

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 18,000 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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Union puts grubby train cabs on report

Train drivers' union ASLEF is calling on its members to report every grubby cab in the repair book. It says the aim is to impress on management that the union's call for clean cabs is a serious issue for ASLEF members. "At the moment managers think they don't need to do anything because they are not deluged with complaints," said union general secretary Keith Norman. "We want members to start the deluge." The union argues that there are two important principles involved – safety and status. "For too long our drivers have accepted that cab conditions will be unpleasant. Perhaps it dates back to steam days – but those days have gone. Driving modern trains is a very different profession, and those who do it are entitled to respect and dignity. Our working space should be of the same standard as skilled professionals in any other industry." It adds unclean cabs are also unsafe cabs – a point its says was confirmed recently by a compensation case when a member needed an operation after his finger was slit open by a piece of broken glass left in a train cab. "Obtaining compensation is a success – but securing clean safe cabs is the victory we want," Keith Norman said. The union wants to reach agreements with all employers about cab cleanliness and a regular cleaning programme. "We want every member to back these demands by reporting every grubby cab to management in the repair book – and to let your health and safety reps know you've done it," the general secretary said. "If we all do this, we can show management that ASLEF train drivers won't tolerate dirty and potentially hazardous working conditions – and impress on them that cab cleanliness is a real issue for drivers."

- [ASLEF news release.](#)

Eurostar action vote over lone working

Eurostar train managers have voted by more than 9-to-1 for industrial action over a failure by the company to give assurances they will not introduce lone working. Rail union RMT this week issued an instruction to its train manager members to take industrial action short of a strike. This could include refusing to operate any passenger service without a complement of two qualified train manager grade staff on board before departure. RMT said the action will commence on Monday 10 May "and will be ongoing until this dispute is resolved to our satisfaction". The union says the dangers of trying to force through lone working for train managers on the Eurostar service were reinforced during the massive failures experienced by the company in the run up to Christmas last year. RMT general secretary Bob Crow said: "The chaos on Eurostar last December, and the crucial role played by train managers in managing a potentially dangerous situation, should have killed off any plans to try and bulldoze through lone working of our members. However, we have still been unable to secure concrete assurances that the plans will not be implemented and in the interests of the safety and security of both our members and the travelling public on the Eurostar we have had no option but to ballot for action." He added that the union had "informed Eurostar that we remain available for talks and in the light of the massive mandate for action I hope that the company will see sense and take the necessary steps to resolve this dispute."

- [RMT news release.](#)

Nuclear worker suffers vibration injuries

A GMB member has received £35,000 in compensation after developing a strain injury from prolonged use of vibrating tools. The 49-year-old from Cumbria, whose name has not been released, was diagnosed with carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) after working at the Sellafield nuclear waste plant in Calder Bridge for 23 years. The often painful condition can also cause numbness and muscle weakness. As well as been linked to repetitive work, it can be caused by using vibrating tools. The symptoms are permanent, but can sometimes be reduced by surgery. The GMB member was first diagnosed with the syndrome in 2003 after complaining to his GP about pins and needles in his hands. He had been using vibrating hand held tools in his job as a process worker in the decommissioning unit every day since 1992. The condition became so bad he was left with restricted grip and had to undergo four operations on his hands. After his diagnosis, he was moved to a different department where he remains on restricted duties. However, he still suffers from pain in his hands, especially in bad weather and during the night in bed. He said: "My hands are my tools so I have been devastated by this condition. I can no longer use my hands effectively and as a result I will be on restricted duties for the rest of my employment with Sellafield." Stephen Gibbons from the GMB said: "Carpal tunnel syndrome can have a devastating impact on workers. Our member has worked in a manual job since he left school but now has restricted grip and dexterity which means he has been forced to rethink what he can do." Hazel Webb from Thompsons Solicitors, brought in by GMB to provide legal advice, added: "Courts consider that since 1975 employers should have known the risk workers face when using vibrating tools on a regular basis. They expect precautions to be taken. Our client will suffer for the rest of his life because the employer failed to keep a closer eye on his condition." Sellafield did not admit liability but settled the claim out of court.

