

Risks

TUC 

e-bulletin

Number 424 – 19 September 2009

**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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Wider action needed on blacklisting

Workers found to have been blacklisted for their safety and trade union activities should be told about the listing and should be compensated, a report for construction union UCATT has recommended. 'Ruined Lives' was submitted as evidence to the government's consultation on blacklisting. The report, commissioned by the union from the Institute of Employment Rights and written by Professor Keith Ewing, says the promised regulations should specify that it is illegal to blacklist anyone because of "activities associated with trade unions" and that if a blacklist is discovered it should be forfeited and all the people on the list notified that they have been blacklisted. The report also argues that to use or maintain a blacklist must be a specific criminal offence. And it adds if a worker has been blacklisted then they should receive an automatic award for basic compensation. Where the blacklisting has resulted in loss, there should be an entitlement for an additional compensatory award, it says. UCATT general secretary Alan Ritchie commented: "While we welcome the government's commitment to introduce regulations to outlaw blacklisting it is essential that they are fully comprehensive." TUC general secretary Brendan Barber has reiterated his support for action, telling delegates to TUC's annual congress this week the union movement should "make sure the disgusting anti-democratic practice of blacklisting is outlawed once and for all" and condemning the "shameful activities" of The Consulting Association, the blacklisting organisation shutdown in February by the Information Commissioner, and the major construction firms that controlled and bankrolled the operation.

- [UCATT news release](#). [Blacklist blog](#).

Judge proposes blacklist test cases

Workers who are taking legal action against employers on the grounds that they were refused employment after being blacklisted for their trade union and safety activities may have their fate decided by three test cases in north-west England. A number of trade union reps who believe they were victimised for their health and safety activities have already initiated tribunal cases. The test case proposal has been put forward by Mr Justice Brain, who is presiding over an employment tribunal in Manchester, as a way of resolving other cases quickly. It is not known how many workers are suing, but about 3,200 were included on the list run by a private detective called Ian Kerr, and used by many of the UK's largest contractors. A report in trade journal Building says letters have been sent to employers and blacklisted workers in the area to ask whether they would be amenable to consolidating the cases in order to achieve a speedier resolution. The cases would be chosen by lawyers representing workers and contractors, and would set a precedent that would allow the speedy resolution of other cases.

- [Building](#). [Blacklist blog](#).

Union anger on fire station cuts plan

The firefighters' union FBU has pledged to fight plans it says would drastically reduce fire service cover in Warwickshire and put firefighters and the public at risk. Up to seven fire stations could shut across the county and a third of all fire appliances could go under the proposals, with the possibility of just one new station opening. The county council's cabinet, which has been considering the plans, made them public this week. Fire chiefs, who have asked the county council to look at the 'Service Improvement Plan', which will now be put out for consultation, have said the changes are needed to cope with demands such as more flooding and traffic accidents. FBU said around 100 retained firefighters would be axed under the plans. Mark Rattray, Warwickshire FBU brigade secretary, said: "The removal of fire engines from these stations will greatly increase the risk to the public and to firefighters. If they go ahead we could see towns and villages being left without any effective emergency rescue cover." He said the plan "is an insult to the public and to professional fire crews", and would be opposed by the union. "The fire service should be given the correct funding to maintain and enhance the level of service that the communities of Warwickshire deserve," he said. "The FBU strongly urge all members of the community to oppose these proposed cuts by taking part in the consultation process."

- [FBU news release](#). [Warwickshire County Council news release](#). [BBC News Online](#). [The Independent](#).

RMT says rail cuts pose 'massive danger'

Rail union RMT has called for a halt to job losses at Network Rail after new information supplied by the company revealed that 2,549 maintenance jobs are under threat. The union is warning that the planned jobs cull, which represents nearly 20 per cent of the current workforce, would present "a massive danger to the travelling public and would create the conditions for a repeat of the Potters Bar and Hatfield disasters as essential maintenance work is hacked back." The figures obtained by RMT show that Network Rail currently employs 12,995 staff with 1,233 subcontractors working on maintenance jobs. The planned cuts would affect 1,816 direct employees and 733 contractor posts. RMT general secretary Bob Crow said: "These shocking figures now expose the full extent of the jobs massacre that's being planned by Network Rail and would leave essential maintenance works cut to ribbons with potentially lethal consequences for the travelling public." He added: "The combination of maintenance cuts, and the deferral of 28 per cent of the track renewals work which Network Rail has already bundled through, is a dangerous cocktail that creates the conditions for potential disaster on the railways."

