

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 17,000 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](#)

Editor: [Rory O'Neill](#) of [Hazards](#) magazine. Comments to the TUC at healthandsafety@tuc.org.uk

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Break cut led to deadly blood clot

A government worker who developed a life-threatening blood clot after sitting at her desk for hours without a break has received more than £10,000 in compensation. PCS member Angela Lamberton, 53, nearly died after the work schedule at her office was restructured to reduce the time employees spent away from their desks. Managers at HM Revenue and Customs in Leicester set new routines which meant staff no longer had to leave their desks to do printing or photocopying tasks. Angela had suffered a previous blood clot and although it was successfully treated and she no longer had to take medication she was told by doctors to take breaks from her desk every 15 minutes. The old work routine meant she was naturally taking those breaks to collect work from the printer. When the new system was put in place she complained to her line manager but she was told she must abide by the new rules. Within weeks she started to suffer pains in her legs. Her GP diagnosed a blood clot and she had to receive emergency treatment to disperse it. She must now take blood thinning medication on a daily basis and wear specialist stockings. She also has to attend the hospital every four weeks and still suffers from tired and painful legs. HM Customs and Revenue admitted liability and settled the claim out of court. PCS national officer Pete Lockhart said: "It is disgraceful that Angela's complaints were ignored despite her medical history. It is a classic case of management putting targets above their staff's health. It should never have taken the threat of legal action for Angela to be allowed to take a break from her desk."

- [Thompsons Solicitors news release](#). [Leicester Mercury](#). [Telegraph](#).

Hospital work led to deadly exposures

A hospital plumber, who has been told he has only months to live after developing mesothelioma, has received £175,000 in compensation. UNISON member Alan Ward pursued an 18-month claim against Yorkshire and Humber Strategic Health Authority when he developed the asbestos-related cancer. The 61-year-old had been exposed to asbestos while working in a number of hospitals in the Wakefield area between 1964 and 1972, including removing asbestos lagging at Clayton Hospital and at Oulton Hall Hospital. He had never been warned about the dangers to his health during his time as a plumber and had not been provided with any protection. Mr Ward later moved into more technical roles in local government and moved away from Yorkshire. Yorkshire and Humber Strategic Health Authority settled the claim out of court. Dave Prentis, UNISON's general secretary, said: "Alan is one of a growing number of workers whose health has been fatally damaged just through going to work. The money will help make his remaining months comfortable, but no amount can compensate him for what he is suffering." The union leader added: "Employers have to face up to their responsibilities to make sure they don't put their workers at risk of injury or death." Alan Ward said: "I didn't know about the dangers when I was 23, we just smashed off the asbestos and carried on working. Employers need to identify and manage any asbestos and should inform workers if they are at risk."

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

Crackdown looms on bogus self-employment

Construction union UCATT have given a cautious welcome to this week's announcement of a Treasury consultation aimed at reducing bogus self-employment in the construction industry. The union says bogus self-employment occurs when workers are officially classified as self-employed but have all the normal working relationships of an employee – but none of the rights. Most cases of bogus self-employment occur through the Construction Industry Scheme (CIS), the union says. The government is proposing that all construction workers will be deemed to be employees unless they supply their own materials, provide a substantial amount of plant, or are providing other people's labour as well as their own. UCATT says that due to lower safety standards on sites using bogus self-employed, workers are at far greater risk of being injured or killed. The union says this month both the Donaghy Report into construction fatalities and a DWP select committee report have been sharply critical of high levels of bogus self-employment in the industry and have cited it as a factor in the high numbers of construction deaths. Alan Ritchie, general secretary of UCATT, said: "Bogus self-employment corrupts the entire industry. Workers are denied basic rights, they fear being sacked at a moment's notice, so are unlikely to complain about dangerous working practices. If workers become too sick or old to work they will be denied benefits and will not have an old age pension." According to UCATT, bogus self-employment costs the Treasury £1.7 billion a year.

- [False self-employment in construction: taxation of workers](#), Treasury consultation, ends 12 October 2009. [UCATT news release](#). [Contract Journal](#).

