absenteeism and lower productivity if these aforementioned goals ignore the effects on survivors-of-layoffs, if the process of restructuring is considered as unfair and unbalanced - particularly if not all alternatives to dismissals having been sufficiently reviewed. The companies must therefore focus on acceptable forms of restructuring and include employee representation from the beginning." Safety reps are crucial to this process, it says. The report notes that "considerations to change work organisation, team composition, and job roles should always involve the health and safety representatives as this leads to a smoother transition and to prevent a potential increase in terms of work accidents and health problems – most likely achieved by putting in place specific programmes to increase health awareness in times of organisational turmoil and stress."

- Health impact of enterprise restructuring: Innovative approaches in organisations, University of Bremen [[pdf](#)]. [ETUI news report](#).

Fine after serious site fall

A South Wales construction company has been prosecuted after a worker was seriously injured when he fell nearly three metres. RJ Heale and Co Ltd, based in Bridgend, pleaded guilty to two charges under the Construction (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1996 when it appeared at Swansea Magistrates Court. The company was fined £5,000 and ordered to pay £6,605.25 costs. Employee Stephen Dalling, 29, was standing on a mezzanine floor while it was being dismantled. He was removing the floorboards at the disused factory and passing them down to colleagues when he fell 2.85m onto the concrete floor below. He suffered a number of injuries, including a fractured skull and fractured vertebrae. He remained in hospital for three weeks and is still unfit for work, four years after the March 2005 incident. HSE inspector Wayne Williams commented: "Mr Dalling's injuries were severe, but a fall from this height could have easily been fatal. It is vital that companies with employees working at height assess the risks and take measures to minimise that risk." He added: "In this case, the company failed to provide edge protection or any other physical measures to reduce the risk of falling at any point during the time this work was taking place. They also failed to provide a health and safety induction to their staff and contractors." More than 1,000 workers a month suffer a serious injury following a slip, trip or fall.

- [HSE news release](#) and [shattered lives campaign](#). [Llanelli Star](#).

Firm fined after fatal accident

A Great Yarmouth company has been fined £25,000 for breaching health and safety rules, after a welder was electrocuted in an incident in a dry dock. Kevin Hall, 46, was killed while working for Richards Dry Dock Engineering on 5 August 2005. The firm was also ordered to pay £34,744.90 costs. Norfolk Crown Court heard Mr Hall was working with welding equipment on the repair of the ship Putford Achilles in dry dock and that water had been allowed to enter the confined area through a pipe. Mr Hall was electrocuted, but the confined space combined with the threat of electrocution to others hindered his rescue and made subsequent attempts to save his life more difficult. He died before he got to hospital. The company admitted safety breaches. Sailesh Mehta, prosecuting for the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), said the company had failed to implement a risk assessment of employees working in confined spaces and undertaking hot work, and failed to ensure rainwater was kept out of the worksite. The company had also failed to provide information, instruction, training and supervision. Jonathan Caplan, representing the company, said that after the tragedy the company carried out a full review of safety procedures and a full-time health and safety manager was appointed. HSE inspector John Claxton commented: "The HSE wishes to make it clear that we expect the risks associated with this type of work to be properly managed in accordance with published guidance, whatever the size

of the company." HSE said there have been eight deaths in confined spaces in the East of England since 2003.

- [HSE news release](#) and [confined space webpages](#). [Norwich Evening News](#). [BBC News Online](#).

