

# Risks

TUC 

*e-bulletin*

Number 462 – 26 June 2010

**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](#)

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

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### **Tory review wrong from the start**

The outcome of a government health and safety review, which seems to have been pre-ordained by the time David Cameron kicked off the process last week ([Risks 460](#)), has been strongly criticised by the TUC. The prime minister announced on 14 June that Lord Young was to undertake the review. By 19 June, the former Tory employment and trade secretary was telling the Times "People occasionally get killed, it's unfortunate but it's part of life" and declaring health and safety regulations protecting office workers were "nonsense". The Tory peer added that police and paramedics should be excluded from health and safety laws. He said the emergency services were "paid for doing a job that involves risk." However, critics say Lord Young revealed an astonishing disregard for the facts in his error-strewn comments. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber commented: "We would have hoped that, at the very least, any proposals for a review of health and safety would be based on the evidence rather than a selection of myths and distortions peddled by the media, more for their entertainment value than anything. Health and safety regulation is about saving lives and protecting workers from injury and illness and Lord Young needs to start listening to both workers and the families of those who have fallen victim to a lack of regulation and enforcement in the past." He added: "There can be no justification whatsoever for giving those whose job is to protect us, such as firefighters and the police, less protection under the law. This is giving out a message that the lives and health of our emergency workers are of less value than those they are trying to help. We know only too well that these people already risk their lives every day to keep us safe. Is the government now going to remove the laws that say their employer has to give them the training, equipment and support they need to protect them as is suggested?" Lord Young's review is expected to report in July.

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

### **Don't play politics with safety**

David Cameron should not play politics with workplace health and safety, a union expert has warned. Roger Kline, from the children's services union Aspect, notes: "In the year when the cost of cutting corners on health and safety killed oil rig workers, polluted an ocean and threatens the very existence of BP, our prime minister, (without a dissenting squeak from his coalition partners) claims we need to end the 'compensation culture' in health and safety." He indicated it is not just industrial workers that have reason to be concerned with the prime minister's health and safety call for a "sensible new approach". Writing online for Community Care magazine, he notes there is a "direct threat" to the working conditions of social workers. "What recent health and safety legislation has done is to force employers to work to prevent accidents and ill health rather than pay out compensation," he added. "They are now required to actively engage in risk management and are supposed to involve their workforce and safety representatives in doing so. Health and safety representatives have guaranteed rights to inspect and intervene." Mr Kline concludes: "There is not much 'new politics' about this

review, led as it is by Lady Thatcher's former favourite minister Lord Young. It is a return to very old politics where life was cheap and accidents were inevitable."

- [The Big Picture, Community Care blog.](#)

### **Strike breaking jeopardised swim safety**

Unions last week raises 'serious concerns' about health and safety arrangements at a major UK swimming event affected by strike action. Members of UNISON, Unite and GMB took the industrial action for three days, from Friday 18 June to Sunday 20 June, at Tollcross Centre in Glasgow, the venue for the UK Swimming Masters event. Glasgow branch secretary Brian Smith, speaking on day one of the 'rock solid' action, said the safety concerns were so acute the unions contacted the Health and Safety Executive. He said the only staff on site were managers, indicating necessary safety cover must have been coming solely "from volunteers from the Scottish Swimming organisation." He added "we have serious concerns that these managers, and the volunteers, have not had the necessary health and safety training specific to this building." Unions say the industrial action is in defence of public services. They add that they are acting to protect the wages of over 150 workers at Culture and Sport Glasgow who are facing a pay cut of up to 10 per cent due to the changes in sports facilities opening hours. The body, which runs the city's sports, museums and libraries and which was created just three years ago, was rebranded as 'Glasgow Life' this week at a cost of £54,000. UNISON said staff would prefer to see the money spent on avoiding wage cuts rather than "new t-shirts."

