

# Risks

TUC 

*e-bulletin*

Number 471 – 28 August 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](#)

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## STUC anger at microchip cancer study

The Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) is to raise formally its concerns about the Health and Safety Executive's 'no risk' claim about cancer rates at a Greenock microelectronics factory. STUC said it intended to write to HSE chair Judith Hackitt "seeking an explanation how the HSE justifies issuing a press release with the heading 'Research indicates no increased cancer risk at Greenock factory' when the report quite clearly states that incidences for some types of cancer were higher than they had anticipated." Dr John Osman, a co-author of the report and HSE's chief medical adviser, launched the report on cancer rates at the National Semiconductor UK (NSUK) plant. He said: "The research does not establish a link between cancer and employment at NSUK. I hope both present and former employees will find some comfort in these results. They have waited patiently to discover the outcome of this research and I hope this report offers some clarity and reassurance." This good news message was reflected in headlines in the local and national press. But STUC says in reality the study found worrying excesses of cancers, notably female lung and breast cancers and male colorectal and brain cancers. An STUC statement said: "From our early study of the findings it is quite clear that there is an increased risk of some types of cancer, including lung cancers in women, yet the HSE in their release and media interviews were running a line that the results were not unexpected given the size of the workforce and the surrounding community." STUC added that HSE's claims the excesses were not significant would not be shared "by those who have contracted cancer, and the families of those who have died, for the rest of their days." Giving the company advance sight of the report, but leaving the families to hear about it through the media was "shameful", STUC added.

- [Scottish Trades Union Congress \(STUC\) news report](#). Health and Safety Executive (HSE) [study webpages](#), [report summary](#) and [news release](#). A further study of cancer among the current and former employees of National Semiconductor (UK) Ltd, Greenock – 2010, HSE, August 2010 [[pdf](#)]. [The Herald](#). [BBC News Online](#).

## Campaign refutes HSE's 'bogus' cancer line

A campaign group has charge the UK's official workplace health and safety watchdog with helping the microelectronics industry cover up worrying evidence of occupational cancer risks. Phase Two, which represents workers who believe their health was damaged by exposures at National Semiconductor's (NSUK) plant in Greenock, Scotland and which has the support of STUC, was speaking out on the 24 August publication of a study into cancer rates at the factory. Phase Two says in addition to "burying the cancer evidence", HSE also misrepresented the findings of studies at IBM and other plants to reinforce this "bogus" no risk message. Nor does HSE's report make any reference to critical independent, peer-reviewed analyses of the IBM 'corporate mortality file', which found wide-ranging cancer concerns. "HSE plays down the evidence of its own study, which did find real cancer excesses, something it studiously omits from its news release and its study summary," said Phase Two spokesperson Jim McCourt. "It then plays down the findings of other studies to reach a faux consensus and bogus 'no

cancer risk' conclusion." He said advice Phase Two has obtained from prominent occupational cancer experts in the US and UK "reinforced the message that HSE has bent the truth in an attempt to make an occupational cancer headache go away. But the way to do that is to make microelectronics work healthier, not to put a healthy twist on sick statistics." He said HSE's tactic of conflating its National Semiconductor study with the industry-backed IBM studies in one good news story would be seen as a major coup by the microelectronics industry. National Semiconductor have reproduced the HSE press release in full on their website.

- [Phase Two news release](#) and [campaign group webpages](#). [National Semiconductor website](#). [Green jobs, safe jobs blog](#). [Evening Times](#).

### **Tube staff to strike for safety**

Some 10,000 members of London Underground's two biggest unions will begin a rolling series of strikes on 6 September against plans to axe 800 station and other staff and close ticket offices. The move comes after RMT and TSSA members voted overwhelmingly for action to defend jobs and safety. Maintenance and engineering staff will begin their first 24-hour strike at 5pm on 6 September. Other grades, including station and revenue staff, operational managers, drivers and signallers, will start their first 24-hour strike at 9pm the same day. An indefinite overtime ban for all London Underground Limited (LUL) members of both unions will start at one minute after midnight on 6 September. RMT general secretary Bob Crow said: "LUL and the mayor must understand that the cuts they want to impose are unacceptable to our members and will undermine safety and service for the travelling public. The mayor was elected on a promise of maintaining safe staffing levels and he is doing the opposite, planning to leave stations and platforms dangerously understaffed and threatening to turn the network into a muggers' paradise." TSSA general secretary Gerry Doherty said: "Boris Johnson may be prepared to go into the Olympic Games with a second-class Tube service when the eyes of the world will be on the capital: we are not. We will defend a vital public service on which millions of people depend every day of their working lives. We will not see jobs and services sacrificed to pay for the sins of the City of London and Wall Street."