- [Thompsons Solicitors news release.](#)

Employer ignored danger warnings

A shop worker suffered a serious back injury after her employer ignored complaints about a dangerous staircase. Angela Hurcomb, 55, was forced to take two months off work as a result of her injuries after she fell down a spiral staircase in January 2008 while working for the store Past Times in Hereford. She needed physiotherapy after damaging her back and hip. She fell despite holding onto the handrail but a later inspection by a council inspector found the treads on the staircase were inadequate. Complaints had been made about the hazards prior to the incident, by both Mrs Hurcomb and her colleagues, but nothing had been done. While structural alterations couldn't be made to the staircase as it was a listed building, improvements could have been made. Lawyers brought in by PCS to represent Mrs Hurcomb reached an out of court settlement of £5,000 after Past Times admitted liability

– her husband is a member of the union, which operates a legal support scheme which extends cover to family members. The shop has now put rubber edging on the stairs to prevent a similar accident from happening. Mrs Hurcomb is now working for a different employer. She said: "My life has changed dramatically since the accident. I used to ride my neighbour's horse every day but my injuries mean I can no longer ride and I cannot drive for longer than half an hour." Phil Madelin, national legal services officer at PCS, said: "With PCS, it's not just our members who are covered for personal injury claims, but their families as well. While Mrs Hurcomb's life will never be the same again, we were pleased to be able to help secure some financial recompense."

- [Thompsons Solicitors news release.](#)

Scaffolder's leg broken by 300k weight

A scaffolder who needed surgery after a 300 kilo weight fell on his leg has received £30,000 in an out of court payout. Unite member Michael Simpson, 63, was trapped under the heavy metal block when it fell onto his ankle in December 2005 while he was working at Felixstowe Docks. Three men were needed to lift the block which broke his leg at the ankle. Mr Simpson needed surgery and a metal plate was inserted to help his leg heal. He was forced to take more than nine months off work and had to undergo intensive physiotherapy to enable him to walk again. He has been able to return to his job as a scaffolder for TH Moss and Sons but is on light duties and has been told he will suffer from permanent stiffness in his ankle. Investigations for a union-backed compensation claim found neither the site owner, Hutchinson Ports, nor the crane operator's employer, Trimley Welding Services, were fully aware of who was responsible for certain aspects of site safety. Michael Simpson said: "My injuries mean that I've had to stop a lot of the activities I used to enjoy with my grandchildren and I've now been put on light duties with my employer. I am fortunate that I have been able to continue working as scaffolder at all." Unite regional officer Jane Jeffery said: "This accident could have been avoided if clear operating instructions had been made available to the crane operator who caused the accident. Without those instructions an experienced scaffolder has been forced to remain on light duties and to deal with the agony caused by his injuries."

- [Thompsons Solicitors news release.](#)

Staffing cuts leave Tube stations 'dangerous'

Rail union RMT says "reckless" staffing cutbacks on London's Tube network have made some stations "a muggers' paradise". The union says it has obtained figures showing that from October 2009 to March this year surface-level stations on the District, Central, Metropolitan, Circle & Hammersmith and Northern lines were left unstaffed for entire shifts on 439 occasions. The union warned of "worse to come" on staffing because of London Underground's plans to cut 800 station posts. RMT general secretary Bob Crow said: "The muggers' paradise of unstaffed stations is already a reality across whole swathes of the Tube system as these new figures

demonstrate. We already have proposals on the table that will force Tube drivers to pull away from stations without working mirrors or cameras and without the assistance of platform staff. It is only a matter of time before a passenger is dragged under a Tube train as a consequence of these reckless cuts.”

- [RMT news release](#). [The Independent](#).

Other news

Scotland takes a lead on dogs law

Postal workers’ union CWU has welcomed new dangerous dogs legislation passed unanimously by the Scottish parliament. The new law will give police, councils and courts in Scotland greater powers to impose penalties on the owners of dangerous dogs. Measures include the introduction of so-called dog 'ASBOs'. The Control of Dogs (Scotland) Bill passed its third stage in the Scottish parliament at the end of April and now looks set to become law north of the border. The Bill holds owners legally accountable for the actions of their dogs, even in their own homes. These were key issues raised by CWU through its 'Bite-Back' campaign. CWU national safety officer Dave Joyce commented: “This is a fantastic step forward in our 'Bite-Back' campaign against ineffective dangerous dogs legislation and we are grateful to Scottish MSPs for enshrining these important changes into law. We now need the rest of the UK to follow the Scottish lead.” He added: “The key message is that any dog can show aggression, particularly if it is not handled and trained properly, so legislation that provides the tools to target irresponsible ownership before it becomes a problem is very welcome.” The union says around 6,000 postal workers are attacked by dogs every year in the UK whilst delivering the mail. It says many require hospital treatment and many receive serious injuries. CWU says in 2007 and 2008 postal workers received life-threatening injuries in savage dog attacks.

