

Risks

TUC 

e-bulletin

Number 437 – 19 December 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](#)

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Directors' duties are overdue, says TUC

The TUC says the case for legally-binding safety duties on company directors is watertight, adding they would be "the biggest driver yet in changing boardroom attitudes towards health and safety." The union body says the current law "means that if a board of directors refuses to have any involvement in health and safety, however bad the record of the company, there is almost nothing that can be done to force them to take responsibility beyond disqualification (which is almost never done)." A new online briefing from the TUC says: "It is clear that the voluntary approach has failed to ensure that directors in all organisations, public and private, take responsibility for the health and safety of the staff they employ. Even if it has led to a majority of boards of organisations receiving regular reports on health and safety, or appointing a 'champion' at board level, there is still nothing that can be done about those companies that do not. These are companies where the only concern of the board members is the bottom line. It is because of these organisations that we need a specific legal duty on directors." TUC adds: "Directors of companies who are already complying with good practice will have nothing to fear from such a duty. It is only those who think they can continue to get away with ignoring the call for corporate responsibility who would be at risk if they continue to run organisations that put the lives of their workers at risk." The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) board will in the new year consider the findings of the two year review of the current voluntary approaches to directors' duties.

- [TUC directors' duties briefing document](#).

Bishops should quit over victimised vicar

The resignation of two Church of England bishops has been called for by the union Unite. The union says they presided over 'a culture of neglect and bullying' in the Diocese of Worcester which drove a vicar from his parish and that this week saw him evicted from his home. It says Unite member Reverend Mark Sharpe and his family have suffered four years of torment. They left their home, the rectory at Hanley Broadheath, near Worcester, this week after eviction proceedings were started. Unite has asked the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, to set up a high-level and immediate investigation into the harassment. It adds that the bishops of Worcester and Dudley, John Inge and David Walker, should step down immediately "for washing their hands like Pontius Pilate". The union also wants the diocesan surveyor, Mark Wild, and the diocesan registrar, Michael Huskinson to quit. Unite said that the bishops allowed Revd. Sharpe, rector of Teme Valley South, his wife Sara and their four children to suffer a campaign of intimidation from parishioners when they moved to the rectory in remote Worcestershire in 2005. Rachael Maskell, Unite national officer for the community sector, said: "The two bishops have washed their hands like Pontius Pilate - and, unfortunately, we know of other cases in the diocese where a culture of bullying, neglect and poor housing for members of the clergy prevails. The two bishops should resign immediately, as should the diocesan surveyor and diocesan registrar." She added: "The fact that Mark

and his family have been forced to leave their home during the so-called season of goodwill at the pinnacle of the Christian year is a disgrace, and a dark stain on the church's reputation." Unite had been negotiating a settlement for Mark Sharpe, who has been off sick with stress since April 2006.

- [Unite news release](#). [BBC News Online](#). [Morning Star](#).

RMT warns that 'cuts cost lives'

Network Rail plans to axe 1,500 maintenance jobs could cost lives, the rail union RMT has warned. Union members were out in force at railway stations up and down the UK on 17 December to launch a 'Rail Cuts Cost Lives' campaign against the job losses. The union wants the public to know how "the threatened jobs cull on the tracks will compromise safety the length and breadth of the country and take us back to exactly the kind of shambolic maintenance conditions that led to the disasters at Paddington, Hatfield, Potters Bar and Grayrigg." RMT says the Network Rail maintenance cuts are driven by "a dash for billions of pounds of savings" at a time when there is increasing demand for rail travel. It says its members are already reporting cuts and backlogs in the frequency of track, signals, overhead lines and level crossing inspections. The union adds it is compiling a dossier of "the potentially lethal impact as the cuts programme". RMT general secretary Bob Crow, speaking ahead of the action day, said: "Network Rail are taking a reckless and cash-driven gamble on rail safety just at the time when we need to be expanding services. When the public realise that important standards are being compromised in the dash for job cuts we know that they will sign up to the RMT's campaign and that's why we are taking our message out to the station forecourts." He added: "This cuts programme must be stopped before we have another disaster on the tracks."

- [RMT news release](#).