- [RMT news release](#). [TSSA news release](#). [Morning Star](#). [BBC News Online](#). [The Guardian](#).

### **Prison bravery 'rewarded with reprimand'**

A prison officer has been suspended for five months, subjected to an investigation and reprimanded following what his union describes as "heroic actions to prevent injury to other staff" and the attempts of an offender to self harm. The Prison Officers' Association (POA) says the episode at Whatton prison is estimated to have cost the Ministry of Justice tens of thousands of pounds. The saga culminated on 12 August, when the officer concerned was reprimanded by the governor for intimidating the prisoner. POA national chair Colin Moses said: "I am totally disgusted at the outcome of this debacle. The officer should have been commended

not reprimanded by the governor.” He said he had written head of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and justice secretary Kenneth Clarke “asking for a full investigation into the waste of taxpayers money and for the award to be expunged from the officer.” He added: “I am aware that the staff at HMP Whatton are very angry because they feel they can no longer protect themselves in any incident with the equipment which NOMS provide and mandate them to carry and use to protect the health and safety of staff and prisoners alike. I will be seeking urgent meetings with NOMS to discuss this issue.”

- [POA news release.](#)

### **Eurostar train managers vote for action**

Train managers at Eurostar have voted overwhelmingly for action to stop next month’s imposition of the ‘self-dispatch’ of services from Paris, a safety critical function currently undertaken by platform staff. After the RMT members voted by a margin of 24 to one for action in a ballot that closed this week, the union instructed train managers to refuse to carry out train dispatch duties that the union argues are a cost-cutting and unreasonable extension of already heavy responsibilities. RMT general secretary Bob Crow said: “Eurostar failed to guarantee that it will not impose self-dispatch, either at Paris or elsewhere on the Eurostar network, our members have delivered their decisive verdict and the union has instructed them not to carry out self-dispatch duties. The company tried to hoodwink our members by claiming falsely that their French colleagues had already agreed to self-dispatch, and that is no way to try to conduct industrial relations.” He added: “This is a purely cost-cutting exercise that would load additional safety critical responsibilities onto train managers and we will not stand by and watch the levelling-down of standards. We will work closely with our French and Belgian colleagues to defend the safety of Eurostar services and to ensure that the company does not impose working practices that have not been negotiated or agreed.”

- [RMT news release.](#)

### **Hospital porter retires early after injury**

A hospital porter who was injured at work after his employer refused to respond to health and safety warnings has been forced to take early retirement. UNISON member Peter Streek, 66, received £13,000 compensation in a union-backed claim after suffering a badly ruptured Achilles tendon. Prior to his enforced retirement, he worked for South West London Elective Orthopaedic Centre (SWLEOC) as a porter at Epsom General Hospital. He injured his foot pushing an unwieldy clinical waste bin down a steep, uneven path to the hospital compactor. The bins were large and poorly designed, had no handles, and were difficult to manoeuvre safely up and down the slope. Mr Streek’s workmates and UNISON had warned management about the dangers, but despite these warnings hospital managers did nothing until after Mr Streek’s injury. He was unable to work for more than a year, and could not walk without extreme pain. He eventually had to take early retirement. UNISON’s

head of health for London, Chris Remmington, said: "Sadly, the accident that forced Peter out of a job he loved could and should have been prevented. If managers had listened to staff and unions, and taken action to make the bins and path safer, Peter would have been saved a lot of pain and distress." He added: "We are pleased that SWLEOC has begun to address its unsafe working conditions in the wake of this case. But for Peter this is too little too late."

- [UNISON news release.](#)

### **Rail worker received £9,750 burns payout**

A rail worker whose leg was badly burned as he cut a rail has received £9,750 compensation. The RMT member, whose name has not been released, suffered the injury while replacing rails at Cogan Station, in the Vale of Glamorgan. A disc cutter ignited off a spark from the rail and caught fire, burning the member's leg through his clothing. The worker, who has permanent scarring, had not been provided with suitable personal protective equipment (PPE). Bob Crow, RMT general secretary, said: "The health and safety of our members is paramount and we will always back those who are, unfortunately, injured at work due to the negligence of their employers. Our member's injury could have been much worse and we hope that his employer, and other rail industry employers, will adhere in the future to the regulations that are designed to prevent such injuries." Clare Nash, from Thompsons Solicitors, the law firm brought in by the union to handle the compensation claim, said: "Since the member's accident, his employer has supplied overalls to wear when carrying out this sort of work. This is a good thing, but it should not have taken an incident such as this to make it happen. The law is clear – if the employer cannot control risk by another means, then it must provide PPE to protect against the risk."