- [CWU news release](#) and [Bite Back campaign](#).

Breast cancer link to shiftwork confirmed

Nearly 2,000 women contract breast cancer every year in the UK because they work night shifts, according to a new report. The figure, published by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), is based on 2005 data and attributes 1,969 new cases of breast cancer and 555 deaths from the disease that year to shiftwork. It says: “The estimate of nearly 2,000 breast cancer registrations due to shiftwork in our study is 54 per cent of all female occupationally-related cancer registrations.” Professor Andrew Watterson, head of occupational health research at Stirling University, urged HSE last year to act on international evidence confirming the link between breast cancer and shifts ([Risks 407](#)). However, HSE chief medical adviser John Osman, quoted in *Hazards* magazine in May 2009, responded: “At present HSE does not think the evidence on a cancer risk is compelling enough to require more of employers than is already required of them in respect of protecting the health of employees who do shift work.” HSE’s 2006 shiftwork guidance makes no mention of breast cancer risks, and HSE has made no

specific recommendations on measures to protect workers. Professor Watterson commented: "Shiftworkers should be aware of this issue. There are things which can be done to reduce their risk if they have to work shifts at night. There are ways of reducing the impact and people who have a choice may want to remove themselves from that setting." A spokesperson for HSE said: "In the light of these findings, this is clearly an area which needs more research. We are actively monitoring and assessing this issue." HSE appears to discount a large body of literature on other work-related causes of breast cancer, with the deaths attributed almost entirely to shifts. A study published in April concluded exposure to certain chemicals at work could massively increase breast cancer risks ([Risks 451](#)).

- [The Herald](#). [The burden of occupational cancer in Great Britain](#), research report 800, HSE, 2010 [[pdf](#)]. [While you were sleeping](#), Hazards magazine, number 106, Summer 2000.

Work cancer toll was (and is) under-estimated

Thousands of occupational cancer deaths each year have been missed in official estimates, a new study for the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has shown. The report puts the number of cancer deaths in 2005 that were attributable to work at 8,023 – which compares to the 6,000 deaths a year HSE defended as a "best available estimate" until two years ago. The new higher figures, which HSE now concedes "are likely to be a conservative estimate of the total attributable burden", indicate there were 13,694 cancers caused by work in 2005. The figure is conservative for a host of reasons. The study only considered group 1 and 2a carcinogens, discounting possibles caused by those in the lower 2b category where there is evidence of risk, but not enough suitable studies to establish the link with certainty. HSE's analysis generally relied on large studies, but researchers have pointed out that many smaller workplaces like car repair shops and small scale building work can result in routine and considerable exposures. And the study uses an HSE estimate of the numbers of lung cancers caused by asbestos exposure, which knocks at least 1,000 cancer deaths a year – and possibly more than 3,000 - off more usually cited figures. The occupational risks from certain cancers, for example leukaemia and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, are virtually dismissed, despite evidence of a significant risk in other countries. In addition, other nations recognise risks from more substances and for cancers at shorter latency periods. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber commented: "This paper confirms that past estimates of the numbers of cancers caused by occupational exposure have been too low. However it also shows that the effect on women has been under-estimated in the past – in particular the relationship between shiftwork and breast cancer." He added: "We welcome the additional work the HSE is doing in this, but this should not be used as an excuse for delay as there is already sufficient evidence for cancer prevention to be given a much higher priority." Filling the gaps in the HSE analysis would quickly push the toll into excess of 10,000 deaths a year and probably well above the minimum 12,000 annual occupational cancer death toll estimated by the trade union magazine *Hazards* in 2005 ([Risks 234](#)).

- [The burden of occupational cancer in Great Britain](#), research report 800, HSE, 2010 [[pdf](#)]. TUC occupational cancer guide [[pdf](#)]. [Global](#)

Young women 'face work stress risk'