Other news

Fatal factory blast 'avoidable'

The explosion at ICL Stockline in Glasgow was an "avoidable disaster", according to a public inquiry into the tragedy. Nine people died and 33 were injured when the plastic factory collapsed on 11 May 2004. Lord Gill's report criticised the two companies, ICL Plastics and ICL Tech, for lacking knowledge and understanding of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) gas, which exploded after seeping from a corroded pipe, reducing the factory to rubble. Scotland's second most senior judge also found that "serious weaknesses" in Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspection procedures contributed to the "a disaster that could have been avoided". His inquiry found HSE had failed to understand the dangers at the plant and did not carry out prompt follow-up visits, despite an HSE inspector drawing attention to the LPG pipe in 1988, 16 years before the explosion. Subsequent inspections never mentioned LPG and its dangers. The Gill inquiry, set up in January 2008 at a cost of about £1 million to the public purse, was told the rotting pipework could have been replaced for £405. With no intervention by the

safety watchdog, the inquiry found the plant's underground LPG pipe was viewed as "out of sight, out of mind" by the owner. Secretary of state for Scotland Jim Murphy said the findings were "damning", adding: "What is clear is that this disaster was entirely avoidable." He said: "There's very strong criticism of the HSE, that they missed some of the tell-tale signs, the inspections they did weren't up to scratch, and they missed some signs that possibly could have meant that this disaster was avoided." He added: "There are real concerns; there are systematic failures identified by Lord Gill. That's why we've said to the HSE they've got to account for their actions." Lord Gill made a series of recommendations which "seek to establish a modern liquid petroleum gas safety regime to minimise the risk that such an event will recur."

- Lord Gill's report on the ICL/Stockline disaster, 16 July 2009, full report [[pdf](#)] and summary [[pdf](#)]. [IOSH news release](#). [The Scotsman](#). [BBC News Online](#). [The Times](#). [The Herald](#).
- [ICL/Stockline campaign webpage](#). [Lord Gill's ICL/Stockline inquiry webpage](#).

Official apology for blast factory failings

In the wake of Lord Gill's report into the fatal ICL Stockline factory blast, both the UK government and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have expressed "regret" at the disaster, with HSE also issuing a rare apology. Work and pensions secretary Yvette Cooper said: "I would like to express my sincere sympathy and regret to the bereaved families and to the injured survivors. Every life lost is a tragedy for the families involved, and made harder to bear by the fact that this was an avoidable disaster." She acknowledged lessons went beyond a long ignored corroding gas pipe, adding "I take very seriously the criticisms made of the safety regime over several decades." Commenting on Lord Gill's findings, the secretary of state said: "I have asked the chair and board of the Health and Safety Executive to report back to me within eight weeks addressing his criticisms and setting out how his recommendations can be taken forward to properly protect people for the future." In his inquiry report, Lord Gill said HSE was guilty of a "stiffly bureaucratic response" with an "apparent lack of any sense of urgency." Addressing Lord Gill's criticisms, HSE chief executive Geoffrey Podger said: "Of course, we in HSE acknowledge any past shortcoming, which are still a matter of great regret to us." He issued a qualified apology to the victims and their families for HSE's part in the "terrible tragedy", a press statement saying: "Chief executive Geoffrey Podger repeated HSE's apologies to the victims and their families that a specific intervention by HSE had not been brought to a successful conclusion." Mr Podger suggested things are better today, commenting: "HSE has already done a great deal since the accident at ICL Plastics." But frontline HSE inspector numbers, inspections, enforcement action and convictions all plummeted in the years following the disaster.

- [DWP news release](#). [HSE news release](#). [Sunday Times](#).

Families call for HSE reform

The "toothless" Health and Safety Executive must be given more resources and powers and should stop going easy on dangerous employers, families bereaved by the ICL Stockline disaster have said. STUC health and safety officer Ian Tasker, speaking on behalf of five of the bereaved the families, said: "This report reinforces our case that we have made all along - that 'soft touch' regulation simply does not work. Time and time again, the employers ducked their responsibilities. The culture of neglect which caused this tragedy was only possible thanks to the companies' ability to, in their own words, side step HSE - a tactic that the regulator should have identified and put a stop to." He added: "What we need to see now is a beefing up of the HSE's resources and powers. Negligent employers who are endangering life and limb should be quaking in their boots instead of Scotland's industrial workers." The bereaved families of Annette Doyle, Kenneth Murray, Thomas McAuley, Tracey McErlane and Anne Trench expressed concern that the inquiry did not examine these wider health and safety failings. A statement said: "The time has come for the HSE to accept that soft touch regulation does not work, and that workers throughout the UK should have confidence that health and safety regulators have employers quaking in their boots." Relatives' campaign group Families against Corporate Killers (FACK) said the "toothless" watchdog's failed strategy had been exposed and called on HSE's top brass to take the honourable course and resign. HSE continued to champion unenforceable "voluntary" director responsibility for workplace safety, FACK coordinator Hild Palmer said, so "at the very least we expect the leadership of HSE to take full responsibility and be accountable as the buck stops at the top."