- [Thompsons Solicitors news release.](#)

### **Lost leg costs trainee nurse her career**

A former nursing student whose career was ended by a road traffic accident, has received a six-figure payout. UNISON member Lisa Bennett, 43, lost her leg after being knocked off her 125cc motorbike by a car in December 2004. The trainee psychiatric nurse, who had been riding motorbikes for more than 20 years, had to have extensive treatment and counselling after suffering a shattered right leg, which was so badly injured it was amputated below the knee. She needed four further operations after the amputation to control infection and also suffered injuries to her left knee, a fractured spine, broken ribs and a broken shoulder. She still suffers extreme pain and must use a wheelchair to help her around the house and when travelling long distances. She had been in her second year of a degree course at Bournemouth University at the time of the crash and had hoped to work at Kings Park Hospital in Boscombe. UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis commented: "The crash cost Ms Bennett her livelihood and health and had a huge impact on her family as well." Lisa Bennett said: "My life has changed forever since the accident - I lost my leg, my dream career, my whole way of life." She added: "It was frustrating to see

my 12-year-old put his life on hold to look after me. He is now 18 and going off to join the RAF this year, as I am finally a bit more able. I am relieved the case is over, but I will never be able to get my life back and will continue trying to cope with the chronic pain.”

- [UNISON news release](#).

## *Other news*

### **Offshore deaths rise due to 'cost-cutting'**

Deaths and major injuries in the offshore oil and gas industry doubled last year because of cost-cutting, unions have said. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) demanded urgent improvements in safety after revealing that 17 deaths and 50 major injuries occurred in the sector over 12 months. HSE said the figures were a “stark reminder” of the hazards involved in the sector. Steve Walker, head of HSE's offshore division, said: “Although the overall numbers of injury and dangerous occurrences are comparatively low, considering a workforce of almost 27,000 and the numbers of rigs and the continuous operations undertaken, this does not excuse the fact that the fatal and major injury rate has almost doubled.” None of the offshore worker deaths are included in these official HSE injury rates as HSE says they occurred in “offshore related travel incidents” and not on rigs. Mr Walker also expressed concern that major and significant hydrocarbon releases had increased by more than a third. He said the industry “must up its game to identify and rectify the root causes of such events.” Jake Molloy, offshore energy branch representative with the union RMT, said: “These incidents are down to cost-cutting. We had prices at \$40 (£26) a barrel last year and there was a typical knee-jerk reaction from management. Cuts have been made across the board. That is probably also the key factor in the increase in hydrocarbon releases. We had 83 significant gas releases, each of which was approximately equivalent to the Piper Alpha disaster in size.” He told the Morning Star: “We believe that safety representatives and the safety committee system needs to be bolstered to provide greater empowerment for reps to intervene, better education and training and greater union involvement.” Hazards Campaign spokesperson Hilda Palmer said: “The increase in major injuries and the increase in hydrocarbon releases is extremely worrying. As we have seen in the BP Deepwater rig explosion in the Gulf of Mexico, the consequences of safety breaches in the oil industry can be horrific, especially when earlier warning events are not properly acted upon.”

- [HSE news release](#) and [offshore statistics](#). [Morning Star](#). [STV News](#). [BBC News Online](#).

### **Campaigners call for tougher dogs laws**

A 20-strong coalition, including the TUC, several unions, the UK's largest animal charities and law enforcement agencies, is calling for tougher dog safety laws. A joint statement launched this week calls on the leaders of the main political parties to work together to introduce improved and updated legislation to protect dog welfare and public safety. The statement comes ahead of the government

response, expected in the autumn, to a consultation on dog legislation. The statement will be sent to Prime Minister David Cameron MP, Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg MP and acting leader of the opposition Harriet Harman MP. It says: "We believe that irresponsible dog ownership, whether it is allowing dogs to stray, be dangerously out of control or indiscriminately breeding them, causes significant problems for the safety and welfare of both humans and animals. Current legislation is proving inadequate in many cases to ensure sufficient protection. We believe that both the provision of sufficient resources at a local level for local authorities and the police, and updated and consolidated legislation that has a genuine preventative effect, are needed to address this problem. We call on the coalition government to act and bring forward legislation that addresses these areas effectively." Dave Joyce, national health and safety officer with communications union CWU, a member of the coalition, said: "This is a significant development in the campaign to get UK dog laws strengthened. Five thousand postal workers are attacked by dogs each year and serious dog attacks are on the rise yet the prosecution rate remains woefully low." NHS figures show the number of dog attacks have tripled since 1991, with many attacks blamed on cross-bred dogs which are not illegal.

