

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 23,000 subscribers. 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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TUC says stand up for safety

The TUC is gearing up for the biggest ever national workplace health and safety event on 28 April. It has designated Workers' Memorial Day 2012 a 'Day of activity to defend health and safety', which is facing an unprecedented attack ([Risks 535](#)). According to the national union body: "The actions of the government are putting the safety and health of Britain's workers under threat, by trying to slash the laws that protect you, cut enforcement and inspection and make it harder to win compensation for injuries. Don't let this happen. Take part in the TUC Day of Action on health and safety on 28 April 2012, Workers' Memorial Day." The TUC adds: "These proposed cuts are not inevitable. Trade unions, safety campaigners and the TUC want proper legal protection for all those in work, a strong Health and Safety Executive (HSE), and a right to seek justice if things go wrong." TUC is going to promote activities nationwide. "Join any events in your area on 28 April 2012. This is International Workers Memorial Day when we traditionally remember the dead and fight for the living," a new 28 April guide urges. "Never has that message been more important than now. Let's ensure that we make it clear that we want clear commitments and action from those who should be protecting us." Posters and a leaflet are already available online, and more resources, including a lobbying guide, will be made available as the day draws closer.

- [TUC Workers' Memorial Day 2012 webpage](#), leaflet [[pdf](#)] and poster [[pdf](#)]. [TUC call for action](#). [Hazards 'remember the dead, fight like hell for the living' images](#) and [WMD artwork gallery](#).

Union concern at increased abuse of shopworkers

The retail union Usdaw has expressed concern at a 'huge leap' in abuse of shopworkers. The union was commenting after the British Retail Consortium's (BRC's) annual survey of retail crime found the total number of reported incidents of verbal abuse, threats and violence against shopworkers rose by 83 per cent in 2011, driven by a more than three-fold increase in threats and a five-fold increase in incidents of verbal abuse. Physical assaults continued a downwards trend, however, falling by 62.8 per cent in 2011. The figures do not include incidents related to the August 2011 riots which hit London and other major cities in England. Usdaw general secretary John Hannett commented: "The huge leap in reported incidents of verbal abuse and threats against shopworkers is extremely worrying and shows why we need to continue to work closely with the BRC, employers, police and other agencies to reduce all incidents of shop crime, create safer workplaces and ensure offenders are brought to justice." He added: "While the reduction in the number of assaults and continuing downward trend in the total number of incidents is welcome news, our own survey figures indicate there continues to be a significant problem of under-reporting and that these figures remain the tip of a very large iceberg." The union said "swingeing and dangerous cuts" to police budgets should be reverse if the problem of retail crime is to be addressed effectively.

- [Usdaw news release](#) and [Freedom from fear campaign](#). [BRC news release](#) and Retail Crime Survey 2011 [[pdf](#)].

Cruiseline tragedy should be a wake-up call

Maritime unions have blamed inadequate safety measures for Europe's worst maritime disaster in a generation. Nautilus International said the 14 January wreck of the massive Costa Concordia cruiseliner should be a wake-up call to the entire industry. The ship was carrying more than 4,000 people when it ran aground less than a mile off Italy's Isola de Giglio, punching a 50-metre hole in its hull. Over 30 people are thought to have died, including several members of the crew. Captain Francesco Schettino, who could face involuntary manslaughter charges, initially told reporters his charts had marked the area as "just water" more than a hundred metres from the nearest rocks. Nautilus International said the incident involving the Italian-flagged cruiseship Costa Concordia is the latest in a series that have highlighted its long-standing concerns over safety. General secretary Mark Dickinson said the union is particularly concerned about "the rapid recent increases in the size of passenger ships – with the average tonnage doubling over the past decade. Many ships are now effectively small towns at sea, and the sheer number of people onboard raises serious questions about evacuation." He added: "Nautilus is by no means alone in voicing concern at underlying safety issues arising from the new generation of 'mega-ships' – whether they be passenger vessels carrying the equivalent of a small town or containerships with more than 14,000 boxes onboard. Insurers and salvors have also spoken about the way in which the sheer size and scale of such ships presents massive challenges for emergency services, evacuation, rescue, and salvage – and we should not have to wait for a major disaster until these concerns are addressed." The union is calling for a thorough review of regulations governing the construction and operation of passenger vessels – in particular, standards of stability and watertight integrity. It says attention needs to be paid to existing evacuation systems and more innovative systems for abandonment.

