

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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TUC lays down 'good work' challenge

The TUC is challenging the government and employers to ensure that workplaces don't just prevent staff from becoming ill, but actively promote good health and well-being through 'good work'. 'In sickness and in health?', published this week, argues that around one-third of our waking hours are spent at work, and that our working lives help to define who we are, where and how well we live, and even how long we live. The pamphlet, which is latest in a series of TUC Touchstone Extra reports, says 'good work' goes much further than simply ensuring that jobs do not make people ill, and is more about organising working in a way that promotes good physical and mental health. The report spells out the factors that can constitute 'bad work' including a lack of control over work, poverty pay, repetitive or monotonous work, a lack of respect at work, incompetent line managers, too much or too little work, a lack of training, unsafe working conditions, long hours and bullying. It says these factors can lead to increased levels of ill-health and sickness absence, lower motivation, higher turnover of staff and reduced levels of productivity. And they affect 'lifestyle', the report adds, noting there is a strong link between stress and the use of tobacco, recreational drugs and alcohol, while desk-bound working or only having access to junk food during a 20 minute lunch break can lead to obesity. The report proposes development of a national standard or index of 'good work', to allow employers to look at work organisation and job design, with employers and employees encouraged to work together to ensure that work is no longer seen just as a place where employees go to earn a wage. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber commented: "The economic rewards of a national 'good work' culture could be huge. Every year around 170 million working days are lost in the UK because people are too ill to go to work and the cost of this sickness absence runs into tens of billions of pounds. The benefits to individual workers of leading more fulfilled and healthier lives are also enormous." But he warned that "as long as we see 'good work' as a good idea rather than a basic human right, work will continue to make workers ill and as a result employees and society will continue to suffer."

- [TUC news release](#). In sickness or in health?, TUC, March 2010 [[pdf](#)]. [TUC Touchstone pamphlets](#).

Unpaid overtime reaches 'extreme' levels

The number of people working 'extreme' levels of unpaid overtime soared to almost 900,000 last year, with teachers and lawyers the most likely to put in hours of extra work, according to new figures released by the TUC. The union body's annual survey of working hours showed that the number of people doing more than 10 hours of unpaid overtime a week rose by 14,000 last year. Among teachers and lawyers one in five clocked up an extra 17 hours of free work a week. The analysis of official statistics was published on 26 February to mark Work Your Proper Hours Day (WYPHD). Last year over five million people across the UK put in an average of 7 hours 12 minutes of unpaid overtime a week, worth £27.4 billion - or £5,402 each. The TUC analysis shows that teachers, health and social service managers and lawyers are most likely to do unpaid

overtime, with around half of all staff in these occupations regularly giving away unpaid hours. One in four (25.3 per cent) public sector workers worked unpaid overtime in 2009, worth nearly £9 billion a year, compared to one in six staff in the private sector (18.3 per cent). Single women are more likely to do unpaid overtime than single men, married or cohabiting couples or lone parents. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "There is no direct link between excess overtime and underemployment but those people who are struggling to find enough or indeed any hours to work must be wondering why some workers are doing so much for free." He added: "Staff are understandably doing all they can to help their company recover from the recession - and bosses should thank them for going that extra mile. But working time still needs to be properly managed. A long hours culture is bad for workers' health and family life - whether the hours are paid or not."

- [TUC news release. Work Your Proper Hours Day.](#) [UNISON news release.](#) [UCU news release.](#) [The Guardian.](#)

Race is on for an ethical London Olympics

Playfair 2012 has launched a campaign for an ethical London Olympic Games. The coalition, co-ordinated by the TUC and Labour Behind the Label (LBL) and which involves unions and other campaigning organisations, wants the organisers of the London Olympics to ensure that workers making sportswear for the 2012 Games won't be working in appalling and degrading conditions. A new campaign website sets out the standards the coalition expects from the London 2012 organisers, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and sportswear brands, and explains how individuals can get involved in the campaign. Millions of people are employed in the global supply chains that produce kits for Olympic teams, and the sportswear and souvenirs available on our high streets. Playfair has unearthed evidence showing that the sportswear industry and Olympic movement have a poor track record on workers' rights. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "Delivering a legacy for London was at the heart of the government's successful Olympic bid. And what better legacy than a commitment to end the exploitation and abuse involved in the sportswear and athletic footwear industries? We want London 2012 to raise the bar on worker's rights throughout Olympic supply chains." Playfair 2012 is part of the global Playfair 2008 campaign involving three international federations, the International Textile Garment and Leather Workers Federation (ITGLWF), International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and Clean Clothes Campaign.