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

### **Firms fined £125,000 after fall injury**

Two construction firms have been fined a total of £125,000 after a worker fell more than 60ft (20m) from a hospital building site in Newcastle. Steven McColgan, 37, from Edinburgh, was seriously hurt when he fell at the Royal Victoria Infirmary (RVI) in 2006. Laing O'Rourke Construction and Expanded Structures, both based in Kent, admitted health and safety breaches at Newcastle Crown Court. The court heard Mr McColgan had been working on the building site of a new hospital block when part of an unsupported platform broke away when he stepped on it in October 2006. He suffered multiple injuries to his head and body which the court was told continued to be "life-changing". A subsequent Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation revealed that supports for the platform Mr McColgan had been using had been mistakenly removed. Laing O'Rourke Construction was fined £50,000 and ordered to pay costs of £13,756. Expanded Structures Ltd was fined £75,000 plus costs of £14,154. After the case, HSE inspector Victoria Wise said: "Laing O'Rourke Construction Ltd and Expanded Structures Ltd failed in their duty of care to Mr McColgan, who was lucky to survive the fall." She added: "It is tragic that Mr McColgan's injuries could so easily have been avoided if those in a position of responsibility had effectively discharged their duties. Laing O'Rourke Construction Ltd had a duty as principal contractor to ensure that safe systems of work were in place and were being implemented on their site. The company had received previous advice from HSE on this specific matter, at another Newcastle site only two years earlier."

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

## **Steel cable shoots through shin**

A Workington company has been fined £15,000 after a steel cable shot through a worker's leg, leaving him with a hole through his shin. ACP (Concrete) Ltd, which produces concrete panels, was prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) following the incident, which left worker Jamie Graham, 25, in a hip-to-toe full leg cast for six weeks and on crutches for another four months. Workington Magistrates' court heard that steel cables were threaded through concrete moulds and stretched to 2000lbs tension. On 19 March 2009, a grip holding one of the tensioned cables failed, releasing a 70 metre long cable. When Mr Graham went to re-thread that cable, another grip failed, releasing a second 70 metre steel cable, the end of which passed straight through his lower right leg, leaving him impaled on the 9mm steel cable. The fire and rescue service had to cut the cable to release him and he was taken to hospital with the end of the cable still imbedded through his shin. HSE inspector Mike Griffiths said: "This terrifying incident should have been prevented. The lack of any inspection or maintenance of the grips meant that problems with them were only detected when a grip failed and that could sometimes result in a cable being released at high speed. The fact that the grips had to fail before they were replaced meant that there were significantly more failures under tension and the chances of a serious injury were increased." The court heard that Mr Graham, who is a keen weight trainer, was significantly immobilised for six weeks after the incident and still suffers pain and weakness in his right leg. The company pleaded guilty to safety breaches and was fined £15,000 plus £6,638 costs.

- [HSE news release](#).

## **Onion firm fined after serious ladder injury**

A Spalding onion packing firm has been fined after a worker broke his shoulder falling from a ladder. Moulton Bulb Company Ltd employee Richard Webster was covering onion boxes with plastic sheeting when he fell around three metres at Glebe Farm, Spalding, on 10 September 2009. The firm pleaded guilty to a breach of the Work at Height Regulations 2005 and was fined £6,000 and ordered to pay costs of £2,188. Prosecuting, Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspector Jo Anderson said: "Falls from height are the biggest cause of workplace deaths and it's crucial employers make sure work is properly planned, appropriately supervised and sufficient measures are put in place to protect staff from these risks." She added: "As a result of this the company has changed its procedures to eliminate the need to work at height by applying polythene sheeting at floor level and then lifting the boxes up. I'm satisfied the company has learned from this incident and would encourage employers in a similar line of business to consider doing the same, if they don't already." HSE says last year more than 4,000 employees suffered major injuries after falling from height at work.