- ICL Support Group statement [[pdf](#)]. [STUC news release](#). [Stirling University OEHRC news release](#). [FACK news release](#)

Boss gets three years for teen's death

Building firm boss Colin Holtom has been jailed for three years for the manslaughter of 15-year-old construction worker Adam Gosling. Mr Holtom, who pleaded guilty to the offence last week ([Risks 415](#)), was sentenced on 20 July at the Old Bailey. Adam died instantly from massive head injuries when a the wall fell on him at a Hadley Wood mansion. The Old Bailey heard Adam and his 18-year-old brother Dean had been left unsupervised to knock down the 7m high wall, which was only identified days earlier as being unstable by contractor Darren Fowler – who was a project manager at Romford-based Soneca Systems and had subcontracted the work to Mr Holtom. Fowler was sentenced to 12 months in jail after admitted breaking health and safety law and running a company while disqualified from being a director. Construction Safety Campaign national secretary Tony O'Brien commented: "This is clearly the right sentence for this crime. We must remember that Adam should not have been working there, that this incident was predictable and preventable - and that he can never be brought back." Simon Hester, investigating inspector from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), said: "The management and set-up of this small construction project was appalling. Adam Gosling should never have been there at all as 15-year-olds have been banned from working on construction sites since 1920." He added: "There was a complete disregard for basic health and safety requirements - inadequate personal protective equipment, no risk assessments, no training and minimal supervision. We know there are many other

sites with serious shortcomings, but it is the duty of the contractors and employers to ensure that basic health and safety requirements are followed.”

- [HSE news release](#). [Construction News](#). [Enfield Independent](#). [BBC News Online](#). [Morning Star](#)

Blacklisting site firms evade justice

The private investigator whose company traded in illegally held information on over 3,000 trade unionists has received a small fine – and the firms that bankrolled and used the service are to escape scot free. A judge last week fined Ian Kerr, the man who ran covert blacklisting outfit the Consulting Association, £5,000 and ordered him to pay the Information Commissioner’s Office’s (ICO) costs of £1,187. He said he was not the only person responsible but was financed by “high street” construction firms. Seventeen building firms will receive official ICO enforcement notices warning them they will be prosecuted if they set up a new blacklist, but will not face the courts. Kerr, 66, was fined at Knutsford crown court after admitting keeping a clandestine database of over 3,000 workers for the past 15 years. The court heard that more than 40 construction companies had given £600,000 in the past five years to Kerr's agency to record personal and employment details of allegedly troublesome workers. About 90 per cent of the information came from the companies so that it could be shared with other firms to vet workers before they were employed. The firms include Balfour Beatty, Sir Robert McAlpine, Costain and Laing O'Rourke, and entries often highlighted health and safety activity. Judge Stephen Clarke said: “It is important that there is no question that secret lists are being operated without people knowing that they are on the list.” The judge told Kerr: “It is unfair to put the blame entirely on you. You were clearly employed to run the organisation,” adding that others were aware of the duty to obey privacy laws. Press reports say Kerr is living on a state pension, though he was being paid between £46,000 and £48,000 a year when the Information Commissioner, the privacy watchdog, raided his office in office in Droitwich, Worcestershire in February. Information Commissioner, Christopher Graham, said he could only prosecute Kerr for failing to declare the existence of the database to the public. Graham said he did not have the legal powers to go beyond warning the companies or to prosecute them for that or any other offence.

- ICO news release [[pdf](#)]. [The Guardian](#). [The Times](#). [Contract Journal](#). [Construction News](#)

Unions condemn 'totally inadequate' fine

Unions have condemned as 'totally inadequate' the fine of £5,000 levied on company boss Ian Kerr who admitted running an illegal blacklisting service. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: “This fine is totally inadequate and in no way reflects the seriousness of the offence. Thousands of trade unionists have been unable to work as a result of this man's activities, and may struggle to get work in the future.” Construction union UCATT said it was