- [TUC news release.](#) [Playfair 2012.](#) [Playfair 2008 clearing the hurdles website.](#)

GMB fights to protect security guards

A new campaign is aiming to tackle the increasing number of attacks on security guards at work. Security industry union GMB, whose SafeGuard campaign was launched on 1 March at the House of Commons, is asking all Britain's security companies to sign the GMB SafeGuard Charter, committing them to act to tackle the

attacks on 350,000 licensed security staff in the course of their work. GMB national officer Jude Brimble said: "Security officers understand there is a risk of violence in the work they carry out. What they do not accept is that violent attacks and abuse against them must simply be tolerated as 'part of the job'." She added: "This GMB SafeGuard Charter aims to raise safety and industry standards, improve employment practices, and increase training and awareness across the industry. Security officers want the highly valuable and professional service that they deliver to be recognised and for the industry to adopt a high profile zero tolerance approach." The GMB SafeGuard Charter, which has the support of the industry body BSIA, seeks to get clients, security companies, police and other agencies to agree to work together to reduce attacks. It also calls for income protection and support and counselling for workers suffering trauma and physical injuries. Other stipulations include provision of "robust and high quality" training in conflict management and systems to record and analyse data on attacks across the security industry. GMB general secretary Paul Kenny said: "Every attack is a crime against the person and the industry needs to send a clear message out that this will not be tolerated. Security officers provide vital services, but they need to know they will be protected and that the industry is seriously committed to improve safety standards and officers' welfare."

- [GMB news release](#) and SafeGuard charter [[pdf](#)]. [GMB Security website](#). [BSIA news release](#). [SMT Online](#).

Stagecoach looks to slash rail staff

Stagecoach rail bosses have been accused by rail unions of endangering passengers by closing booking offices during evenings and at weekends. The planned cuts would affect 24 South West Trains (SWT) stations across Surrey, Hampshire, Wiltshire and Dorset. Gerry Doherty, general secretary of the union TSSA, called on Stagecoach's multi-millionaire owner Brian Souter to withdraw the plan because it was "putting profits before passengers' safety." He said the government had refused a Stagecoach staffing cuts proposal 18 months ago, but charged that Souter was now "trying to get cuts by the back door." RMT also said the planned cuts would lead to a massive deterioration in customer service and would seriously increase the risk of assaults at stations at evening and weekends. Bob Crow, RMT general secretary, said: "There is no doubt that Stagecoach on South West Trains are itching to move to un-staffed stations with people replaced by machines because they see that as the way of pumping up their multi-million pound profits regardless of the impact on public safety, customer service and their own hardworking staff." He added: "The threat of attacks at un-staffed stations is well documented and the government should be stepping in and taking action against these train operators who are prepared to leave the public dangerously exposed in the dash to line their own pockets."

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

Church must act on clergy bullying

A culture of bullying has yet to be understood or addressed in the church and in other faiths, the union Unite is warning. Unite national officer Rachael Maskell will tell a London 'Define Bullying' event on 11 March of the large number of calls and emails - about 50 - the union has received in the wake of the Mark Sharpe victimisation case. The vicar was bullied, fired and finally evicted by the church before xmas last year, prompting the union to call for the resignation of two Church of England bishops ([Risks 437](#)). Rachael Maskell, who has experience of working with clergy around the globe, commented: "The case of Mark Sharpe is the tip of the iceberg when it comes to bullying in the church - a scourge that the church hierarchy seems unable or unwilling to tackle. Since Christmas, we have had an upsurge of calls from clergy and from members of other denominations telling us about heart-rending stories of bullying and other forms of abuse, such as sexual harassment and intimidation." She added: "Many have had their lives ruined by the scars of this experience and only wish the church would be humble enough to talk to a union which has clear expertise in dealing with these issues. Unite is calling for those leading the various faiths to resolve this issue with the seriousness it deserves. The only way forward is for there to be dialogue and proper procedures and training put in place." Unite represents 2,500 faith workers.