Guards cost less than a director's pay

Rail union RMT has demanded an immediate reversal of plans to introduce Driver Only Operation (DOO) on the new Glasgow/Edinburgh via Airdrie route. The call comes as company accounts reveal the top boss at Scotrail earns more than the additional cost of employing the guards the union says are necessary to ensure train passenger safety ([Risks 436](#)). First Scotrail financial returns show that the highest paid director made £429,274 in the 2008/2009 financial year compared to the £300,000 additional cost of employing guards on the new service. RMT says the switch to driver-only trains will compromise safety and breach contractual agreements to have two members of staff on Scottish rail services at all times. Bob Crow, RMT general secretary, said: "We now know that the price of safety on Scotrail's new service is less than their highest paid director earned in the last financial year. That is an appalling indictment on the company and a real reflection of their priorities." He added: "RMT's campaign against Driver Only Operation and in support of guards on the trains is

pulling in solid support from politicians and the public alike. This latest news on Scotrail bosses pay will reinforce the widespread anger at the cash-driven moves to an under-staffed and unsafe service.”

- [RMT news release](#).

Safety warning over signalling cover

Rail union RMT has warned that managers drafted in at short notice to try and run signalling services during a strike in Wales have not had adequate preparation for the safety critical job. The union said its members have reported that the management stand-ins received just a five hour briefing for duties that would normally require a minimum of a month’s full training. RMT added the company was attempting to break the scheduled six day strike which started on Monday. The signalling staff resorted to industrial action over the imposition of rosters at the new South Wales Control Centre due to open in January 2010. Commenting after the “rock solid” first day of the strike, RMT general secretary Bob Crow said: “Our members have made it clear that they are not prepared to see their work-life balance wrecked as part of an imposed cost-cutting exercise.” He added we are “hearing from our maintenance members that they are being denied access to the track possessions for some routine maintenance on the South Wales mainline because the scab managers have insufficient knowledge of the job to cope. Rather than waste effort trying to undermine our members’ solid strike Network Rail should be sitting round the table with us trying to thrash out a resolution to this dispute – the company knows we are ready to talk whenever they are.”

- [RMT news release](#) and [related release](#).

Union calls for urgent work death inquiry

Construction union UCATT has called for an urgent inquiry following the death of a worker in Hull last week. Raymond Jessop 53, died on 8 December after falling from a ladder while painting a council property in the city. He was employed by Kier Building Maintenance which is responsible for the repair and maintenance of 10,000 council properties in the city. A UCATT official who visited the site said there was sufficient room for scaffolding to be erected or for a mobile platform to be used, rather than having to rely on a ladder. The union believes the use of ladders for this project is at odds with the advice provided by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), which states that ladders should only be used “for low risk, short duration work”. The union adds that an original decision to use scaffolding was abandoned because the company said workers were not trained in using tower scaffolding and “cost was an issue”. Derek Johnson, UCATT’s Yorkshire regional secretary, said: “All the evidence indicates that a decision to use ladders was taken on grounds of cost. This decision has had fatal consequences and a worker has died. It is essential that such a tragedy is never allowed to happen again; Kier’s, Hull City council and all contractors must change their policies to ensure that ladders are not relied on when

undertaking such large scale painting projects." UCATT said it intended to raise its concern that workers were being pressured to finish the project to avoid possible pay reductions tied into any delay.

- [UCATT news release.](#)

Construction blacklisting campaign goes global

Construction unions from around the world have backed proposals to stamp out blacklisting wherever it occurs. The decision was taken last week by the Building and Wood Workers International (BWI), the global federation of construction unions, at its conference in Lille, France. The union delegates supported overwhelmingly an emergency motion proposed by UK site union UCATT. UCATT's motion mandates the leadership of the BWI to "monitor any developments on blacklisting discovered in BWI affiliate countries" and to "assist unions in taking action where there are suspicions of a blacklist or where blacklisting practices have been confirmed." Alan Ritchie, general secretary of UCATT, said: "I am delighted that the BWI are committed to stamping out blacklisting wherever it exists. Blacklisting is a disgraceful, deceitful practice which ruins the lives of workers." UCATT says some of the companies involved in the widespread blacklisting of construction trades unionists in the UK, uncovered by the Information Commissioner in February, are multinationals. It has emerged that many of these companies practice exemplary industrial relations policies in some countries, while undertaking entirely unethical practices in others, the union says. UCATT adds it has been working with construction unions in other countries to highlight abuses and to pressure companies at an international level to amend their policies. Anita Normark, the outgoing BWI general secretary, said: "Blacklisting is an obscene anti-union practice used by unscrupulous companies all over the world to deprive workers of their rights and to rob trade unionists of their livelihood. We condemn blacklisting and believe that it should be punishable by law." Alan Ritchie said UCATT was "committed to assisting our sister unions in overcoming similar problems in their own countries."