- [UNISON news release.](#) [Glasgow Life news release.](#) [Morning Star.](#) [BBC News Online.](#)

### **Campaign aims to scupper pirates**

Workplace violence a big issue for trade unionists – and maritime professionals are having to deal with one of the most extreme forms of workplace violence: piracy. Mark Dickinson, general secretary of seafarers' union Nautilus International, says it is "incredible" his members are still at risk "on a daily basis". Writing on a TUC blog, he points out "that last year saw a total of 410 officially recorded attacks on merchant ships in piracy incidents and more than 1,100 incidents of violent attacks against their crews – including the use of guns, knives and even rocket-propelled grenades. Over the past decade, our research shows that 195 seafarers have been killed, 509 injured and an amazing 4,171 held hostage in pirate attacks. And that's just based on the official statistics: some research suggests as many as one in four incidents are never reported." He added: "For seafarers, piracy is also more than simple workplace violence. Many seafarers may spend months at a time on their ships, so attacks are also an attack on their home as well – and it is often their own personal property that is stolen during raids." Unions were fighting back, he said, with the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) involved in a global campaign to persuade all governments to commit the

resources necessary to end the problem of piracy. Nautilus is part of the coalition of industry, insurance and union bodies, which aims to deliver at least half a million signatures in an e-petition to governments at the United Nations by World Maritime Day on 23 September.

- [Touchstone blog. Global Campaign Against Piracy - sign the petition](#) now!

### **Bosses pocket bonuses as pubs crumble**

Directors of a major pub chain are pocketing 'massive bonuses' but neglecting essential maintenance to their properties with potentially deadly consequences, GMB has said. The union has called on the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to investigate all Pubco Enterprise Inns premises "before someone is killed." The move follows an incident at the Kings Arms in Biggin Hill this month where a bedroom ceiling collapsed and injured a chef. As the ceiling began to cave in, Steve Thomas leapt from his bed in an attempt to avoid the full impact of the collapse and sustained damage to the ligaments and soft tissue of his leg. A second employee had left the room moments earlier. GMB says had that worker still been in the room they "most certainly would have been critically injured." Earlier this year, pub tenant Nicola Rose, a GMB member, had called in the union to raise outstanding repair and maintenance work that was the responsibility of Enterprise. The firm agreed to sort out the work, but subsequently failed to act. Hayley Brennan, GMB's lead organiser for pub tenants and who represented Nicola in the negotiations, said: "This puts a complete new take on going to your local pub to get plastered." She said: "I warned them that if the ceiling collapsed on someone, GMB would hold them criminally negligent. They agreed to get it sorted. Last week it collapsed and fell on the chef and he has sustained injuries. GMB will hold them to account." She added: "While the Pubco boardrooms are awarding themselves massive bonuses, lack of investment in their estates has led to increasingly dilapidated premises. I am calling on the Health and Safety Executive to undertake an urgent review of all tenanted pubs in the UK before someone is killed – starting with Enterprise Inns."

- [GMB news release.](#)

### **'Lethal' plan for driverless Tube trains**

Tube union RMT has condemned 'lethal and unworkable' plans hatched by Conservatives on the London Assembly to move the entire London Underground train system to driverless operation. The leaked memo, obtained by the BBC, recommends sacking all of the 3,525 train drivers and operators. RMT says it is also clear that the plan is part of a secret drive by the Conservative Party to break the union. RMT general secretary Bob Crow said: "Under normal circumstances I would be tempted to dismiss this leaked report as some kind of a joke, cooked up by anti-union fantasists, but in the current climate of cuts and attacks on public services we are taking it very seriously." He warned that the crucial safety role played by train staff would be lost if the plan was implemented. "People only have to look at the footage of the carnage down the tube after the 7/7 bombings, and the brave and critical role played by train operators and platform staff in dealing with that emergency situation, to see why these crew are so vital to the safety of

Londoners," he said. "The people behind this Tory Party report not only want to get rid of the drivers but they want no staff on the tube trains at all. That just proves that they have no understanding of the tube system and a complete and utter disregard for passenger safety. It may well be that some junior politician is simply flying a kite to make a name for themselves but RMT will not sit back and allow this lethal and unworkable idea to gain any traction whatsoever."