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

## **Shipbreaker fined over asbestos risks**

A North Lincolnshire shipbreaking company put its workers and others at risk of exposure to asbestos, a court has heard. Marine reclamation company Acetech Construction Limited, purchased a Polish former fishing vessel, 'The Patricia III', in 2007 for dismantling and selling on as scrap. The ship, built in the 1970s, had been lying unused at Grimsby Dock for around three years. An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found Acetech had failed to carry out an adequate survey that would have highlighted the presence of asbestos containing materials before employees began work on the boat. Scunthorpe magistrates heard that between 1 December 2007 and 29 February 2008, work took place to strip down the boat resulting in several employees being placed at risk of exposure to asbestos. Acetech Construction Ltd was fined £3,400 and ordered to pay £5,000 costs after pleading guilty at Scunthorpe Magistrates Court to three breaches of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006. After the hearing HSE inspector Kirsty Welsh said: "Had Acetech Construction carried out a full survey, assessed the risks and put in place systems to protect their workers, then any potential harm would have been avoided."

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

## **Asbestos disturbed at primary school**

A Solihull building firm has been fined £1,000 after failing to take precautions against asbestos while working at a school. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) prosecuted the company after bosses at Greswolde Construction Ltd failed to warn employees the substance was present, despite being in possession of a survey detailing the location of the asbestos. The company pleaded guilty to two breaches of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006. As well as the fine it was also ordered to pay £2,268 costs. Stratford-upon-Avon Magistrates Court heard how on 9 July 2009 the firm was contracted to carry out building work on an extension at Rokeby Primary School in Rugby. Three employees were carrying out the work when they disturbed an area containing asbestos. Despite the company being in possession of a Type 3 Asbestos Survey detailing the materials that were subsequently disturbed, and the fact that children were occupying adjacent classrooms, it still gave the go ahead for the workers to begin to strip out the area. None of workers had been informed of the presence of asbestos on the site and had not received asbestos awareness training or protection. HSE inspector Paul Cooper said: "The dangers of asbestos are well known in the building industry so for the managers of Greswolde Construction not to inform their employees of its presence shows a complete disregard for their safety and well-being. What makes it worse is that this work was being carried out in a primary school where young children were in the next room."

- [HSE news release](#).

## **Asthma risk in motor repair**

Car bodyshop workers are still at risk of occupational asthma from spray paints, according to a new Health and Safety Executive (HSE) report. A probe into the use of two-pack paints containing isocyanates in the trade identified that, while practices have improved greatly in recent years, there are still a number of areas of concern. HSE estimates that vehicle spray painters are 80 times more likely to develop occupational asthma than the average worker in the UK. Visits to 30 motor vehicle repair bodyshops and telephone surveys with 500 bodyshops found some sprayers and managers remain unaware of the link between breathing in isocyanates contained within the invisible spray mist, and developing occupational asthma. Almost one in five bodyshop managers surveyed by telephone did not know their booth clearance times. This, combined with the finding that many sprayers are still unaware of the dangers of invisible spray mist if they re-enter booths too soon, leaves them at risk of breathing in isocyanates. The study found that the vast majority of sprayers (85 per cent) do wear air-fed breathing apparatus. However, many lift their visors to check the finish before the paint is dry, creating a risk of exposure to the isocyanate-containing mist. Louise Rice from HSE said: "We're encouraged to see that bodyshop managers and sprayers are generally much more aware of the risks of isocyanates and what they need to do to protect themselves, but it is worrying that the message is still not getting through to all of them." She added: "We will use this research to ensure we're working with industry in the most effective way to help reduce the risk to workers." The research also considered how factors such as size of business, working hours and bonus systems, health surveillance, personal protective equipment and training impact on health and safety practices in isocyanate paint use.

- [HSE news release](#) and [vehicle repair asthma webpages](#). Determining current health and safety practices, awareness of HSE initiatives and economic trends in relation to isocyanate paint use in the motor vehicle repair sector, Research Report 802, HSE [[pdf](#)].