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

Builder secures damages for loss of finger

A building worker who lost a finger in a circular saw has received an undisclosed sum in compensation. GMB member Albert Hardy, 58, from Chesterfield has been forced to change trades after his index finger on his left hand was amputated following the incident while working for a building firm in Belper. He was using a handsaw to remove shuttering, the boards used to box in concrete when putting down foundations. One of his directors told him to use a circular saw for the job which meant Mr Hardy had to work in an awkward position. The powerful saw caught on the material and cut into his left hand. His index finger had to be amputated above the knuckle. The company did not admit liability but an out of court compensation payout was agreed. Andy Worth from the GMB said:

"Mr Hardy was asked to change tools by his director who had failed to think through the risks of that change. As a result our member has been through incredible pain, has had to learn to cope without a major finger."

- [Thompsons Solicitors news release](#).

Union legal backing pays off out of work

Union members who are injured outside the workplace can still benefit greatly from union legal cover, two recent cases show. A Durham firefighter who had to have his lower leg amputated after he was knocked off his motorbike received £800,000 in compensation. The FBU member, whose name has not been released, now has a prosthetic leg and has been forced to give up work as a firefighter. The 44-year-old dad of two teenage boys is still receiving counselling for post traumatic stress disorder. Duncan Milligan from the FBU said: "This member not only lost his leg, but he also lost his career. It was a long battle to get him compensation but we don't give up and are pleased to have helped him secure substantial damages in the end." In a second road traffic case, GMB member Lesley Langton, 42, was advised to accept just £1,250 in damages after a car smash. However, with union legal help she has received almost nine times the amount in compensation – the final settlement was £9,000. The nurse suffered a serious back injury in the May 2007 accident. She said: "I am so glad I contacted the GMB's legal services department to find out if what I was being quoted was reasonable. I thought the offer was low because I knew that I had been in agony with my back. I had said I thought the claim was worth £5,000 but they said I was being 'wholly unrealistic'. I had no idea that it would be worth nearly nine times as much as the original offer."

- Thompsons Solicitors news releases on the [FBU](#) and the [GMB](#) cases.

Other news

Six figure payout for injury HSE wouldn't probe

An electrical engineer who had his left leg amputated below the knee after falling from a ladder in Rotherham has been awarded £450,000 in compensation. Keith Waring fell 13ft off the ladder on to a block paved patio, seriously injuring his left ankle. The case led to criticism of the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) role, after campaigning magazine *Hazards* revealed HSE had been informed of the September 2002 incident, but had refused to investigate because it was not considered serious enough ([Risks 317](#)). Lawyers said Mr Waring's injury could have been avoided if he had been given a safety harness and training. David Urpeth, head of workplace injuries at Irwin Mitchell Solicitors, said: "Employers have a duty of care to their workers and must provide them with suitable training and equipment for the job in hand. In this case, Mr Waring should have been given scaffolding or a harness to make sure he was safe, and should not have been asked to carry out a dangerous

task he had not been given training for." Mr Waring has to wear a prosthesis on his left leg, as well as an external fixator on his right leg. He said: "The simple fact is that the accident should never have happened, and it would never have happened if my employer had given me the correct training and safety equipment for the job in hand." Mr Waring, who has said he felt let down by HSE, was working for Rotherham-based company Rhino, now known as Steal-Master UK Limited and which is now in liquidation. HSE's inspection rate for major injuries has dropped off dramatically since Keith Waring was injured ([Risks 433](#)).

- [IrwinMitchell Solicitors news release](#) . [Yorkshire Post](#). [Sheffield Star](#).