- [RMT news release](#). [BBC News Online](#) report, including the Tory memo [[pdf](#)]. [Personnel Today](#).

### **You decide, says firm – eyes or ears?**

A West Midlands fitter was forced to make a choice between protecting his ears or his eyes at work. The 66-year-old Unite member is now deaf in his left ear and suffers from tinnitus after he was exposed to excessive levels of noise while working for a factory for 40 years. Neither the worker nor the factory, which makes parts for the petrochemical industry, has been identified. The conditions in which the deafened worker and his colleagues toiled and the type of protection provided meant that until 2006 he and his colleagues had to choose between wearing protective glasses or ear muffs. He chose to protect his eyes and as a result was exposed to excessive noise. He said: "During the early years of my work health and safety wasn't a priority. Even when protective equipment was introduced in the 1990s its use wasn't enforced. The working environment and the type of equipment we were provided with meant I had a choice between protecting my eyes or ears. I felt that my sight was more important and chose protective glasses over ear muffs. I've now paid the price of that decision with my hearing." He was awarded £7,000 compensation in a union-backed claim. Unite regional secretary Gerard Coyne commented: "Our member should never have been put in a position where he was forced to make a decision about which part of his body to protect whilst at work. There was equipment easily available to the company that offered adequate protection for both his ears and eyes."

- [Thompsons Solicitors news release](#).

### **Worker maimed in molten metal spill**

A foundry worker who suffered 65 per cent burns during a spillage of molten metal has received a 'substantial' sum in compensation. The 28-year-old Unite member from Horwich, whose name has not been released, suffered extensive burns to his legs, feet, arms, hands and torso and was put into a medically induced coma following the incident at PMT Industries in Tonge Moor in January 2008. Since then he has needed more than 20 reconstruction operations. It took an eight hour operation to save his legs. The worker was making a large cylinder known as a 'Yankee Dryer Head'. However, while pouring molten iron into a mould the ladle up-turned spilling the liquid onto the floor and he was engulfed in heat, steam and smoke. He was unable to escape because he couldn't see and because the aluminium access ladder to the

platform he was on had melted in the heat. He is still receiving skin grafts and has needed considerable psychological support to deal with flashbacks and to come to terms with his injuries. Lawyers brought in by the union argued that PMT Industries should have had safer systems in place to avoid this type of horrific incident. PMT denied liability but settled the claim out of court. Kevin Coyne, Unite regional secretary, said: "This accident is the foundry workers worst nightmare. It is difficult to imagine the pain and suffering that our member suffered during the incident itself and during the many operations he has had to help his recovery." He added: "His good physical recovery is testament to his bravery and determination. We are proud to have supported him in his claim for compensation." Samantha Hemsley from union law firm Thompsons Solicitors said: "This was a difficult case to fight as PMT Industries refused to take responsibility for this accident but through hard work we are pleased to have been able to secure a substantial sum in compensation."

- [Thompsons Solicitors news release.](#)