- [Nautilus UK news release](#). [ITF news release](#). [Morning Star](#). [BBC News Online](#).

Unite criticises Tory 'smokescreen' on unions at work

The Conservative Party should turn its attention to the challenges facing the economy instead of "peddling distortion" about the union role, the union Unite has said ([Risks 535](#)). The union was commenting after last week's failed attempt by Tory MP and former Barclays investment banker Jesse Norman to introduce legislation to reduce facilities and time provided by public sector employers for trade union work. Unite, however, points to "findings from business itself which show that the work of union representatives actually saves employers around £1.1 billion annually by helping to resolve disputes and preventing illness and injury at work – ten times more than the £113 million that Norman claims union representatives cost the taxpayer." The union accused the Conservatives of "peddling myths about trade unions in the public sector to divert from the poor economic performance and a deeper desire to block public sector workers' access to justice in the workplace." Unite

general secretary Len McCluskey said: "This Tory MP and former Barclays investment banker has his priorities all wrong." He added: "There is no rational reason to target dedicated men and women who spend their days preventing accidents, avoiding tribunals and supporting their colleagues."

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

Vibration caused ongoing health problems

A plasterer who suffered permanent damage to his hands after he was exposed to vibrating tools at work has received a second dose of compensation. The 54-year-old GMB member from Doncaster developed the painful wrist condition carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) and Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) after working with vibrating machinery for 25 years. He was first diagnosed with HAVS in 2003 and received £4,500 in compensation for the condition. Over subsequent years his employer continued to fail to protect him from excessive exposure and his condition worsened. The HAVS began to spread to his palms and he started to suffer from loss of dexterity in his fingers. He also developed CTS. By 2008 his hands became so bad he needed surgery to treat the CTS on his left hand. He is awaiting an operation on his right hand. The worker, whose name has not been released but who still works for the unidentified firm, must monitor the type of tools he uses. Following his diagnosis of CTS, he started a second union-backed compensation claim. The employer did not admit liability but settled the claim for £12,000 out of court. Tim Roache, regional secretary at the GMB, commented: "Any employer which has members of staff using vibrating tools must have a policy in place to ensure they are monitored and do not get exposed to excessive use. The fact that this member had already been diagnosed with HAVS and then was continually put in a position where he was using vibrating tools excessively is unacceptable." Nicola Shepherdson from Thompsons Solicitors, the law firm brought in by the union to act in the case, said: "HAVS is a well-known risk for workers exposed to excessive levels of vibration from tools. This employer has no excuse for our client developing not one, but two conditions, as a result of them failing to monitor his working conditions."

- [Thompsons Solicitors news release](#).

Union protection extends outside of work

A UNISON member who was involved in a car smash and left needing spinal surgery has received compensation with the help of union lawyers. The grandmother-of-four from County Durham, whose name has not been released, suffered a slipped disc after her car was hit from behind by a 4x4 as she was waiting at a roundabout. She was not working at the time of the 2008 incident, but was driving to visit her dad. Initially she suffered pain in her neck and shoulders which improved with physiotherapy. However, over the following months she began to suffer from tingling in her legs and heaviness in her arms. She was told she would need surgery and for a year had to be put on restricted duties in her job as a client care warden for Durham County Council. She had

surgery to replace a disc in her spine and had to take four months off work to recover. A union-backed compensation claim led to the driver of the other vehicle admitting liability. The claim was settled out of court for £21,596. Nazia Quyoom from Thompsons Solicitors, the law firm brought in by UNISON to act in the case, said: "This member suffered a significant injury through no fault of her own which had an impact on her working and social life. Those injured in a car accident have a right to seek independent legal advice from solicitors of their own choice, including their trade union's legal service."

- [Thompsons Solicitors news release](#).