Firm's 'relaxed attitude' led to death

An organic farm owned by the wife of the multi-millionaire industrialist and top Tory backer Sir Anthony Bamford was ordered to pay more than £90,000 last week after one of its employees died because of a relaxed attitude to safety. Gardener Tony Cripps, 57, was crushed under a JCB while he tried to collect elderflower from the Daylesford Organic farm shop to make lemonade for the owner Carole Bamford. Gloucester Crown Court heard that Mr Cripps had been working part time at the farm for just two months when he was killed in June 2007. Along with another employee, he was riding in the bucket of the digger when it hit a bump or a rut and he was thrown out and under the front wheel. "Sadly, a relaxed safety culture at this particular farm had meant that the practice of using telehandler buckets as work platforms had become acceptable practice despite the obvious risks. Consequently, the use of the bucket for collecting elderflower was not exceptional, but for Anthony Cripps it proved fatal," Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspector Caroline Bird said after the case. JCB chairman Sir Anthony Bamford and Lady Bamford were not in court as the judge, William Hart, fined Daylesford Organic Farms Limited £65,000 with £27,500 costs after it pleaded guilty to an offence under the Health and Safety at Work Act. The judge said there was an "old fashioned, traditional and relaxed approach" on the farm. He noted that "by modern standards" it had not carried out adequate risk assessments. Speaking on behalf of Mr Cripps' family, Stuart Henderson of Irwin Mitchell Solicitors, said: "It is clear to us that this accident was totally avoidable and could and should have been prevented if proper safety procedures had been followed by his employers." He added: "Our view from the outset has been that health and safety training and risk management were not given anything near the attention they deserved." Daylesford Organic Farms Limited is based at Daylesford Hill Farm near Moreton in Marsh, Gloucestershire but registered in Mondovia, Liberia.

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

Manslaughter verdicts on firefighter deaths

A fireworks factory owner and his son have been convicted of the manslaughter of two firefighters killed in an explosion at the East Sussex site. Geoff Wicker, 49, and Brian Wembridge, 63, who

served with East Sussex fire and rescue service, were killed in the blast at Marlie Farm in Shortgate, near Lewes on 3 December 2006. Alfa Fireworks owner Martin Winter, 52, and his son Nathan, 25, were "grossly negligent" as they knew an unlicensed metal container packed with fireworks could explode if a blaze broke out, Lewes crown court heard. They received jail sentences of seven years and five years respectively. The company was found guilty of two breaches of health and safety legislation. As well as killing the two firefighters, the blast injured 20 others, mainly police and fire officers. Prosecutors argued that the Winters were aware of the hazards posed by housing such fireworks in a metal container. The jury accepted the prosecution's case that the head of the company owed a duty of care to everyone who might come in contact with the fireworks, and that he was "grossly negligent" in making arrangements for their storage. The firework-packed metal container which exploded was unlicensed for storage by Festival Fireworks. Jurors were told it was obvious to both Nathan and Martin Winter of the potential for a huge blast to have occurred if a blaze broke out.

- [BBC News Online](#). [The Telegraph](#). [The Guardian](#). [Sussex Express](#). [Daily Mirror](#).

£150,000 fine for Preston chemical fire

An international waste management company has been fined £150,000 for health and safety breaches following a major chemical fire in Preston which closed two motorways. Sections of the M6 and M55 were shut for several hours during the morning commute on 2 July 2007 while 66 firefighters tackled the blaze. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) prosecuted Veolia ES Cleanaway (UK) Ltd after carrying out a joint 15-month investigation with the Environment Agency and Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service. Veolia pleaded guilty to two offences at Preston Crown Court. As well as the fine, the company was ordered to pay costs of £90,000. The court heard that the fire started just after 6am in an open area of the site, which is used to store drums of chemicals. Firefighters reported seeing drums rocketing into the air and off the site after setting alight. HSE inspectors believe the fire, which saw more than 132,000 litres of chemicals burn, was caused by lithium batteries igniting nearby waste materials. HSE's Linda Murray said: "Our investigation showed that Veolia didn't do enough to make sure that the dangerous chemicals on its site in Preston were stored safely. The company also failed to provide adequate training for its staff. Any businesses that have flammable substances on their premises need to take appropriate measures to minimise the risk of fires or explosions. Veolia clearly could and should have done more." Veolia was charged with two breaches of the Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations 2002. It admitted inadequate control and storage of dangerous substances and a failure to provide suitable and sufficient information, instruction and training for its employees.

- [HSE news release](#) and [fire and explosion webpages](#). [Central Radio](#).