## *Other news*

### **Oil giants guilty in Buncefield blast**

A company controlled by Total and Chevron has been found guilty of grave safety failures that led to the Buncefield oil depot explosion. Hertfordshire Oil Storage Limited (HOSL), which was owned by the oil giants, failed to prevent major accidents and limit their effects, a court has found. The eight-week trial at St Albans Crown Court saw a range of criticisms of HOSL and Total UK, which had three out of five directors on the company's board and employed most of the staff on site. The Buncefield blast on 11 December 2005 destroyed the depot after a huge vapour cloud ignited when 250,000 litres of petrol leaked from one of its tanks. The explosion injured 43 people and destroyed homes and businesses. Prosecutors said it was "miraculous" that there were no fatalities, a fact largely attributed to the incident happening early on a Sunday. Andrew Langdon QC, prosecuting in the Buncefield case on behalf of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Environment Agency, told the court: "Supervisors didn't get much help or protection in what they did. They didn't get any risk assessments worth their name – pretty essential you might think – how the tanks should be filled, how they should be emptied, what happens with all these considerations." Training manuals were found to be out of date and there was found to be a "degree of fatigue" among the supervisors tasked with keeping the depot safe. Contracts with companies who worked onsite were found to be insufficiently clear, with contractors unsure of lines of responsibility. There were also guilty verdicts against two other companies linked to the Buncefield site, TAV Engineering and Motherwell Control Systems 2003. The Health and Safety Executive and Environment Agency said in a statement: "The scale of the explosion and fire at Buncefield was immense and it was miraculous that nobody died. Unless the high hazard industries truly learn the lessons, we may not be that fortunate in future." Sentencing is planned for 16 July 2010.

- [HSE/Environment Agency joint statement.](#) [HSE Buncefield webpages.](#) [The Guardian.](#) [Buncefield Investigation website.](#)

## **Campaign leads to fewer quarry injuries**

Reportable injuries in the quarry sector are down 76 per cent since the 'Hard Target' initiative was launched in 2000, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has said, with reportable injuries down from over 500 to below 200 a year. The watchdog is now calling on firms to renew their commitment to 'Target Zero', the phase of the campaign that came into effect in 2005, with the aim of bringing down reportable injuries by a further 15 per cent year on year to 2015. HSE chair Judith Hackitt commented: "The improvements made so far are down to strong leadership, with employers promoting a safety culture right across their organisations, bolstered by the efforts of the unions and trade associations." Among factors contributing to the improved record, she highlighted "safety reps who have devised worker involvement courses in their own time." GMB national officer Allan Black commented: "GMB strongly supports the work of everyone involved in the Target Zero campaign. The superb results achieved to date are testimony to the value of involving workers to develop joint solutions to the key issues that the quarrying industry faces. We look forward to embedding this good practice across the sector, and driving further improvements in the future." Launched in 2005, Target Zero is an initiative of HSE's Quarries National Joint Advisory Committee (QNJAC) "which seeks to achieve continual improvement in the health and safety performance of the quarry industry."

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

## **Worker loses leg under waste recycling truck**

A Cheshire recycling company has been fined £10,000 after a worker lost part of his leg when he was crushed by an 18-tonne truck. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) prosecuted WSR Recycling Ltd after the incident, which led to the worker's left leg being amputated below the knee. The 46-year-old man, who has asked not to be named, was working in a tipping bay at the company's site in Widnes on 14 September 2009 when he was struck by a Volvo L110E articulated shovel loader. WSR Recycling admitted it did not ensure pedestrians and vehicles could move around the bay safely when it appeared this week before Halton Magistrates' Court in Runcorn. Chris Goddard, the investigating inspector for HSE, said: "This worker has suffered a life-long injury as a result of a tragic incident and was very fortunate not to have been killed." He added: "It was foreseeable that pedestrians would be working in the same area as trucks, and so measures should have been taken to manage the risks. The site should have been properly supervised so that workers were kept away from moving vehicles." WSR Recycling pleaded guilty to a breach of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992. The company was fined £10,000 and ordered to pay £6,338 costs. HSE says figures show that employees in the waste industry are ten times more likely to be killed at work, and four times as likely to be involved in an accident.

- [HSE news release](#) and [waste webpages](#).