Stress at work can greatly raise the risk of heart disease for women under 50, a study of more than 12,000 nurses suggests. The study, published in the journal *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, concludes work pressure has a greater effect on young women than those in their 50s and 60s. Danish researchers asked 12,116 female nurses aged between 45 and 64 about pressure at work and tracked their health for 15 years up to 2008. By then, 580 nurses had been admitted to hospital with ischaemic heart disease, including 369 cases of angina and 138 heart attacks. Nurses who indicated that their work pressures were a little too high were 25 per cent more likely to have ischaemic heart disease as those who said their work pressures were manageable and appropriate. But those who felt work pressures were much too high were almost 50 per cent more likely to have ischaemic heart disease. After taking account of risk factors for heart disease, such as smoking and lifestyle, the risk fell to 35 per cent, but still remained significant. When the findings were analysed by age, only the nurses under the age of 51 were at significant risk of heart disease. In a separate analysis, the researchers looked at the impact of work pressures on the same group, but for just five years up to 1998. Nurses who felt themselves to be moderately pressurised at work were 60 per cent more likely to have ischaemic heart disease, while those who said they faced excessive pressures at work were almost twice as likely to have it. These findings held true even after taking account of other risk factors. "It seems as if the effect of work pressure has a greater impact on younger nurses," say the authors. "This is in agreement with findings from previous studies looking at age specific effects in both men and women." They say the lower risk among older nurses may be due to other risk factors that become relatively more important with increasing age. Vulnerable individuals may have already left work, they add.

- Yrsa Andersen Hundrup and others. [Psychosocial work environment and risk of ischaemic heart disease in women: the Danish Nurse Cohort Study](#), *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, volume 67, pages 318-322, 2010 [[pdf](#)]. [BBC News Online](#).

Insurers must not evade payouts

The new government must provide injured workers with enhanced access to compensation, the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL). The association was commenting as a government consultation, *Accessing Compensation*, which closed on 5 May. APIL urged the incoming government to ensure that plans laid down by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), to create an Employers' Liability Tracing Office (ELTO) and Employers' Liability Insurance Bureau (ELIB), are followed. In February, the DWP launched a consultation on creating the ELTO, which will manage an electronic database of employers' liability insurance policies, and the ELIB, a compensation fund of last resort. APIL president Muir Lyons was critical of an existing voluntary scheme operated by the Association of British Insurers (ABI). He said: "All employees have the right to go to work and come home unharmed. But, when they are injured or made ill by their employers, they must be able to

claim fair compensation for their injuries. To do this, they need to be able to trace the insurers of their employers, but in too many cases, particularly when the employer has gone out of business, this cannot be done, either because policy information has not been properly preserved or because the current tracing system, administered by the ABI just does not work." According to the DWP consultation document: "While the Tracing Service has led to some improvements, there are still some individuals who are left without help – 3,210 of them in 2008." Those who cannot locate the responsible insurer, cannot obtain compensation for workplace injuries or diseases under the existing rules.

- APIL news release [[pdf](#)]. [Assessing Compensation consultation](#), DWP. [Law Gazette](#).

Right-leaning lobby ignorant on safety

A leading professional body has joined unions and campaigners in criticising a report by a Tory-linked think tank that calls for health and safety deregulation. The report, 'Health and safety: reducing the burden,' produced by the right-leaning Policy Exchange, "is marred by a number of conceptual weaknesses," according to the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH). In March, TUC general secretary Brendan Barber dismissed the report, saying it was "as close to being relevant to the needs of the modern workplace as Alice in Wonderland. Anyone who believes that there is a culture of over-compliance needs some basic lessons in the reality of working life" ([Risks 449](#)). IOSH is equally dismissive. It says references to "over compliance" aren't based on genuine requirements of safety laws. It adds that the report's authors are "seemingly unaware" that their call for "proportionality" on safety regulation is in fact already the legal position. "Regrettably, this Policy Exchange report does nothing to clear up public confusion or address the root causes of risk and liability aversion," said IOSH policy and technical director Richard Jones. Campaign group Families Against Corporate Killers (FACK) said the report, which treads similar ground to recent Tory proposals, treats the victims of work hazards with 'contempt', adding: "The Policy Exchange has not dealt with our burden which we carry all our lives, nor with all the costs of poor health and safety in human and financial terms, and has not bothered to consult those on the receiving end of employers' negligence."

- [IOSH news release](#).

Food firm fined for finger loss

A specialist bread manufacturer has been fined after a worker was injured by a dough mixing machine and had his finger amputated. Thambirasaiyah Roy, 39, was using a spiral mixing machine to make dough in October 2006, at the company's factory in Hendon. His left hand came into contact with the unguarded beater of the mixing machine. As a result part of his left index finger had to be amputated. A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation showed the guard covering dangerous parts of the machine had been missing for some time before the incident and previous advice

from HSE regarding maintenance of machinery in the factory had been ignored. Bread Factory Limited, formerly known as Bread Limited, of Hendon, Barnet, pleaded guilty to breaching the work equipment regulations. In April, the company was fined £3,500 and ordered to pay costs of £2,926, at the City of London Magistrates Court. HSE inspector Anne Gloor said: "This incident could easily have been avoided. The hazards associated with this type of machine are understood within the food manufacturing industry and there is clear guidance on the guarding standards which should be followed. There were clear failings on this occasion. Had a simple guard been fitted to this machine then Mr Roy would never have suffered these injuries."