Injury exposed catalogue of offences

A printing company and two of its directors have been prosecuted after an investigation into a worker's injury exposed a series of health and safety breaches at its Bedfordshire site. The legal action against Flitwick firm Colpac Ltd and two of its directors, Terry Langton and Stephen Burton, was brought by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The offences came to light when a worker at the food packaging printing factory was injured trying to release a blockage in a machine. Sandra Aka, from Bedford, tried to retrieve a carton which was stuck in a window patching machine when her arm was caught between two rollers. Miss Aka, who was 20 at the time of the incident on 14 August 2008, suffered bruising and cuts to her left arm. HSE's investigation found that Colpac had failed to provide Miss Aka with adequate training to use the machine. Inspectors also uncovered a series of safety failings on electrical safety, machinery isolation, manual handling and machinery guard checks. Five prohibition notices were served ordering the company to stop some activities until the risks to workers had been addressed. Four further improvement notices were later issued requiring Colpac to tackle less pressing safety matters. Colpac admitted two health and safety charges and was fined a total of £20,000 and ordered to pay £5,129 costs. Operations director Terry Langton admitted a breach of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and was fined £3,000. Manager Steve Burton admitted a safety offence and was fined £800. HSE inspector Emma Rowlands said "for a company to face nine improvement or prohibition notices shows a complete disregard for workers' safety and welfare. We make no apology for intervening and ordering urgent action to be taken - these steps needed to be made quickly before somebody else was seriously injured or, worse still, killed."

- [HSE news release](#) and [print industry webpage](#).

Immigrant workers 'living in sheds'

More than 1,000 migrant workers across Slough are thought to be living in sheds in people's back gardens. Slough Borough Council believes the problem has become so pressing it is working with the UK Border Agency and police to ensure tenants' well-being. The council said it was clamping down on landlords and reminding them of the planning rules for outhouses. Housing standards manager, Keith Ford, said many of the immigrants were living in the sheds without proper sanitation and were "being exploited". Thames Valley Police said the force dealt regularly with incidents involving the outbuildings, and was "well aware" of people living in them. "There was a fire in a shed the other day that had someone living in it," a spokesperson said. "Luckily, they were pulled to safety. It's a council housing issue really, we only deal with such incidents." Local councils in areas such as Slough, Peterborough and Boston, Lincolnshire, have said they need more central government money to cope with a large influx of foreign workers.

- [BBC News Online](#). [Financial Times](#).

Mum's family searches for asbestos clues

The family of a young mother who died from the asbestos cancer mesothelioma is searching for more information about where she was exposed to the deadly dust. Tracey Carpenter from Kettering was just 43 when she died in November this year. She had been diagnosed with mesothelioma in July. Tracey, who left behind her 18-year-old daughter Jade, 16-year-old son Reece and partner Gary Haldane, could not recall working with asbestos. It is thought she may have been exposed to the dust brought home on her father's contaminated work clothing. Charles Fairey, who died in 1980 aged 56, had worked as a crane driver at the British Steel plant in Corby. Tracey, who worked at Kettering Borough Council as a customer services adviser, remembered her father coming from work wearing dusty clothing when she was a child. She also remembered helping with the laundry which included her father's work clothes. The family would like anyone who worked as a crane driver or on the maintenance of cranes at the Corby steelworks or who worked alongside Charles Fairey to get in touch with any information about the presence of asbestos. Gary said Tracey was always fit and healthy and her death came as a huge shock. "Tracey was always on the go so when she was diagnosed with mesothelioma it was a massive shock for the whole family, particularly when we realised that it was untreatable," he said. "It means a great deal to the whole family to find out more about how Tracey was exposed to asbestos. We would urge anyone who worked as a crane driver at British Steel in Corby to get in touch."

- [Thompsons Solicitors news release](#). [Northants Evening Telegraph](#).
- Anyone wanting to pass on information should call Neil Baines at Thompsons Solicitors on freephone 08000 224 224 or 0115 9897209.

Company ignored asbestos warnings

A company has been fined for failing to carry out proper risk assessments for the presence of asbestos before a major office refurbishment in Merthyr Tydfil. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) says employees and contractors were put at risk when work started on the refurbishment without an asbestos survey. Waxport Ltd pleaded guilty to breaches of the asbestos regulations and was fined £1,000 and ordered to pay costs of £8,416.43. The company, which owned the Merthyr Tydfil office block, had previously been told by a licensed asbestos contractor to complete an asbestos survey before carrying out major refurbishment work in the building in April 2007. Instead, Waxport Ltd commissioned another company to carry out the refurbishment work, and advised them that asbestos was no longer present in the building or had been encapsulated. As a result, work commenced and asbestos was disturbed, with work only stopping when a site worker identified the substance. HSE inspector Dean Baker said: "The company were required to have a comprehensive asbestos management plan in place identifying where asbestos was located but they failed to do this. In this case, an asbestos survey was only carried out after the incident occurred. Working on or near damaged asbestos-containing materials or breathing in high levels of asbestos fibres, which may be many hundreds of times that of environmental levels could increase workers' chances of getting an asbestos-related disease."