## **Council fined after school death fall**

A council has been fined £56,000 after an electrician was killed when a work platform collapsed in a school gym hall. Robert McGill suffered severe brain injuries in the 6 April 2009 incident at Kilmarnock Academy, and died later in hospital. At Kilmarnock Sheriff Court, East Ayrshire Council admitted a criminal breach of safety law. Mr McGill, who had worked as an electrician for the local authority for 18 years, fell to the ground from a mobile elevated work platform, known as an airlift, as he worked to repair overhead lighting at the school. The court heard he and another council worker were using the airlift without stabilisers. An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) following the tragedy found that no formal training had been given to any of the electricians working for the council expected to use the airlift. Sheriff Seth Ireland said: "There were no written enforceable procedures put in place by East Ayrshire Council, which would have directed and supported the late Mr McGill and other workers in the safe operation of this piece of plant. The loss of Mr McGill to his family must be regarded as being beyond any monetary figure." Speaking after the court hearing, HSE inspector Barry Baker said: "This was a tragic incident which highlights once again the very real risks of working at height and the consequences of failing to take reasonable safety precautions. More than 4,000 employees suffered a major injury as a result of a fall from height in 2008/09 showing that it should be properly planned and assessed, adequately supervised and employees given enough training to allow them to work safely. The consequences of failing to do this are frequently serious and in this case, sadly, were fatal."

- [HSE news release](#) and [falls webpages](#). [BBC News Online](#). [Glasgow Evening Times](#). [Scotsman](#).

## **Father fined after son's fall**

A sawmill and the father of an injured worker have been fined after the roofing contractor fell through a skylight and suffered serious head injuries. Woodgate Sawmills Limited, and Stanley John Frederick Stephens of The Longhope Welding Company were prosecuted after Robert Stephens, 40, fell through a fragile skylight on 1 June 2007 while working on the roof of a sawmill building in Coleford. He was working for his father, Stanley, alongside fellow Longhope Welding Company employees to raise the roof line of the sawmill when he fell five metres and landed on the concrete floor below, sustaining serious head injuries. At a hearing before Gloucester magistrates, Woodgate Sawmills Ltd pleaded guilty to four breaches of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994 and 2007 and was ordered to pay a £13,320 fine and £14,443 costs. Stanley Stephens pleaded guilty to criminal safety offences and was fined £26,660 and costs of £14,443. Speaking after the hearing, Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspector Annette Walker said: "The investigation revealed significant failures in the safe systems of work for the removal of the roof sheets and also significant failure to control risks of working at height during all of the stages of the sawmill refurbishment. Robert Stephens was supervising two other employees who were also at risk, one of whom was only 17 at the time of this incident." She added: "The sawmill remained open

during all of the works and employees working below were also at risk from persons or objects falling on them. Robert's fall could easily have proved fatal."

- [HSE news release.](#)

### **Workers caught short on toilet breaks**

Many of us are being short-changed by our employers when it comes to the call of nature. A study by the Labour Research Department (LRD) has found many British workers are suffering because of inadequate toilet facilities and restrictive toilet break rules. LRD surveyed unionised workplaces and found that the transport sector was particularly badly affected, along with industries such as mining, construction and quarrying. Those with health problems such as irritable bowel syndrome experienced particular difficulties. While most office workers did not experience problems, there were still some areas - for example call centres - where restrictive practices and surveillance meant that workers could be penalised for taking time off to go to the loo. "For most workers, toilet breaks are not an issue: they go when they need to and that's that," said LRD researcher Dave Statham. "But for some, the situation is not so simple, and the consequences can be unpleasant, unhealthy and humiliating. Employers in all industries need to realise that staff need proper access to clean facilities, and to be able to go when they need to without harassment or loss of pay." Other problems identified in the survey included disabled access, lone working, requiring permission to go to the loo, insufficient break time, and unhygienic facilities. The research reaches the same conclusion as earlier reports from TUC and *Hazards* magazine. In March, TUC reiterated its call for a legal right-to-go for workers ([Risks 447](#)).