## *International News*

### **Chile: Miners safe, but rescue could take months**

The 33 Chilean miners trapped deep underground for over three weeks have been told they may not be rescued for several months, the country's health minister has said. Jaime Manalich said the miners, trapped 700m below ground since 5 August, had reacted calmly. Officials had delayed breaking the news out of concern for their mental well-being. A special exercise and recreation programme is being set up to keep the men fit during their long wait. They will also need to be in shape to be pulled up the 66cm (26 inches) wide shaft that is being bored to rescue them. The work may take up to four months to complete. Chile's president Sebastian Pinera told reporters the men would be out by Christmas. The miners were trapped when the main access tunnel collapsed at the San Jose mine in Copiapo, about 725km (450 miles) north of the capital, Santiago. They are located 7km (4.5 miles) into the winding mine, where they are sheltering in a 50 square metre side-chamber off one of the main passages. The miners, who spent 17 days surviving on emergency supplies designed for a couple of days, have been receiving glucose and rehydration tablets lowered

down a narrow shaft. Other supplies included small lights, eye patches, medicine and an intercom cable. ICEM, the global union federation for the mining sector, cautioned that the rescue of the miners is far from assured. It says if successful, it will exceed both the eight days that 115 Chinese coal miners survived underground in a Shanxi province mine in April 2010, as well as the 25 days three Chinese miners survived in a colliery in the south of the country last year.

- [BBC News Online](#). [ICEM news report](#). [AWU solidarity message](#).

### **Egypt: Safety protesters face military trial**

Eight civilian warplane factory workers have appeared before a military court in Egypt after protesting about poor safety conditions, a spokesperson for the Center for Trade Union and Workers' Services (CTUWS) has said. The legal team defending the Helwan Engineering Industries Company workers was denied the right to receive a photocopy of the investigations report, Adel Zakariya said. The workers were arrested on 3 August after leading a sit-in to protest at an incident where a nitrogen tube exploded inside the factory, killing one worker and injuring many others. The workers were accused of refraining from work and assaulting a public official, the chairman of the board. "Another worker was charged with unveiling military secrets after he attempted to contact the media to expose the situation since they work for an army factory," Zakaria said. "There has been a media blackout about the incident and the trial," he added. Military trials are closed to media. Any sentence by a military court cannot be appealed. Press reports say the factory is subject to civil law, but is on land owned by the military. The facility located south of Cairo, also known as Military Factory 99, is one of Egypt's largest army factories and assembles warplanes.

- [Daily News Egypt](#). [Al-Masry Al-Youm](#).

### **USA: Retirement dilemma for manual workers**

As governments look to reduce the pensions bill by delaying retirement, manual workers could be faced with jobs they can no longer physically manage while not being eligible for a retirement pension. This is the conclusion of a US study which looked at the prospects for older workers in occupations characterised by physically demanding or difficult work. The new study warns little consideration has been given to the potential impact on retirees, with manual workers most severely affected. Hye Jin Rho, the author of the new report from the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR), commented: "Many older workers are in jobs that require substantial physical effort, jobs that may not afford them the option of working into their 70s in order to get full retirement benefits." The report, 'Hard work? Patterns in physically demanding labor among older workers', found that in 2009, 45 per cent of workers age 58 and older had physically demanding jobs or jobs with difficult working conditions. CEPR says "the study demonstrates that a large number of workers would be adversely affected by raising the normal retirement age. As with all the

proposals to cut Social Security, careful consideration should be given to effects on the millions of older workers who will have little else to depend on in their retirement.”

- [Center for Economic and Policy Research \(CEPR\) news release](#). Hard work? Patterns in physically demanding labor among older workers, Hye Jin Rho, CEPR, August 2010 [[pdf](#)].

### **USA: There are alternatives to toxic chemicals**

New measures are needed to prevent exposure to toxic chemicals, especially as more chemicals enter the market, US academics have warned. Their report says a comprehensive, proactive federal chemicals management policy should identify toxic chemicals before they are used commercially and force the use of safer alternatives. ‘Preventing toxic exposures: Workplace lessons in safer alternatives’ says while new rules are formulated, efforts should concentrate on measures to promote safer alternatives. In a related editorial, co-author Holly Brown-Williams, of the University of California Berkeley, notes: “Instead of waiting until a hazardous chemical has been released into the workplace and the environment, we should prevent the hazard by replacing or redesigning the materials, processes, and practices involved with it. This is a different way of doing business, which has economic as well as health benefits.” She adds: “Occupational and environmental health are often treated as distinct so we manage them separately. Workers often get lost in discussions of toxic exposures. We forget that hazardous chemicals and products are made and used in the greatest quantities in workplaces — where they first expose workers.” The report points to the EU’s REACH regulations and the Toxics Use Reduction Act in place in Massachusetts as examples of good legislative practice.

- Preventing toxic exposures: Workplace lessons in safer alternatives, Perspectives, volume 5, number 1, UC Berkeley Health Research for Action, 2010 [[pdf](#)]. [California Progress Report](#). [Green jobs, safe jobs blog](#).

### *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](#)

### *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