

Union slams 'grasping' asbestos insurers

Construction union UCATT has reacted furiously to the decision of several large insurance companies to try to block compensation for pleural plaques victims in Scotland. In March, the Scottish parliament passed an asbestos damages act, which allowed pleural plaques victims in Scotland the opportunity to claim compensation for the condition. The Act, which received Royal Assent last week, overturns a Law Lords decision made in October 2007, which barred compensation for pleural plaques. The condition usually has no symptoms, but is linked to a higher risk of subsequently developing asbestos cancer. Alan Ritchie, general secretary of UCATT, said: "This action is beyond contempt. Workers have had their health damaged by asbestos and have a constant fear of developing a fatal disease. The insurers don't care about the health of workers. They were happy to take the premiums but will fight tooth and nail not to pay any compensation." The judicial review has been launched by insurance giants Aviva, AXA Insurance, RSA and Zurich and has the backing of the Association of British Insurers (ABI). They are attempting to use the Human Rights Act to justify their arguments. UCATT's Alan Ritchie commented: "I do not know how these people sleep at night. They have no shame." Nick Starling, ABI's director of general insurance and health, said "the industry is fundamentally opposed to any move that will extend compensation to those exposed to a risk but not suffering any symptoms, such as pleural plaques."

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