- [Unite news release. Define bullying event, 11 March.](#)

New blacklisting regulations "too weak"

Construction union UCATT has said it is "bitterly disappointed" with the new anti-blacklisting regulations, repeating its warning the measures are so weak that they will not prevent blacklisting from occurring. Employment relations minister Lord Young announced the new measures, which came into effect on 2 March. He said: "The new regulations outlaw the compilation, dissemination and use of blacklists. They have been designed to build on existing protections in the area, which are found in trade union and data protection law. Good employers who operate fair and open vetting processes have nothing to fear from these regulations." He added: "I am confident that this new piece of legislation will bring to an end the disreputable practice of blacklisting once and for all." However, Alan Ritchie, general secretary of UCATT, said the government had ignored its call for essential improvements to the regulations. He said: "Fortunately for Lord Young blacklisting doesn't occur in the House of Lords but ordinary construction workers are not so privileged." UCATT argued that the regulations were deficient because they did not make blacklisting a specific criminal offence and only prevented workers from being blacklisted for undertaking narrowly defined "trade union activities". The union said the regulations also fail to grant an automatic right to compensation for any worker who discovers they have been blacklisted. If a blacklist is discovered workers will not be told automatically they had been blacklisted. Mr Ritchie said: "Cynical construction employers will recognise the weakness of the regulations and could continue to blacklist workers. They know that they are unlikely to get caught and if they do they will merely get a slap on the wrist. UCATT will continue to campaign to have the regulations overhauled so that they are truly effective in stamping out this despicable practice once and for all."

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

Is drug testing an issue in your workplace?

Reports from unions and the shopfloor suggest there has been an upturn in the number of firms introducing – or at least proposing to introduce – drug testing programmes at work. The TUC is investigating the phenomenon, and says it has aware of “growing concern on random drug testing in non-critical employment areas”. As a result, TUC intends to produce advice and guidance for safety reps and stewards on the issue. It would like to hear any good or bad stories, including case histories and any policies that have been introduced or negotiated.

- Email details of drug testing case histories, workplace practices and policies to the [TUC health and safety department](#) or post to Hugh Robertson, TUC, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS. [TUC drugs and alcohol webpages](#).
- Have you seen the new [Hazards magazine drug and alcohol webpages](#)? Check them out for news, features and background documents and resources.

Other news

Watchdog confirms RMT rail safety fears

Rail union RMT has demanded an immediate halt to plans to axe up to 1,500 safety-critical Network Rail maintenance jobs after an official probe called for “a significant change in attitudes and behaviours throughout” the company. The call, in a letter from Bill Emery, the chief executive of the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR), to Network Rail boss Iain Coucher, came as a damning report from ORR identified major safety concerns related to implementation of Network Rail’s maintenance restructuring. These include a failure by Network Rail to carry out practical tests on the plans, concerns with ongoing problems on the West Coast Mainline where the bulk of the job cuts are targeted, reductions in safety-critical working hours and plans to cut back on safety lookouts and safety briefings. ORR also highlighted “inadequate employee engagement” at the firm. Commenting on the findings of the investigation, ORR chief executive Bill Emery said the watchdog “will have no hesitation in taking immediate action if safety to passengers or employees is put at risk. I now urge Network Rail to resolve all identified issues before it commits to implementing this maintenance restructuring.” RMT is currently balloting staff for strike action over the job cuts plans. The union’s general secretary, Bob Crow, said the cutbacks could have “lethal consequences.” Responding to the ORR findings, he said: “Coming from the ORR this is nothing short of condemnation of Network Rail’s dangerous cost-cutting plans. If even the ORR says the plans are untested, being implemented in haste and will put pressure on managers to cut back on safety-critical lookouts and briefings, it is clear that they must be stopped and that is why we are demanding an immediate halt.”

- [ORR news release](#) and letter to Iain Coucher, Network Rail [[pdf](#)]. [RMT news release](#). [BBC News Online](#).

RMT demands action against Network Rail

RMT has demanded urgent legal action against Network Rail after an improvement notice served on the company highlighted "systemic" failings in its track-work safety regime. The failings came to light during an investigation by the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) into Network Rail's plans to restructure its maintenance operations. RMT – which is balloting 12,000 track staff over safety and job cuts – renewed its call for an immediate halt in the planned "cull" of 1,500 safety-critical rail-maintenance jobs. It also urged the Railways Inspectorate to take action against Network Rail management "at the highest level" over its safety failings. The improvement notice, issued by railways inspector Liesel von Metz on 23 February, concerns lines between Cardiff Central and the Valleys and fleshes out a prohibition notice served earlier in the month. This stop work notice was raised explicitly by ORR chief executive Bill Emery in a sternly worded letter sent this week to Network Rail boss Iain Coucher. The latest improvement notice also raises a concern that "similar failings may be present in other Maintenance Delivery Units across all routes". The notices pinpoint a shortage of lookouts to ensure safe track working which the inspector says amount to breaches of the Health and Safety at Work Act and railway safety regulations. "Network Rail bosses are presiding over a cost-driven dismantling of railway safety culture and it is time that they were stopped," said RMT general secretary Bob Crow said. "When the Inspectorate is finding such fundamental faults it is time to call Network Rail's management to account, and if there are breaches of the law they should be in court facing charges."