- [HSE news release.](#)

Steel beams fall on site worker

A Hertfordshire company has been fined after a worker was seriously hurt when he was struck by steel beams falling from a tower crane. Stephen James, 58, was working as a slinger, a person directing crane drivers, for John Doyle Construction Ltd at a residential development in September 2007. City of London Magistrates heard Mr James had slung 20 steel beams onto two chains attached to a tower crane to be moved across site. The 2.7 metre beams were slung with six metre length chains attached to the crane, but as the load was lowered it hit a piece of reinforcing bar protruding from a first floor slab. The chains came together allowing the beams to slip. Mr James suffered multiple injuries including severe damage to his right arm and leg and now has a metal plate in his head and has been unable to work since the incident. A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation found the lift was not carried out in safe manner and the site was congested with building materials. HSE asserted that there should have been a specified safe zone for lifting. The company pleaded guilty to breaching the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations. It was fined £2,000 with costs of £17,466. HSE inspector Monica Babb said: "The terrible injuries Mr James suffered in this incident should and could have been avoided. This type of incident illustrates the importance of lifting operations being properly supervised and carried out in a safe manner. The site should have been tidier and there should have been a specific area set aside for lifting operations. This includes indentifying and dealing with the risks that can arise from an overcrowded site."

- [HSE news release.](#)

Water firms fined after roof fall

A water services company and its sub-contractor have been fined after a technician fell through the roof of a pumping station in Cambridgeshire, fracturing a vertebra in his back. Technician Matthew Morgan, sub-contracted to Anglian Water Services, fell through an unmarked fragile roof light while taking a reading from a rain gauge on top of a pumping station in Willingham, near Cambridge. Mr Morgan, 28, suffered fractured vertebra, cuts and bruising, and has had ongoing back pain since the fall on 6 August

2007. His employer, IETG Ltd, appeared at Ely Magistrates' Court on 27 April and admitted breaching criminal safety law in failing to ensure the health and safety of those working near unmarked fragile skylights. Magistrates fined IETG £1,500 and ordered the firm to pay £3,219 in costs. Anglian Water Services Ltd, which own and runs the pumping station, sub-contracts IETG Ltd to carry out specialist services. It failed to adequately identify the risks associated with working near the unmarked fragile skylights, and was fined £4,000 and ordered to pay £3,261 in costs. The company was also fined a further £12,000 with £6,286 in costs, after it admitted a separate offence. While investigating Mr Morgan's fall, Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspectors found problems with the safety of a number of machines at Anglian Water Service's sewage treatment plant in Angel Drove, Ely. Some machines were missing safety guards, which protect workers from dangerous moving parts. And some interlocking devices, designed to isolate power from the machines, were not working properly, meaning the machines could automatically start up when the guards were open.

- [HSE news release](#) and [Shattered lives campaign](#).

International News

Australia: Suicidal worker told to 'toughen up'

Fifteen years as a single-crew ambulance officer left Rick Wallace with post-traumatic stress disorder and a serious back injury - he would sometimes have to carry patients by piggyback to a stretcher because he was on his own. The Sydney Morning Herald reports Mr Wallace, 54, received "minimal" counselling in his 28 years in the ambulance service in southern Sydney, despite enduring the ordeal of attending critical patients on his own. The final straw was when a woman jumped in front of an express train near Wollongong in late 2005. A manager told him to "cowboy up" when he attempted suicide in September 2006, and he was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. "Some of the comments I got were, 'it's all in your head, this PTSD', 'toughen up', 'cowboy up', 'What's wrong with you? Just get on with it,'" Mr Wallace said. He was admitted to hospital, for the second time, for a five-week post-traumatic stress disorder treatment course in 2008. While he was there he received several emails from a manager containing images of car crash scenes, which were intended as a joke. He complained to his employer but nothing was done, he said. After undergoing back surgery in 2006 Mr Wallace was medically retired in January 2007. He said the New South Wales ambulance service is "refusing to accept there is a problem - and there is a huge problem with PTSD, depression, anxiety and attempted suicide and suicides." He is now the vice-president of the Police Post Trauma Support Group, which welcomes all emergency service workers. "They saved my life," he said.