Two firms guilty over crane deaths

Two firms have been found guilty of health and safety breaches relating to the deaths of two men on a construction site in Worthing in 2005. WD Bennett's Plant & Services Ltd was found guilty at Chichester Crown Court of two health and safety breaches that led to two workers being killed and a third injured. The firm had earlier pleaded not guilty. WD Bennett was found to have breached both the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the Construction (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1996. Eurolift (Tower Cranes Limited) pleaded guilty to breaches of the same laws. The prosecution followed an incident on a construction site at a school in Durrington, Worthing, on 11 February 2005. The deceased men, Steve Boatman and Gary Miles, had been working on the jib of a crane. A third man, who was injured in the incident, was working on the mast of the crane. He was instructed to start de-torquing the mast bolts of the crane. He should have slacked off the bolts one-by-one, and then re-tightened each bolt in turn, but he was not trained in this job and he failed to re-tighten the bolts leaving them part un-done. This caused the crane to collapse as it was turned. Mr Boatman and Mr Miles were flung from the crane and died from injuries sustained in the fall. The third victim suffered several broken bones and lacerations. HSE inspector Peter Collingwood, who led the investigation, said: "This was a tragic and highly avoidable accident in which two men lost their lives. It was caused by the inadequate supervision of a worker who was not trained, nor competent for the task that he was asked to undertake." The two companies will be sentenced on another date, which has yet to be set.

- [HSE news release](#). [Contract Journal](#).

Water worker manslaughter trial collapses

Three bosses charged with killing a worker have walked free from Cardiff Crown Court after the prosecution called a halt to their trial. The judge in the case, Mr Justice Pitchford, called for the method of working on mains pipes which carry millions of litres of water to be investigated. The three men had been accused of the manslaughter through gross negligence of 25-year-old labourer Craig Rees when a water main burst open at a pumping station in Usk in May 2006. He died instantaneously when joints on a new meter installation suddenly gave way as he tried to stop what until that moment had been small leaks in a chamber below ground level. Jeffrey Reed, the site agent for Lewis Construction, the company employing Mr Rees, together with Colin Hughes and Gary Sanford, both production managers with United Utilities which operated the site for Welsh Water, had been charged with unlawfully causing his death. All three denied a charge of manslaughter in a trial which began on 24 February and is thought to have cost hundreds of thousands of

pounds. The case collapsed due to inconsistencies in the prosecution evidence. A CPS spokesperson said after the hearing: "We have an ongoing duty to review the evidence in each case to ensure that the tests set out in the Code for Crown Prosecutors continue to be satisfied. In this case, as a result of evidence given by a prosecution expert witness, it became apparent that there was a conflict of evidence which rendered the prosecution case unsustainable."

- [South Wales Argus](#). [Wales Online](#).

International News

Australia: Protect workers from nano risks

Australian unions and industry are calling for urgent regulation to protect workers from the risks of nanotechnology. The call comes in the wake of a panel discussion on nanotechnology and occupational health and safety held at Australia's Parliament House. Steve Mullins of national union federation ACTU, a panel contributor, commented: "When dealing with nanotechnology we need to look to the past to learn from the mistakes that we've made." He says the nanotechnology industry is growing rapidly, with its global revenue set to expand from \$US32 billion (approx £22bn) to \$US2.6 trillion (£1.8tn) over the next decade. But he says there is a lack of data on the use of nanotechnology in Australia. "We don't even know who's using it in the country at the moment. We don't even know who's bringing it into the country." Mr Mullins also wants a publicly accessible registry of companies dealing with nanomaterials, and full labelling, so workers know when they are working with potentially hazardous nanomaterials. "What is happening is the market is growing in an unregulated space and that is dangerous for workers. From our point of view we need regulation in place by the end of this year." He says a precautionary approach should be taken. "If we think it's dangerous, treat it as dangerous," he said. The panel was organised by the Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies (FASTS) and sponsored by the government's Australian Office of Nanotechnology.

- [ABC News](#). [Audio of the nanotechnology and occupational health panel discussion](#).