- [RMT news release.](#)

Union welcomes ship fatigue inspections

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) has warned that serious action will be taken against shipping companies found to be cutting staffing levels and flouting hours of rest requirements. The statement from the marine safety body has been welcomed by seafarers' union Nautilus. MCA said both UK and non-UK ships will be subject to inspection and those operating demanding schedules with minimal crews will be targeted. Work records will be monitored and compared to operating patterns of vessels to verify accuracy, and in some instances copies of relevant documents will be required. MCA will also monitor compliance with the requirement to have a dedicated lookout at night. Those in breach of the regulations may face prosecution. MCA's Paul Coley said: "It's been known for many years that tiredness caused by long working hours and low manning is dangerous to both ships and its crews." He added: "Shipping companies have been warned about the consequences of fatigue many times. This time it's not just a warning. The MCA are determined to stamp out excess hours in UK waters and so significant breaches of the regulations will be reported to our enforcement unit and may result in prosecution." Nautilus welcomed the MCA action, but also raised ongoing concerns. Senior national secretary Allan Graveson said: "While we welcome this move by the MCA, a 91 hour week is still permitted

that is manifestly unsafe." And Nautilus general secretary Mark Dickinson added: "We support the move but the concern remains over the ability to deliver."

- [MCA news release](#). [Nautilus news release](#).

HSE launches site crackdown

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has started an intensive inspection initiative aimed at stopping dangerous practices on building sites across Great Britain. The watchdog says it wants to raise awareness of construction site risks and prevent unnecessary injuries and deaths. HSE figures for 2008/09 record that 53 workers died and 11,264 were injured while working in construction. The inspection initiative, which started on 1 March, is focusing on refurbishment and roofing work. Inspectors will make unannounced visits. Philip White, HSE's chief inspector of construction, said: "HSE does not think a lax attitude to health and safety in one of the more dangerous industries is acceptable, especially when many of the incidents are completely avoidable by taking commonsense actions and precautions." He added: "This is the third year running we have run initiatives like this and, after these latest inspections, we hope that we can report back that we have found good practice and safely operating sites. However, if we find poor practice that is putting the lives of workers and, in some cases the public, at risk we will take action; this could include closing sites and prosecuting those responsible." In inspection blitzes last year inspectors visited 1,759 sites and 2,145 contractors and "were forced to issue more than 270 prohibition notices to stop dangerous work - much of it relating to working from height."

- [HSE news release](#).

Campaigners welcome new cranes law

Unions and campaigners have welcomed confirmation that a crane safety law will come into effect next month ([Risks 445](#)). The union GMB said a local campaign in Battersea, South London, deserves much of the credit for the new law. The Battersea Crane Disaster Action Group (BCDAG) was created in September 2006 after two people were killed in a crane collapse. As a result of the award-winning campaign, employers will now have responsibility to notify the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) of the site address of all conventional cranes and the name and address of the owners. This must be followed up with an examination of the crane within a 14 day period. Liliana Alexa, the Battersea resident who spearheaded the campaign and whose son Michael Alexa, 23, was killed by a crane collapse whilst cleaning his car, welcomed the change in the law. She added, however, that "too many people are still being killed and hurt on building sites, these people usually get paid around £7-10 an hour to risk their lives and their safety on a daily basis, it's just not worth it, but where else are they meant to work? They are then told to keep quiet if they hear or see anything on site which contradicts good health and safety practice." Dan Shears, GMB national officer for health and safety, said: "Poor health and

safety surrounding tower cranes has led to the death of at least eight people since 2000 according to the Health and Safety Executive. This new law will now go a long way to ensuring this isn't repeated."

- [GMB news release](#). [BCDAG news release](#).