- [Sydney Morning Herald](#). [Police Post Trauma Support Group](#).

USA: Retailer discouraged accident reports

Californian supermarket chain Raley's Inc has agreed to pay a \$550,000 settlement to resolve an unlawful business practices case

after pressuring workers out of reporting injuries and claiming compensation. An investigation by district attorneys in six counties started in 2007. It found Raley's managers routinely attempted to dissuade injured employees from filing compensation claims, suggesting that injured employees use their own health insurance for work-related injuries instead of reporting accidents and injuries as required by state workers' compensation law. As part of the settlement, Raley's agreed to changes of its workers' compensation practices, including mandatory training for store managers, improved record keeping and contracting with a medical advice company to evaluate injuries and recommend treatment over the phone. Raley's also agreed to pay \$550,000 in penalties and costs, including \$30,000 to pay for training law-enforcement investigators and auditors. The chain also accepted an injunction that prohibits Raley's from violating workers' compensation laws and requires that Raley's continue and expand the improved practices for claims by injured workers. The Amador County District Attorney's Office and the California Department of Insurance began investigating three years ago after receiving a complaint that store managers of one grocery store had attempted to dissuade an injured employee from filing a workers' compensation claim. The investigation led to criminal charges against two store managers who admitted misdemeanor violations. That led investigators to determine the practice was widespread.

- [Sacramento Bee. Sacramento Business Journal.](#)

USA: Young workers at risks

Younger workers in the US are twice as likely as their older counterparts to be treated in hospital emergency departments for work-related injuries, official research has shown. On average each year from 1998 to 2007, about 800,000 workers aged from 15 to 24 years were treated in emergency departments and nearly 600 died from work-related injuries. The new study from the US government's occupational health research body NIOSH examined emergency department-treated injuries and deaths among workers 15 to 24 years of age for the 10-year period, 1998 to 2007. The most frequent cause of death for younger workers was transportation-related fatalities, something that also holds true for older working populations. "Contact with objects or equipment" was responsible for the highest number of emergency department-treated injuries. This means these workers were struck by equipment, caught in tools, or crushed by machinery. NIOSH says "as in older populations, males in the younger workforce are more frequently injured or killed than their female counterparts. Also of note is that young Hispanic workers suffer a fatality rate that is significantly higher than the rate for non-Hispanic white workers and non-Hispanic black workers (5.6 versus 3.3 and 2.3 per 100,000 full-time equivalents (FTEs))."

- [NIOSH science blog.](#)

USA: Union called in at anti-union deaths mine

Three weeks after the 29 non-union miners died at Massey Energy's Upper Big Branch mine in West Virginia ([Risks 451](#)), the colliery did what other non-union miners have done in recent times when company negligence has caused a disaster. They called in the union participate in the investigation. Under US mine safety law, non-union miners can request the expertise of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) in the event of a disaster or other safety related concern. That happened at the non-union Crandall Canyon mine in the state of Utah in August 2007, following an explosion that killed six miners, and then days later, three rescue workers. It happened at West Virginia's Sago Mine a year earlier when 12 miners perished due to an underground explosion. On 27 April this year, a US Senate hearing on the West Virginia tragedy heard testimony that the Massey mine had been cited a total of 515 times for safety violations, and 124 times in 2009 alone. The company was hit with fines totalling US\$1.24 million, but paid less than US\$180,000 because the fines were reduced through continual appeals. And those appeals generally delay the necessary safety corrections. "It's very easy to game the system," said Joe Main, who heads the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) as an assistant US labor secretary. "It's a catch me if you can mentality," added Main, who once served as health and safety director of the UMWA. UMWA president Cecil Roberts testified: "The miners who work for Massey are scared to death. They're intimidated. This company is run like its 1921, not the present day." In the past 15 months in the US, 53 miners have perished; 52 of them worked at non-union operations.

- [ICEM news report. Washington Times.](#)

Resources

Stress research and statistics

If you want some official background stats on workplace stress, or a quick look at the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) research on the topic, then your task has just got a bit easier. HSE has produced a dedicated 'Work related stress –research and statistics' webpage.

- [HSE stress research and statistics webpage.](#)

Events and Courses

TUC courses for safety reps

COURSES FOR APRIL 2010 to JUNE 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