- [RMT news release](#). [New Civil Engineer](#).

New teachers left to 'sink or swim'

The performance and 'emotional wellbeing' of new teachers is being put at risk by the practice of throwing them in at the deep end without adequate support. Teaching union NASUWT says too many schools are failing to help teachers new and recently qualified teachers to cope with poor pupil behaviour and other pressures. It says this is a major finding of a five-year research project commissioned by the union. The study, published earlier this month, found that low-level bad behaviour among pupils was very common and that more disruptive behaviour, such as swearing, shouting and throwing equipment, was also a customary experience for some staff. Newly qualified teachers who had encountered physical violence were less likely to intend to stay in the profession for more than five years, it found. More than half of the new teachers surveyed felt unprepared to deal with physical violence in the classroom and more than a third with verbal aggression. NASUWT general secretary Chris Keates said: "It is clear that pupil indiscipline has a detrimental impact on their ability to teach, has led in some cases to poorer educational outcomes and has a negative impact on teachers' emotional wellbeing. It is also clear that pupil indiscipline affects career choices and in some cases, particularly where teachers had experienced physical violence, it was a key factor in decisions to leave the profession." She added: "Initial teacher training courses need to be revisited and reviewed to ensure that they focus specifically on boosting the training for tackling pupil indiscipline both before and during school placements."

- [NASUWT news release](#). [SHP Online](#).

NASUWT rep gets TUC safety award

Prime Minister Gordon Brown has presented an NASUWT safety rep with the TUC safety rep of the year award. Cheshire teacher Geoff Smith received the award at this week's TUC congress in Liverpool, in recognition of his efforts to improve health and safety in schools across the North West. Geoff, who works at Malbank School and Sixth Form College in Nantwich, is also an NASUWT regional health and safety co-ordinator. His award-winning efforts include producing a film to be shown in schools called Slipping Up. It is aimed at pupils aged 11-18, but can also be used as a training video for newly qualified teachers. The busy rep has also established a bi-annual health and safety conference with Cheshire County Council, UNISON and the NUT. Geoff said the award is "a great honour for me and the NASUWT as it recognises all the work that myself and my colleagues have put in. People tend to think that health and safety is all about killjoys stopping people from having fun but it's really not like that." He added: "Since I got involved with this issue I have tried to rebrand it and show people the true nature and importance of safety guidance. It is good business for everyone to work in an environment where people feel safe, secure and happy." NASUWT general secretary Chris Keates said: "I am delighted for Geoff and very proud that a member of the NASUWT is being recognised in this way. Geoff is a very hard working and committed individual who feels passionately about ensuring the safety and wellbeing of others. He is a credit to himself and the union."

- [NASUWT news release](#). [TUC news release](#).

New call for safety duties on directors

Company directors have failed to respond to a series of pleas to voluntarily take health and safety seriously in the boardroom, so they should be required by law to do so. The latest call for statutory duties on directors comes as part of a new campaign from safety magazines Health and Safety at Work and Health and Safety Bulletin (HSB). The magazines are using an online petition to garner support for the campaign. HSB editor Howard Fidderman writes: "Legislation has a persuasive and educative effect that can go unnoticed amidst a preoccupation with sanctions; it makes it clear to employers and their workforces that a government expects certain things to happen and that the matter is too important to be left to goodwill, gentle encouragement and even self-interest." He adds "the sentencing of directors would surely help bring home within an organisation the consequences of failure. With nine in 10 injuries attributable to management failures, it makes sense that health and safety law is generally premised on the body corporate. As such, sanctions - almost invariably fines - are levelled at the organisation too." Commenting on a series of failed voluntary initiatives, most recent the joint effort from the Institute of Directors and Health and Safety Executive, Fidderman said: "There is an incongruity that there are no explicit duties on those at the top of organisations even though there is an almost universal consensus that the key to effective management of workplace health and safety is leadership from the top. Ideally, all directors would take their health and safety responsibilities seriously. The problem is they don't and, for these individuals, guidance is never going to work."