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

## *International News*

### **China: Illegal coal mine kills 47**

A coal mine in central China's Henan Province where an underground explosion killed 47 people on 21 June was operating illegally, officials said. The operation license of Xingdong No. 2 Mine in Weidong District, Pingdingshan City, expired on 6 June, and the district government cut its electricity supply on 7 June, according to local officials. But mine manager Liu Jianguo still managed to produce coal even as ten district government supervisors were stationed at the mine, said Luo Lin, head of the State Administration of Work Safety. The shaft should have been sealed with concrete but instead it was covered with a "moveable" cement board, journalists at the scene reported. "The accident shows safety regulations were not strictly observed at the grassroots level and that some regulators may be in cahoots with mine owners," said Luo. Seventy-five miners were underground when the blast occurred. Twenty-five of the 28 rescued miners were hospitalised, one of whom has been discharged. Nine were reported to be in a serious condition. According to official figures, 2,631 coal miners

died in 1,616 mine incidents in China in 2009, down 18 per cent from the previous year. But independent labour groups say the figure could be much higher, as accidents are covered up to prevent mine closures. Most accidents are blamed on failures to follow safety rules, including a lack of required ventilation or fire control equipment. Coal-generated power accounts for about 70 per cent of China's electricity needs.

- [Xinhua](#). [BBC News Online](#). [The Independent](#).

### **India: Panel reconsiders Bhopal leak action**

Cabinet ministers are recommending that India's government revisit its response to the 1984 toxic gas leak in Bhopal. The leak at the Union Carbide plant killed an estimated 15,000 people in the world's worst industrial disaster. Anger over the case revived this month after an Indian court sentenced seven senior managers at a former Union Carbide subsidiary to two years in prison. Home Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram, briefing reporters after a two-hour-long meeting in Delhi, said the panel of senior ministers had dealt with all issues concerning the incident. He said the meeting discussed "compensation to victims, legal issues including pursuing the extradition of Warren Anderson [the then chair of the US-based Union Carbide parent group] and... health-related matters." The fact that the Bhopal tragedy is back in the news at the same time as the huge oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico has added to the sense that victims of the 1984 disaster have been terribly let down. An editorial in The Hindu newspaper noted President Obama's "determination and purpose in holding BP accountable... unwittingly showed up the indifferent attitude of successive US governments to the Bhopal gas calamity." It adds "surely, this intellectually accomplished president could not have missed the double standards involved in US responses to Bhopal and the oil spill crisis." An extradition treaty does exist between India and the United States - but so far all requests by India for Warren Anderson's extradition have been turned down by the US government. President Obama, by contrast, has been scathing in his attacks on BP chief Tony Hayward, including saying he should be out of a job.

- [The Guardian](#). [BBC News Online](#). [The Hindu](#).

### **USA: BP disaster victims could lose out**

Thanks to a 90-year-old legal loophole, the families of the 11 workers killed on the Deepwater Horizon oil rig may be denied full compensation for the loss of their loved ones. US magazine In These Times reports: "Currently, the Death on the High Seas Act (DOHSA) severely limits the liability of negligent corporations operating in international waters. Last week, Democratic senator Patrick Leahy introduced legislation to close the loophole but his proposed reform is likely to face stiff opposition from the oil and cruise ship industries." Unlike occupational fatalities on land - where the worker's family can sue for both pecuniary (lost wages) and non-pecuniary damages (recompense for the loss of a loved one) - the families of the victims of the Deepwater Horizon disaster are only able to recoup lost wages. Under DOHSA, a negligent

cruise ship operator, oil rig owner, or ferry boat captain is not liable for non-pecuniary damages, effectively imposing a relatively low cap on claims. The article notes this is not just about money. "The threat of non-pecuniary damages might also make employers more cautious with the lives of their workers. From a strictly budgetary standpoint, the de facto liability cap makes workers seem more expendable, especially low paid workers." It was announced this week that the Chemical Safety Board (CSB), the organisation that investigated BP's Texas City disaster and pinned much of the blame on the company's London-based global board, would investigate the "root causes" of the latest industrial catastrophe blighting BP's record.

- [In These Times](#). CSB investigation announcement [[pdf](#)].