Steel giant Corus gets £5,000 safety fine

Steel giant Corus has been fined £5,000 after a worker was seriously injured while clearing a jam in the production line at a factory in Skinningrove, East Cleveland. Corus UK Limited - trading as Corus Special Profiles - was also ordered to pay costs of £5,074 at Teesside Magistrates' Court. The company pleaded guilty of breaches of the Health and Safety at Work Act and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. The court heard how on 24 May 2008, team leader David Harrison, then 41, was working on the mill floor where steel is rolled into long beams. He was attempting to clear a jam in a machine, which requires an operator activating controls above the mill floor. The operator was unable to see Mr Harrison and so instructions were relayed via a third man using a combination of hand signals and shouting. Mr Harrison was struck by moving machinery, severely injuring his right leg. HSE inspector Bruno Porter said: "This incident could have easily been avoided, but instead has left Mr Harrison with a badly injured leg for which he still needs medical help." He added: "Despite the fact that clearing jams in machinery was a common operation, there was no record of a suitable and sufficient risk assessment for this activity and no recorded safe system of work in place. While Corus was aware of the hazards and had implemented safe operating procedures to deal with some of the risks, it failed to install a full safe isolation system, which had been identified as necessary prior to the incident." The £5,000 fine will not make a significant dent in the company coffers. The firm's website notes: "Corus is Europe's second largest steel producer with annual revenues of around £12 billion and a crude steel production of over 20 million tonnes." Last month it increased the price of many of its steel products by at least £50 per tonne.

- [HSE news release](#). [More on the Corus safety record](#).

Council fined after road worker dies

Rotherham Council has been fined £75,000 after an employee was killed by a reversing truck. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) also prosecuted contractor Brocklebank & Company (Demolition) Limited over the incident during a council road surfacing operation. Gordon Duffield, a council employee, was knocked down by an eight-wheeled Brocklebank tipper wagon as it delivered asphalt on 4 May 2007. Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council was fined £75,000 and £18,350 costs after pleading guilty at Doncaster Crown Court to a breach of safety law. Brocklebank & Company (Demolition) Limited was fined £30,000 and £12,000 costs. After the hearing, HSE principal inspector John Rowe said: "The council had a duty to protect their employee. Yet, vehicle movements at

the site were uncontrolled despite the fact that tipper wagons had to reverse the length of the site." He added: "The council were also aware that the worker was partially deaf as a result of exposure to noise at work – but had made no assessment of his suitability to continue as a road worker." A statement from Mr Duffield's family said: "Losing someone you love in such a horrific way is an extremely difficult thing to come to terms with. Knowing their death could have been prevented makes the loss even more unbearable." It continued: "We can only hope that if anything positive can come out of the tragic circumstances we have found ourselves in, it is that lessons can be learned, and that lives can be saved through improved health and safety measures within companies and organisations in the same or similar industries."

- [HSE news release.](#)

International News

Australia: Tragedies linked to compensation worries

Injured workers in South Australia are going without food and medication and some have been driven to suicide because they cannot afford basic necessities, it has been claimed. Ann Bressington, an independent MP in the state, said both her and Rosemary McKenzie-Ferguson, founder of the voluntary Work Injured Resource Connection, have "found ourselves in the position of having to provide food to injured workers because some were living on nothing more than dry bread and packet soups and unable to afford their medications." Commenting on last year's cutbacks in the state's WorkCover SA compensation scheme, she said the focus had been on the cost when "the real stories of injured workers and their families struggling to buy food, keep a roof over their heads and cloth their children is not told. It is a sad indictment of our government's concern for its constituents when sick, injured and vulnerable people are forced into this position." She added "many injured workers are now below the poverty line. They have thrown injured workers out in to the cold and left them to starve." More draconian cuts are still being phased in under the new law passed last year. Earlier this year TV programme Todaytonight interviewed two widows who blame WorkCover SA for contributing to their husbands' suicides. One man left a suicide note explicitly blaming WorkCover SA, emphasising his point by jumping to his death from the sixth floor of the WorkCover SA office building. SA Unions, the umbrella organisation for unions in the state, is campaigning to "restore fairness" in the system, which it says is currently "the costliest, least fair and most poorly managed workers compensation scheme in the nation."