- [HS@W article](#).
- Sign up to the [HS@W/HSB petition](#) calling for statutory directors' duties.

HSE warning on offshore 'complacency'

The new head of the Health and Safety Executive's offshore division has put tackling industry complacency at the top of his priority list. Steve Walker, who took up his post this month, said he was keen to see the "good progress" being made in improving safety does not lead the industry to take its eye off the ball. He pointed to recent offshore injury and hydrocarbon release figures that HSE says show there has been good progress on safety. The new offshore safety chief said: "I recognise the challenges in keeping aging installations fit for purpose at a time when industry is looking at the technical and cost demands in developing existing fields, especially in the context of the economic climate and the ongoing energy debate. However, this is no excuse for delaying or putting off essential work. Industry must pay attention to every detail, no matter how small, if it potentially puts safety at risk." He added: "I intend to continue to drive up standards in the industry and ensure that there is no room for complacency. I need to see industry putting its money where its mouth is in terms of improving asset integrity. Though progress is being made, the work is far from complete." He said: "Ultimately I want to ensure that HSE remains an effective, efficient and respected regulator." There are worrying signs some of the progress welcomed by HSE may already have been reversed.

Latest official figures show gas leaks and major injuries offshore have both increased dramatically in recent months. There were 21 significant hydrocarbon releases on North Sea installations and 14 major accidents during the quarter from April to June. This compared to 61 and 30 respectively for the whole of last year.

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

Maintenance worker dies at wind farm

A contractor has died while carrying out maintenance work on a turbine at a wind farm near Thurso, Scotland. Emergency services were called to the Npower Renewables site at Causeymire on Wednesday 16 September. Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service said it was called at 9.11am with a report that a man was unconscious and stuck on a turbine. Press reports say three fire engines were sent to the wind farm but left the scene when it was confirmed the worker had died at 10.25am. Northern Constabulary said a report would be submitted to the procurator fiscal. A spokesperson for Npower Renewables said: "Our thoughts at this time are very much with the individual's family. The cause of the incident is being investigated by RWE Npower Renewables and we will be fully co-operating with the Health and Safety Executive." This wasn't the first fatal fall on a Scottish wind turbine. Teenager Basilio Brazao, a Brazilian working for Falck Renewables, died on 22 May 2007 when he fell 100 feet inside a wind turbine shaft which was under construction at the Earlsburn windfarm in Touch Hills, near Stirling. Campaigners say there are many other UK fatalities related to wind farm construction and use. Statistics published this year by Caithness Windfarm Information Forum record 46 deaths between 1990 and 2008, with eight deaths in 2008 alone. A report from the trade union health and safety magazine Hazards this year warned that "green" jobs could present all the same hazards as traditional jobs, and noted: "It will take a concerted union effort to make sure the green jobs agenda doesn't save the environment but cost lives."

- [BBC News Online](#). [Daily Record](#). [Caithness Windfarm Information Forum](#). [ITUC/Hazards green jobs, safe jobs blog](#) and [related webpages](#).

Flurry of action on bad gangmasters

Three gangmasters have had their licences revoked this month and a fourth has been fined for operating without a licence. The Gangmasters Licensing Authority (GLA) says the prosecution for using workers to gather shellfish without a licence is the first of its kind. It came after five migrant workers were found to be gathering cockles on the sands at Morecambe Bay in September 2007 without the required permit. Four of the men had to be rescued by the Morecambe lifeboat five miles from the Morecambe Bay shore. Harold Benson pleaded guilty at Preston Crown Court to contravening the Gangmasters (Licensing) Act 2004 and was fined £600 and ordered to pay £4,000 in costs. The law was introduced shortly after the Morecambe Bay tragedy in 2004 when the actions of an illegal gangmaster led to 23 Chinese cockle pickers being cut

off and drowning in the rising tidal water. Three other gangmasters who used Polish and Lithuanian workers to pick flowers in Cornwall had their licences revoked this month after a GLA investigation. The GLA said it found overcrowded accommodation for workers living in caravans in Cornwall and Scotland. The licences of AAW Contract Services, JDSS and EU Labour were revoked. The workers would spend part of the year picking daffodils in Cornwall and the rest in Scotland.