Europe: Increasing risks from hazardous substances

Contact with hazardous substances at work is endangering the health of workers across Europe and nanotechnology is one of the risks causing most concern, an expert report has concluded. 'Expert forecast on emerging chemical risks', published by the Bilbao-based European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), identifies the main groups of substances which could pose new and increasing risks to workers, contributing to diseases which range from allergies, asthma and infertility to cancers. "It is estimated that each year there are 74,000 work-related deaths linked to hazardous substances encountered in the workplace," commented

Jukka Takala, the agency's director. "This means that 10 times more people die from dangerous substances than from workplace accidents. Many companies do not give enough consideration to the elimination or substitution of hazardous substances. Management of chemical risks is particularly poor in SMEs [small and medium sized firms] and subcontractor firms." About 15 per cent of European workers report handling chemical products for a quarter of the time they spend at work, while 10 per cent report inhaling vapours and 19 per cent report breathing in dust, fumes and smoke in their workplaces. The report puts nanoparticles at the top of the list of substances from which workers need protection.

- [European Agency news release.](#)

USA: Colour images expose asbestos problems

Murky grey x-rays to identify occupational lung diseases could soon be a thing of the past, a top occupational doctor has said. And Dr Michael Harbut, an asbestos disease expert at the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute in Detroit, says new 3-D, colour imaging technology could aid better diagnosis and better prevention. Demonstrating the new approach at last week's Asbestos Disease Awareness Organisation conference in Manhattan Beach, California, he said the process allows "us to visualise lesions caused by asbestos exposure in three dimensional detail and often at a much earlier stage than that of the current standard radiographic techniques." Harbut, who has decades of experience in diagnosing and treating asbestos-related illness, added: "If we can identify the 'sentinel' or first cases of asbestosis or lung cancer at an early stage, then we can help identify asbestos exposures in places where it might not have previously been suspected." The use of the new chest radiography in the identification of the abnormalities could also help to reduce the death rate from asbestos-related diseases, Harbut said.

- [Andrew Schneider Investigates. ADAO website.](#)

USA: Docs lie and workers lose

Dr Hershel Samuels, an orthopaedic surgeon, examined a driver for a plumbing company. The driver said he had fallen, banging up his back, shoulder and ribs. He was seeking expanded workers' compensation benefits because he no longer felt he could do his job. Dr Samuels, an independent medical examiner in the New York state workers' compensation system, seemed to agree. He called out test results indicative of an injured man. His words were captured on videotape. Yet the report Dr Samuels later submitted to the New York State Workers' Compensation Board cleared the driver for work and told a far different story: no back spasms, no tender neck. In fact, no recent injury at all. This denial of injury appears to be far from rare. Independent medical exams are among the most disputed components of New York's troubled workers' compensation system. Under that system, workers with bona fide injuries are entitled to medical care and replacement wages, usually paid for by their employer's insurer. But a New York Times review

of case files and medical records and interviews with participants indicate that the exam reports are routinely tilted to benefit insurers by minimising or dismissing injuries. "You go in and sit there for a few minutes — and out comes a six-page detailed exam that he never did," said Dr Stephen M Levin, co-director of the occupational and environmental medicine unit at Mount Sinai Medical Center. "There are some noble things you can do in medicine without treating. This ain't one of them." The examiners do not need special training, only to have a state licence and to be authorised in a speciality. "Basically if you haven't murdered anyone and you have a medical licence, you get certified," said Dr Alan Zimmerman, 75, a Queens orthopaedic surgeon who does the exams. "It's clearly a nice way to semi-retire."

- [New York Times](#).

Resources

Global trade and safety newsletter

Increasing numbers of workers around the world are employed by international companies, exploiting tax and regulatory exemptions to produce goods for export. Health and safety is frequently a casualty. The Maquiladora Health and Safety Support Network (MHSSN) newsletter - Border/Line Health & Safety – is the single best source on the issue. Maquiladora are foreign-owned production plants. MHSSN's work started with Mexican workers in the proliferation of factories just over the US border, but has expanded to coverage of the health and safety problems arising out of deregulated global trade worldwide.

- Border/Line Health and Safety [[pdf](#)]. [Maquiladora Health and Safety Support Network \(MHSSN\)](#).

Events and Courses

TUC courses for safety reps

COURSES FOR APRIL TO JUNE 2009

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

Useful Links

- Visit the TUC 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.

- HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA. Tel: 01787 881165; fax: 01787 313995

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