"extremely dismayed" by the lenient sentence. General secretary Alan Ritchie said: "This is not justice. The fine imposed was no more than could have been imposed by the Magistrates Court who recognised their powers were 'inadequate'." He added: "Ian Kerr wrecked the lives of hundreds of construction workers, many of whom were forced out of the industry. This fine is a slap on the wrist to Mr Kerr and a slap in the face to our members who were denied work because of his actions." Mr Ritchie added that Mr Kerr's solicitor had claimed he was just an employee of the Consulting Association. "If that was the case then others were directly involved in the blacklisting and profited from it," he said. "Everyone involved in the blacklisting including the construction companies should be prosecuted." TUC's Brendan Barber said: "It is vital that the government introduces without delay new regulations outlawing all blacklisting, to prevent the profoundly undemocratic practice of discrimination against those who choose to join unions and to campaign through them to make UK workplaces much safer places to be employed." Affected trade unionists, who protested outside the hearing, angrily confronted the private investigator, Ian Kerr, who hid his face as he was driven away.

- [TUC news release](#). [UCATT news release](#). [Construction News](#).

Government hints at asbestos action

Anticipated decisions on asbestos compensation, research and insurance issues failed to materialise before parliament started its summer break this week, but Cabinet minister Jack Straw did indicate the government still intends to act. In the House of Commons on 21 July, the secretary of state for justice told back-bench MPs the government was still considering the pleural plaques compensation issue, was looking at measures to remedy a loophole that denied compensation to asbestos victims who could not trace their previous employers or their employers' liability insurers and was considering ways to fund an asbestos disease research centre. Commenting on the justice secretary's statements, TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "We welcome the news that the government is looking to support research into asbestos-related diseases. While the priority is to prevent exposure to asbestos, where exposure has occurred we need far more research to prevent people developing diseases, and better treatment for those who have become ill. The TUC wants to see a national centre set up for research into asbestos-related diseases." He added: "The announcement to look further at ways of tracing insurers is welcome, but the government needs to set up a system for workers who cannot trace their employer's insurer to ensure they still get full compensation." He said, however, the TUC was "concerned that the government is not announcing a reversal of the House of Lords ruling on compensation for those with pleural plaques, but we hope ministers will use the summer recess to ensure the law in England and Wales is brought in line with that in Scotland."

- [TUC news release](#). [Thompsons Solicitors news release](#). [Daily Mirror](#)

Asbestos victims express delay dismay

A coalition of groups representing victims of asbestos disease have expressed dismay at the government's failure to make firm commitments on key asbestos compensation issues. Tony Whitston, chair of the Asbestos Forum, criticised the government for prolonging asbestos victims' wait for justice. He said the protracted delay on the pleural plaques decision "can only be justified if it leads to a return to compensation for pleural plaques sufferers. The government still has an opportunity to agree a just settlement. To do otherwise after hopes have been raised and then dashed so many times would be intolerable." He added: "If the government is serious about helping asbestos victims who are sick and dying they must address the problem of untraceable insurance by setting up an insurance fund of last resort, similar to that provided by the Motor Insurance Bureau, which provides cover where insurers cannot be found. Why should asbestos victims bear the sole burden for the institutional failure to keep a database of employers' insurers? Why should insurers escape liability for insurance they wrote and why should asbestos victims be treated less favourably than motor accident victims?" The forum welcomed the indication from justice secretary Jack Straw that the government was looking at ways to support an asbestos disease research centre.

- [Asbestos Forum news release.](#)

Pleural plaques do hurt you

While insurers and government advisers seem adamant pleural plaques don't hurt you, a top US lung disease expert says he has evidence they can be a source of excruciating pain. Michael Harbut, based at the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute's National Center for Vermiculite and Asbestos-Related Cancers (NCVAC), says he discovered a probable reason for the unrelenting chest pain experienced in certain patients with asbestos-related diseases and cancers. He puts it down to an effect of pleural plaques – lung-scarring commonly associated with exposure to asbestos. Writing in the 20 July 2009 edition of the International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Health, Dr Harbut and colleagues describe how they employed a new radiographic technique to assess a patient with pleural plaques. This revealed that the plaques, often described as "benign", caused erosion on the interior wall of the ribs. "This action of the pleural plaque against the covering of the bone and the bone itself is a biologically plausible and an anatomically logical explanation of the unrelenting pain which some patients experience," said Dr Harbut. Using the new imaging approach, Dr Harbut was able to show the progression of the patient's pleural plaque over a three year period, from 2005 to 2008 and the relationship to "pleuritic pain". Speaking in the Commons this week, justice secretary Jack Straw said he would be "delighted" to examine any fresh evidence on the link between pleural plaques and symptoms. UCATT general secretary Alan Ritchie commented: "It is imperative that the government utilises the latest delay to fully assess the new medical evidence. UCATT will be making representations to the government to ensure this occurs."