- [HSE news release](#) and [Hidden killer campaign](#). [Local London](#).

China: Sick migrants demand surgical proof

Thirteen migrant workers from Yunnan in China have applied to have open-chest surgery to prove their lungs have been damaged by dust. The workers are following the lead of Zhang Haichao, who famously underwent open-chest surgery to prove he was suffering from pneumoconiosis, China Labour Bulletin reports. All 13 were employed in a machinery factory in the provincial capital Kunming. The firm, Xuxin Machinery, refused to provide them with free medical check-ups. The report says the workers' "extreme move" reflects both the often intractable problems migrant workers have in getting work-related illness compensation, and the "huge" payout Zhang Haichao received after he became a media celebrity earlier in the year. Zhang was awarded 615,000 yuan (£55,000) in September 2009. However, five other employees who worked with Zhang in the company workshop from 2003 to 2004 and who were diagnosed with abnormalities of the lung were refused compensation by the company, saying the state fund should pay. The firm reportedly said: "You won't get any money from us because we have paid in to the social security fund. You better get back to work, if you don't, you will be fired." The local social security bureau however refused to pay the compensation on the grounds that the company only started paying into the scheme in the last few months.

- [China Labour Bulletin](#).

Global: Big, green and with blood on its hands

Top US retailer Kohl's is really, really proud of its award-winning environmental credentials. It has a whole website devoted to "Kohl's green scene", and it sees being retail's green giant as a reflection of its corporate responsibility. According to Ken Bonning, Kohl's executive vice president of store planning and logistics: "We want to demonstrate that it is possible for a large company to have a successful business model and operate in a sustainable way." However, this is the type of corporate green hype that rankles with the US-based International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF), which points to labour rights and safety abuses in the company's supply chain. "Unfortunately Kohl's focus on sustainability hasn't spilled over to the labour rights of its workers," it says. 'Working for Scrooge: Worst companies of 2009 for the Right to Associate', published by ILRF on 10 December, puts the company on its "top offenders" list, which features corporations "selected on the basis of their ties to violence against trade unions and suppression of the universal right to organise." It notes that workers at Menderes Tekstil, a textile factory located in Denizili, Turkey, that produces bed linens for Kohl's and other leading retailers, were fired after starting to unionise so they could challenge hazards in the factory that led to numerous injuries and the deaths of four workers. Conditions at the factory were "extremely dangerous", the report says, adding attempts to unionise the factory were "stifled". This is clearly at odds with Kohl's 'Terms of Engagement for Kohl's Business

Partners'. Commenting on the Turkish factory situation, ILRF report notes: "Despite Kohl's own high moral standards and repeated calls for action, it continues to avoid comment or action since these events were brought to light."

- [ILRF news release](#) and [full report](#). [Green jobs blog](#).

Turkey: Coal mine blast kills nineteen

Nineteen miners have been killed in a suspected methane gas explosion at a coal mine in western Turkey. The 10 December explosion happened at a depth of more than 200m (700 feet), causing a shaft to collapse and starting a fire. Rescue efforts were delayed by the high concentration of gas in the mine. Local press reports say three people were detained following the tragedy in the north western province of Bursa. The manager and two employees were reportedly held on the orders of the public prosecutor's office investigating the incident. The detentions came after energy minister Taner Yıldız announced that the mine would be closed. "We have decided to stop mining and production here completely for six months," the minister told the Anatolia news agency. The safety record of Turkey's coal mining industry lags behind that of most industrial countries. The Turkish Trade Union of Miners issued a statement following the blast, stating mines in the country are plagued by lack of proper safety regulations and inadequate inspections.

- [ICEM news briefing](#). [Today's Zaman](#). [BBC News Online](#).

Resources

Health and safety and aging workers

How to address the health and safety implications of an aging workforce was the theme of a high level US conference this year hosted by the union-run National Labor College. The report of the conference presentations and discussions, involving US government agencies, unions, academics and others, have now been made available online. The report recommends attention to workplace environments to maintain "work ability" as workers age, along with legislative fixes and research to fill in knowledge gaps for keeping workers healthy and productive. A very large slice of the workforce will be within the scope of the report's recommendations. The US Department of Labor uses age 40 as a starting point for being an "older worker."

- [NIOSH update](#). Society for Occupational and Environmental Health conference report [[pdf](#)] and [video highlights](#).

Events and Courses

TUC courses for safety reps

COURSES FOR NOVEMBER 2009 to JANUARY 2010

- [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