- GLA news releases on the [cockling](#) and [flower picking](#) gangmaster actions. [BBC News Online](#). [Wales Online](#).

Crush death leads to £7,500 fine

A Northampton company found guilty of criminal safety breaches after an employee was crushed to death has been fined £7,500. Trackline (International) Ltd was also ordered to pay £6,690 costs at Lincoln Crown Court after the worker died when his forklift truck was obstructed in its path, toppled over and crushed him. The incident happened at the company's site in Pinfold, Bourne on 1 August 2007, where the company assembles earth-moving equipment. Shaun Porter, 31, was moving a large steel assembly from one end of the factory to the other. A large vehicle frame was protruding into the unmarked gangway and he decided to raise the forks over the obstruction to make room for his vehicle to proceed. On realising that he would hit the frame, colleagues shouted for him to stop. Shaun braked but his load struck the frame causing the truck to spin round and overturn, crushing him as he tried to jump clear. Commenting after the case, Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspector Jo Anderson said: "If vehicles including forklift trucks are to move around in the workplace it is vital that clearly marked gangways are in place and that the risks arising from the loads being carried are controlled. Today we have heard how a death could have been avoided. Companies must understand the importance of managing transport in the workplace in order to prevent a tragedy like this happening again in the future."

- [HSE news release](#). [Rutland and Stamford Mercury](#). [Northampton Chronicle and Echo](#).

Apprentice suffers severe falls injury

A Glasgow construction company has been convicted of criminal safety offences after an apprentice joiner was severely injured. The 20-year-old worker fell nearly four metres through an opening in the floor after the loose sheet of plywood which had been placed over the opening gave way. The incident happened on the upper floor of a new primary school being built in Glasgow. As a result of the 28 June 2007 fall the worker sustained serious neck and other injuries. At Glasgow Sheriff Court last week, City Building (Glasgow) LLP was fined £20,000 after pleading guilty to a breach of safety law. Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspector Annette Leppla warned those who are responsible for working at height to take sensible precautions to prevent accidents. "This accident was entirely foreseeable and preventable," Ms Leppla said. "The worker

was severely injured because his employer failed to do enough about the risks associated with working at height. It was down to chance alone that this incident did not result in a permanent injury or even fatality. For a period of several days, floor openings had been left just covered with loose sheets of plywood which were totally unsuitable for that purpose.”

- [HSE news release.](#)

Multinational pays penalty for skin risks

A multinational cable manufacturer has been fined £27,500 after an employee suffered such serious occupational dermatitis he was forced to take early retirement. Prysmian Cables and Systems Limited was sentenced last week at Southampton Crown Court after earlier pleading guilty to three breaches of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH). In addition to the fine, the firm was ordered to pay costs of £10,700. A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation found that managers failed to control hazardous substances including a known skin irritant at the company’s premises in Eastleigh. The problem chemical was dodecylbenzene (DDB) oil, a potent skin irritant and sensitiser, which is used during cable manufacturing and testing processes. Exposure resulted in one employee suffering from dermatitis so serious he was forced to take retirement on medical grounds. The court heard his future employment prospects are extremely limited. HSE specialist inspector in occupational health, Anne Bartlett, said: “This case illustrates the need for employers to take dermatitis risks as seriously as any other risks to health and safety in the workplace. Dermatitis is not just a ‘bit of a rash’ which can be ignored but a painful, debilitating and as this case proves, a life changing condition which can be easily avoided.” She added: “All employers should undertake risk assessments in a way that correctly identifies all of the significant risks, including those to health and as a result ensure that an appropriate package of measures, including physical safeguards, safe systems of work, protective clothing, consistent training and appropriate health surveillance are provided for the safety of all workers.”