- [Karmanos Cancer Institute news release.](#) [Karmonos Institute.](#) [IJOEH](#)

Asbestos stealth tests in schools

Campaigners are to carry out secret tests on dozens of English schools this summer to highlight the threat of asbestos which, they claim, is a serious threat to the health of pupils and teachers. MPs, leaders of the teaching unions, and families of teachers killed by asbestos-related diseases have arranged the tests, claiming ministers and local councils are not doing enough to identify – and safely remove – the substance. Asbestos-related illnesses including mesothelioma, a very deadly form of cancer, are believed to kill at least 16 teachers every year – and the figures are rising. Documents obtained by the campaign group Asbestos in Schools show that ministers were warned more than a decade ago that a national audit “could lead to a panic reaction” and that it would also have “significant cost implications”. Campaigner Michael Lees, whose wife, Gina, died of mesothelioma aged 51 after teaching for 30 years, said the financial costs of tackling the problem were still overriding health issues. “Some local authorities are on top of asbestos management, whereas others have given less priority to maintaining school buildings,” he said. He added that in some schools standards of asbestos management “are dangerous”. The campaigners have persuaded consultants to carry out tests free in up to 100 schools this summer, after the government refused to fund the project. They will use the results in a bid to convince the government of the need for action.

- [The Independent](#). [Asbestos in Schools website](#).

Asbestos takes husband and carer

A Parkinson's disease sufferer, who was robbed of her husband's care by his untimely death from asbestos-related cancer, has received over half a million pounds in damages. Carol Devoy, 65, told the High Court in London had husband Alexander Devoy lived, he would have shouldered the main burden of her care. Judge Michael Reddihough awarded Mrs Devoy £500,726 damages for her loss. Mrs Devoy had to give up her career as secretary when she was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease 13 years ago. According to her counsel, Christopher Melton QC, Mr Devoy was his wife's constant and devoted companion and carer. Mrs Devoy told the court: “If Alex had still been alive he would have continued to look after me. He was always on hand in the house.” The former chief engineer died two years ago from the asbestos cancer mesothelioma. Mrs Devoy sued shipbuilders, William Doxford Ltd, for whom her husband worked as a fitter between 1955 and 1959, and Stuntbrand Line Ltd, for whose predecessors, Clan Line Steamers Ltd, he worked between 1960 and 1970. Neither defendant contested liability in the case.

- [Northern Echo](#). [Sunderland Echo](#)

Scallop boat workers lost at sea

Three crew members died this week when their Cumbrian scallop dredger capsized off the coast of Scotland. Skipper Tony Hayton,

45, Peter Hilton and Thomas Sanderson, both 52, all from Maryport, died when the Aquila overturned on Monday. A major rescue operation got under way immediately after a witness saw the vessel overturn off the west coast - but only one of the four crew survived. A member of the local fishermen's federation said skipper Tony Hayton from Maryport in Cumbria was a "very experienced" seafarer. The victims were plucked from the treacherous waters in around three hours by coastguard and Navy helicopters and an RNLI lifeboat but they could not be saved. RAF spokesperson Michael Mulford said the response by rescue crews to the accident off Ardnamurchan Point in Inverness-shire was "very quick". He added: "The saddest thing is the actual capsizing was witnessed which meant the alarm was raised literally as the event happened. It's really very sad, after all that effort, to have to concede that at the end of the night only one of those four is going home." Because the deaths occurred at sea, they will not be included in the Health and Safety Executive's official fatality toll for the year.

- [The Sun](#). [BBC News Online](#)

Chance to avoid Puma crash missed

A chance to prevent the North Sea helicopter crash in which 16 offshore workers died was missed, experts investigating the incident have revealed. Two crew and 14 passengers died when the Bond Super Puma crashed off the Aberdeenshire coast on 1 April. A bulletin from the Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB) has revealed an earlier problem with the aircraft's gearbox was not correctly identified. The experts called for a review of design and operating life of parts. A metal chip was found in the gearbox of the Super Puma a week before the accident and engineers did institute extra checks. However the latest bulletin from the AAIB said if the particle had been correctly identified and its importance properly understood then the whole module that failed in the crash could have been taken out of service. A Crown Office spokesperson said the procurator fiscal's investigation into the circumstances of the crash was continuing. The 16 dead will not be included in Health and Safety Executive's annual work fatalities total as other agencies are responsible for investigating the tragedy.