### **USA: Work safety laws are top public issue**

Health and safety regulations are the most important workplace issue for the public, new US research has found. A national poll on by the Public Welfare Foundation and researchers at the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center found a massive 85 per cent say workplace safety regulations are "very important", heading the poll. This was followed by family and maternity leave (78 per cent), a minimum wage (70 per cent) and paid sick leave (69 per cent) in the ranking of very important public concerns. More than half of workers without paid sick days (55 per cent) have gone to work with a contagious illness like the flu, compared to 37 per cent of workers with paid sick days, the study found. Nearly twice as many workers without paid sick days (24 per cent) have sent a sick child to school or daycare than workers with paid sick days (14 per cent). Three in every four respondents overall (75 per cent) favoured a law that guarantees paid sick days for all workers, and most support pro-rated paid sick days for part-time workers. "Americans overwhelmingly view paid sick days as a basic labour standard," concluded Dr Tom W Smith, a senior fellow at the National Opinion Research Center and director of the study.

- Public Welfare Foundation [news release](#), [full report](#) and [audio release](#).

### **USA: Pratt study did show cancer rise**

Pratt & Whitney Aircraft has been accused of burying evidence of higher cancer rates at a Connecticut factory. A series of headlines trumpeted the company line: 'No cancer link found at P&W'; 'Study: Pratt & Whitney Workers Got Brain Cancer At Same Rate As Overall Population,' and 'Study Shows No Cluster At North Haven Plant.' However, Carol Bass, writing in the investigative online journal the New Haven Independent, sees it differently. She says the headlines echoed Pratt & Whitney's official statement about the most recent results of a massive brain cancer study, released 3 June. "We are reassured," said the statement from the giant jet engine maker, "that the study does not show an increased rate of brain cancer among our Connecticut employees." According to Bass: "Reassuring, yes. But not entirely true." She added: "In fact, Phase 2 of the \$12 million, eight-years-and-counting study found slightly elevated rates of a deadly brain tumour among people who worked

at Pratt's North Haven plant - where a rash of death ignited concerns a decade ago... The gap gets bigger when you compare P&W employees who worked only in North Haven with those who were never assigned there." Bass points out that study co-author Nurtan Esmen of the University of Illinois at Chicago, wasn't so quick to dismiss the 40 per cent glioblastoma gap between Pratt's "North Haven only" and "never North Haven" workers. "I don't think we're ready to make a judgment," he said. One of those possible causes of the elevated rates in New Haven, Esmen said, is the "blue haze" of the now-closed plant. Created by metalworking fluids, the haze always hung in the air, those who worked there say. Bass concludes: "The cancer victims' families are hoping that the study's third and final phase will penetrate that haze and - at long last - provide some answers."

- [New Haven Independent](#).

## *Events and Courses*

### **TUC courses for safety reps**

COURSES FOR SEPTEMBER 2010 to DECEMBER 2010

- [Northern](#), [North West](#), [Southern & Eastern](#), [Yorkshire & Humber](#), [South West](#), [Midlands](#), [Scotland](#), [Wales](#)

### **Is deregulation dead debate, 15 July, London**

Has the recession revealed the failure of light-touch regulation? Or is red tape stifling the economic recovery? The TUC and the British Chambers of Commerce go head-to-head on 15 July as they debate the future of regulation. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber and independent economist Howard Reed will debate with British Chambers of Commerce director general David Frost and Manchester Business School's Professor Francis Chittenden, considering the arguments set out in the TUC's Red Tape Delusion and the BCC's Employment Regulation: Up for the Job?. Pre-election, the Conservatives promised a programme of deregulation and have already singled out health and safety for particular attention, announcing a review and plans to introduce some deregulation in the area.

[Is deregulation dead?](#) 15 July, 12.30-2pm, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London (lunch available from 12pm). [Register online](#).

## *Useful Links*

- Visit the TUC [www.tuc.org.uk/h\\_and\\_s](http://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