- [HSE news release.](#)

UK lead standard poses major heart risk

Exposure to lead over a lifetime has been linked to an increased risk of dying from heart disease by new research. The authors of the US study call for a tightening of the country’s occupational exposure standard – which at 40 micrograms per decilitre of lead in blood ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$) is already significantly tighter than the UK male action level of 50 and suspension level of 60 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$. The researchers, whose finding were published online on 8 September 2009 by the journal *Circulation*, analysed lead concentrations in the blood and bones of 868 men in the Boston area. The men, whose average age was 67 at the start of the study, had lead concentrations in their blood and the bones of the patella (kneecap) and tibia (shin) measured over a nine-year period. They found that men who had the highest

concentrations of lead in their bones had a six times greater chance of dying from cardiovascular disease than men with the lowest concentrations. Men with the highest levels of lead had a 2.5 times greater chance of dying from all causes than men with the lowest levels. "Cumulative exposure to lead, even in an era when current exposures are low, represents an important predictor of cardiovascular death," said study author Marc Weisskopf, an assistant professor of environmental health and epidemiology at the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston. "The findings with bone lead are dramatic. It is the first time we have had a biomarker of cumulative exposure to lead, and the strong findings suggest that it is a more critical biomarker than blood lead." On the basis of the findings Weisskopf said the current US occupational standards "are probably inadequate." The dangers of even low levels of lead were illustrated this week in a study published online in the Archives of Disease in Childhood. The University of Bristol study found blood levels well below the accepted "safe" threshold of 10 µg/dl harm young children's intellectual and emotional development. The researchers found doubling in lead level from 5 to 10 µg/dl was associated with a 0.3 point fall in SAT scores.

- Marc G Weisskopf and others. A prospective study of bone lead concentration and death from all causes, cardiovascular diseases, and cancer in the Department of Veterans Affairs Normative Aging Study, *Circulation*, published online before print 8 September 2009 [[abstract](#)]. [Harvard University news release](#). [Science Daily news release](#). [US News and World Report](#). [Health Scout](#).
- K Chandramouli and others. Effects of early childhood lead exposure on academic performance and behaviour of school age children, [Archives of Disease in Childhood](#), published online before print 17 September 2009.

Work pesticides up Parkinson's risk

Gardeners and farmers who use pesticides as part of their job are up to three times more likely than others to develop Parkinson's, according to a new study. Overall, the study, published this week in the Archives of Neurology, found that those whose job involved using pesticides were 80 per cent more likely to develop the condition, which affects 120,000 people in Britain. However, exposure to any of three chemicals, a weedkiller called 2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid, or 2,4-D, an insecticide called permethrin, or another weedkiller called paraquat, increased the risk three-fold. Although paraquat was banned by the European Union in 2007, the other two are still available for use in Britain. The study, by a team from the Parkinson's Institute, in Sunnyvale, California, asked 519 patients with the disease and 511 healthy people about their jobs and exposure to a range of chemicals. In total 44 of the patients with Parkinson's and 27 of the healthy volunteers had been exposed to pesticides through their occupation. The study found that people who had worked in agriculture but who had not been exposed to pesticides through their work were no more likely to develop the disease.

- Caroline M Tanner and others. Occupation and risk of Parkinsonism: A multicenter case-control study, *Archives of Neurology*, volume 66, number 9, pages 1106-1113, September 2009 [[abstract](#)]. [The Telegraph](#).

Study exposes chemical cocktail risk

Workers exposed to a cocktail of chemicals may be suffering far more harm than previously considered, a study suggests. Results from a study of male rats published in the US journal *Environmental Health Perspectives*, indicate that assessing the risk of chemicals one compound at a time will underestimate potential harm. People are exposed to hundreds of chemicals at a time but that cocktail may currently be considered 'safe' based on the individual toxicities of those chemicals. "Evaluations that ignore the possibility of combination effects may lead to considerable underestimations of risks associated with exposures to chemicals that disrupt male sexual differentiation," said the study, a joint project between researchers from the National Food Institute in Denmark and The School of Pharmacy at the University of London.

- Sofie Christiansen and others. Synergistic disruption of external male sex organ development by a mixture of four anti-androgens, *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 2009 [[abstract](#)]. Full text [[pdf](#)]. [Ecologist](#).