- [Ann Bressington news release.](#) [SA Unions news release.](#) The WorkCover Suicide video can be viewed on the [Todaytonight website.](#) [Safety at work blog.](#) [Unions SA compensation campaign.](#)

Bangladesh: Anger as garment workers perish

At least 21 workers have been killed in a fire at the Garib & Garib Sweater Factory in Gazipur, Bangladesh. A further 50 workers

suffered from burns or smoke inhalation in the 25 February tragedy. The firm produces garments for many of the major high street names. The fire started on the first floor of the seven storey building at 9.30pm, when workers were leaving the factory after their shifts. As the fire spread, workers became trapped on the floors above. According to one survivor, rescue efforts were hampered as firefighters had to cut through window grills to access the workers. No-one on the scene could tell firefighters how many workers were in the factory. Patrick Itschert, general secretary of ITGLWF, the global union federation for the sector, said: "This tragedy, which echoes so many others in Bangladesh's garment sector, is a brutal reminder of the grossly inadequate safety measures in place in Bangladesh's garment factories." Calling on the Bangladesh government to act immediately, he added: "In the past the ITGLWF has called on the government of Bangladesh to conduct an urgent structural review of all multi-storey buildings currently in use as garment production units; to launch an examination of all plant and machinery in garment producing factories; to ensure that all factories have adequate access and exit routes so that workers can swiftly be evacuated and emergency teams and equipment can quickly be brought to the site; and to create an adequate factory and wage inspectorate to ensure regular checks on workplace safety and adherence to labour legislation, including hours of work."

- [ITGLWF news release](#). [Morning Star](#).

Korea: Urgent action call on Samsung cancers

A cancer cluster is affecting young workers exposed to toxic chemicals at electronics manufacturer Samsung in Korea, union and safety campaigners have warned ([Risks 439](#)). They say the pattern of cancer deaths "bears a striking resemblance to the pattern of cancer deaths among IBM 'chip' workers in the US and to other electronics cancer clusters around the world." A petition calling for Samsung to accept responsibility for the problem, compensate victims and remedy the health and safety problems is being circulated worldwide by Supporters for the Health And Rights of People in the Semiconductor industry (SHARPs), the Korean Metal Workers' Union (KMWU), Asian Network for the Rights Of Occupational Accident Victims (ANROAV) and International Campaign for Responsible Technology (ICRT). The groups say: "Samsung denies all responsibility, and the Korean government has taken its side by denying compensation and even arresting and detaining the victims' lawyer!" In addition to the demands for justice for cancer victims and improvements in safety standards, the campaigners say Samsung Electronics "must disclose to the workers and the public the truth about the hazards of working in the semiconductor industry" and "must stop suppressing workers in their struggles for a safe and fair workplace."

- [ANROAV news release](#). [AMRC news release](#). [Good Electronics news release](#).
- [Sign the SHARPs petition](#). [Global Unions cancer campaign](#).

Turkey: 'Obvious negligence' in deadly mine blast

A gas explosion that last month killed 13 workers in a Turkish mine was the result of "obvious negligence", according to a top union official. Tayfun Görgün, president of the mining union DEV MADEN-SEN, said there were clear faults with the mine's ventilation, early warning system and auditing. In addition to the deaths in the 23 February blast in Balıkesir, western Turkey, 18 workers were injured. Görgün outlined a litany of problems at the mine. He said the ventilation system had failed to clear a deadly gas build up and an early warning system was either absent or not working. He added that the mine owner, Şentaş Mining Company, had experienced a similar tragedy in 2006, when 17 miners died. There was also a major problem with safety oversight, he said. He criticised Ministry of Labour audit procedures which do not involve site visits. Instead, a representative of the employer travels to the capital Ankara to present evidence the mine is safe. The number of official mine safety inspectors is ridiculously low, he added.

- [Bianet](#).

Resources

The lifesaving union effect

Hazards magazine has updated its webpages on the extremely positive "union effect" on workplace health and safety. A new guide notes that "union workplaces are safer workplaces" and urges workers "to get organised – or you might not live to regret it." The pin-up-at-work guide provides reps four pointers to giving a workplace a "union health check". It urges reps to check their union organisation on health and safety, get active at workplace level, audit systems to make sure they are working properly and to take advantage of union safety training. It says: "Health and safety *is* negotiable – it's just when it comes to our lives and our health, unions won't take no for an answer." It adds: "Sometimes just identifying problems and asking for improvements is enough. Other times it takes more – from hard negotiations to hard-nosed trade union action." The guide is accompanied by a Workers' Memorial Day poster repeating the union effect message – "unions make work safer" is the theme for the 28 April event this year.

- [Hazards 'union effect' webpages](#) and [28 April poster](#).
- The new issue of [Hazards magazine](#) is out now – [subscribe now](#).

Events and Courses

TUC courses for safety reps

COURSES FOR JANUARY 2010 to MARCH 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