- [AAIB special bulletin](#), 16 July 2009. [BBC News Online](#)

International News

Europe: Safety reps are a 'powerful force'

Trade union safety reps have a "huge potential" for improving workers' health, a Europe-wide investigation has concluded. The ESPARE project – full name 'The Impact of Safety Representatives on Occupational Health: A European Perspective' – was launched in 2006 by the European TUC's health and safety research arm, REHS. The project found having trade union representation leads to better observance of safety rules, lower accident rates and fewer work-related health problems. It concluded that unions need to better "integrate key health and safety issues into their strategies." This

includes incorporating safety into collective bargaining and ensuring "safety representatives are not just informed or consulted on health and safety problems but also have the influence and power to negotiate them." The report says its proposals "may help to design future research and policy needs, develop new surveillance indicators, identify more effective actions or interventions, and evaluate the impact of safety reps' actions on a variety of occupational health outcomes." It adds that "available knowledge and research supports the conclusion that unions, workers' representation and safety representatives constitute a key powerful force for improving workers' occupational health in the EU. In sum, research mainly conducted in Anglo-American tradition and Nordic countries has shown that workplaces where trade unions are present are safer and have better occupational health outcomes."

- [ESPARE project](#). The impact of safety representatives on occupational health: A European perspective (the EPSARE project), Report 107, European Trade Union Institute, 2009. [Order details](#)

Europe: Furniture trade wants formaldehyde rules

Unions and employers in Europe's furniture trade want strict limits on formaldehyde in furniture production. A joint declaration from the European Federation of Building and Wood Workers (EFBWW) and the European Furniture Manufacturers Federation (EFMF) calls for "legislation requiring that all materials used in furniture put on the market in the European Union (EU) have the lowest possible emission level based on the best available technology". They say their first concern is the health and safety of workers and consumers. The declaration calls for formaldehyde to be put onto the new list of indicative occupational exposure limit values drawn up under the EU's Chemical Agents Directive. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classifies formaldehyde as carcinogenic to humans, putting it in the top Group 1 risk bracket. Formaldehyde is used mainly in the production of resins that are used as adhesives and binders for wood products, paper pulp, paper, glasswool and rockwool. It is also used extensively in the production of plastics and coatings, textile finishing and the manufacture of industrial chemicals. Other uses include as a disinfectant and preservative. France's National Research and Safety Institute (INRS) estimates that over a million European workers are exposed to formaldehyde.

- [REHS news report](#). EFBWW/EFMF joint declaration on formaldehyde [[pdf](#)]

Global: Temps get worse conditions

Temporary workers face worse conditions in their jobs, new studies have confirmed. A July 2009 report from the French government's research and statistics unit, DARES, found in 2005 fixed contract employees and temporary agency workers had less skill discretion in their work and were less readily helped by their fellow workers, although their work was less intense. Temporary workers were also

less likely to have access to "risk prevention provision, with 16.9 per cent lacking this cover compared to 12.4 per cent of workers in secure jobs. Insecure employees on permanent contracts also suffered, with jobs characterised by low skill discretion, high work intensity and physically stressful work. Latest figures from Japan's labour ministry have revealed that 5,631 temporary workers were injured or killed while working in 2008. Most of these were injured after being sent to temporary jobs in the manufacturing industry, which accounted for two-thirds of the incidents. The transportation industry was responsible for another 10 per cent of injured temps. A report in the Japan Times said while the number of temporary workers killed in 2008 fell slightly to 31, "a lesser number of knife killings would receive front page coverage for weeks, but the report on workplace deaths is relegated to back pages." It adds: "The only reason those numbers are down from 2007 is that the total number of temp workers fell." The article concludes: "The number of temp workers could rise rapidly if and when the economy recovers. The government must ensure that all workers — full-time, part-time, temporary — have a safe place to work."

- [REHS news report. Japan Times](#)

Resources

Pandemic flu latest

The TUC guidance on pandemic flu has been updated again. Among the latest additions are advice on pregnant women, those with underlying health conditions and employers who try to get those who have been in contact with the virus to take leave.

- [TUC pandemic flu guide](#)

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

The person responsible for the Risks e-bulletin is Hugh Robertson
Email: healthandsafety@tuc.org.uk