International News

Australia: Big business would hurt workers

Big business is backing changes to national workplace health and safety laws that would put workers at risk of injury or illness, Australian unions have warned. Jeff Lawrence, secretary of the national union federation ACTU, said it was unacceptable for the changes to health and safety laws to lead to increased profits for businesses at the expense of workers' safety. Australian unions this week launched hard-hitting new advertisements to press for decent safety laws. "Business lobby groups are pushing for changes that would reduce the health and safety rights for millions of workers," said Lawrence. Good practice in several states would be undermined if the business lobby got its way, he said. "This is despite employer groups like the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry admitting in a recent research brief that Australia is failing to meet self-imposed targets for reduced workplace injuries and that there are valid estimates of up to 7,000 fatalities occurring each year from work-related injuries and diseases." He said the proposed national occupational health and safety (OHS) laws must give workers a say over matters that involve their health and safety, make employers responsible for providing a safe workplace, and protect and empower elected health and safety representatives to do their job. He added that the new law must respect the role that unions play in investigating and enforcing workplace safety, and allow victims of workplace incidents to take court action against employers when regulators fail to.

- [ACTU news release](#) and [radio advert](#). [Courier Mail](#). [Sydney Morning Herald](#).

France: Hotline plan for suicidal telecoms staff

France Telecom has promised to set up a free hotline for workers suffering from stress after the 23rd suicide by one of its employees in 18 months. The move followed a crisis meeting between the French labour minister, Xavier Darcos, and France Telecom's chief executive, Didier Lombard. Mr Lombard said "the infernal spiral" of copycat suicides must be broken. The minister pressed France Telecom to tackle the problem and to listen to its workers. Unions have blamed tough management methods at the multinational, which was privatised in 1998. The latest suicide occurred when a 32-year-old woman leapt to her death last week from a Telecom office in Paris. The unions say a never-ending drive for efficiency is causing emotional havoc in the workforce - especially among older employees recruited when France Telecom was part of the public sector. Since privatisation in 1998 some 40,000 jobs have gone, and unions say there is pressure on many employees either to leave or to accept new working conditions. After the latest cases the firm promised to hire more counselling staff and to suspend internal job transfers pending new talks with the unions. The France Telecom case follows similar work-related suicide scandals at French car manufacturers Renault and Peugeot-Citroën. 'Crying shame', a report last year from Hazards magazine, warned that work factors could account for up to 250 suicide deaths in the UK each year ([Risks 423](#)).

- [BBC News Online](#). [Connected Research](#).

Sweden: Worker-blaming firm faces labour court

A firm that fired a worker after an incident where a colleague broke his legs was in fact to blame for injury, the official inspectorate has said. The Swedish Work Environment Authority (SWEA) has filed a complaint against Mondi about health and safety practices following the injury at the firm's Dynäs mill in Väja, Sweden. The worker was injured in March as he was pushing a paper roll onto a forklift truck. The paper rolled back, fracturing both his legs. Mondi fired the forklift driver, saying he was responsible. However, SWEA has now referred the case to the prosecutor as it concluded the injury was down to poor organisation on Mondi's part. "We have concluded that the company could have protected the risk area, but that it did not. The company has not raised the issue of danger in its reports and that led to this accident," Gary Malmberg, inspector at SWEA, told PPI Europe. The Swedish paper workers' union, Pappers, has already sued the mill, for "having fired a person without legal grounds." Pappers' representative Lars Wåhlstedt said. "We think that the company should take responsibility for the accident, and not blame an individual person." The case will be handled in the Swedish Labour Court. Mondi continues to insist the forklift driver was to blame.

- [RISI Pulp & Paper News Service](#).

USA: Radiation risk making granite tops

Workers who make the granite countertops popular in many household kitchens may be exposed to dangerous levels of radiation, a study has found. Researchers found full-time granite workers could be exposed to radiation levels up to 3,000 times the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) radiation exposure limit for members of the general public. The study was conducted by industrial hygienist Linda Kincaid, stonecutter Al Gerhart and Dave Bernhardt, a health physicist. Their findings, presented at the Health Physics Society's annual scientific gathering, were well received. However, top US investigative journalist Andrew Schneider, commenting on his Cold Truth blog, notes: "I'm sure you won't be stunned to learn that the stone industry, and some of the scientists that work for them find endless faults with the study." He reports, however, that the official US workplace safety watchdog, OSHA, has said it will do more research into the possible exposure hazard. A number of minerals in granite – particularly the zeolites in the biotite mica that make up the speckled flakes characteristic of the rock - contain substances that emit ionising radiation.

- [The Cold Truth blog](#).

Events and Courses

TUC courses for safety reps

COURSES FOR AUGUST to OCTOBER 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