Other news

Workplace dust contributed to miner's heart death

A former coal miner died as a result of an industrial disease, an inquest has ruled. Although Thomas Gill died on 24 September last year as a result of a heart condition, the inquest heard a lung condition, caused by more than 30 years of dusty work on the coalface, was a "major factor" in his death. Mr Gill, 73, had been feeling unwell for a number of days before he died, the inquest heard, and collapsed at his home in Whitehaven. He was taken to the town's West Cumberland Hospital where he was pronounced dead. His widow Janet Gill told the inquest that her husband began working at Haig Colliery, Whitehaven, after he left school and was one of the last workers to leave the pit when it closed in 1986. He went on to work as a labourer, including a spell at Sellafield, before his retirement. Mr Gill was suffering from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), Mrs Gill said. Coroner David Roberts, in returning a verdict that Mr Gill died of industrial disease, said: "The post-mortem showed a heart condition to be the main cause of death, but COPD was a major factor." Last month, *Hazards* magazine warned that inadequate dust control standards were leading to thousands of work-related COPD deaths each year. A report in the magazine's December 2011 issue also warned that dust exposures at work could lead to an increased risk of heart disease and heart attacks. The TUC is pressing for the workplace dust exposure standard to be slashed to a quarter the current limit ([Risks 521](#)).

- [News and Star](#). TUC 'Dust in the workplace' report [[pdf](#)]. [Hazards 'Dust up!' campaign](#) and [report](#).

Job pressures led to suicide

A Hampshire firefighter who took his own life had been taken on too much work, an inquest has heard. Father-of-three Martin Coles was found hanged in a wooded area in Wickham on 9 August last year. The inquest in Winchester heard the 54-year-old workshop foreman and retained firefighter had been worrying about money and had been working hard before his death. Less than two years earlier, Mr Coles had been demoted from his job as a manager at animal supplies store to a workshop foreman – a decision his family said he was unhappy about. His widow Jill Coles told the court how she went to bed and woke up the next day to find her husband wasn't

there. Due to the nature of his work, she assumed that he had been called out during the night and only became suspicious when she spotted his car in the drive. Mr Coles had no history of attempted suicide and no traces of drugs or alcohol was found in his blood. Grahame Short, coroner for central Hampshire, said: "I'm satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that he intended to hang himself due to the nature of his death. It's extremely sad but he clearly could see no way out of his situation." He recorded a verdict that Mr Coles had taken his own life. A series of recent reports have linked increased suicide rates to job insecurity and other recession-related stresses ([Risks 528](#)).

- [Portsmouth News](#). [More on work-related suicide](#).

Unions welcome Grayrigg rail death prosecution

Unions have welcomed a decision by the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) to prosecute Network Rail over the rail crash at Grayrigg in which one passenger died. Margaret Masson, 84, from Glasgow, died after the Virgin train derailed on the West Coast Main Line in Cumbria in February 2007. In November 2011, an inquest jury found poorly maintained points were to blame for causing her death ([Risks 531](#)). The train went over a "degraded" set of points at 92mph and careered down an embankment, leaving over 80 people injured. Mick Whelan, general secretary of the train drivers' union ASLEF, commented: "It is right that we examine every detail of how the Grayrigg tragedy came about, and who or what systems were responsible, in order that we can prevent a similar occurrence in the future." The train's driver, ASLEF member Iain Black, was praised by the coroner after raising the alarm despite suffering serious injuries in the crash. Manuel Cortes, leader of the TSSA rail union, said: "We welcome the fact that the ORR are taking criminal proceedings against Network Rail although we are disappointed that it has taken five years for this to happen. Our long held view, supported by last year's full inquest, is that this crash came about as a result of the bully boy regime which operated under former chief executive Iain Coucher and his cronies. Thankfully, they are now part of history." Network Rail is charged with criminal breaches of health and safety law, arising from the company's failure to provide and implement suitable and sufficient standards, procedures, guidance, training, tools and resources for the inspection and maintenance of the points.

- [ORR news release](#). [ASLEF news release](#). [TSSA news release](#). [BBC News Online](#).

Suspended sentence after fall death

A man has been given a suspended prison sentence after a worker was killed when he fell through a roof at a disused factory unit in Leicester. Robert Jozwiak, 44, was repairing the roof of a former textile dye house on 3 June 2009 when it gave way and he landed on the concrete floor six metres below. His skull and back were fractured and he died from his injuries later that evening. He had been instructed to carry out the work by Musa Suleman, who was helping to bring the building back into use after his previous business venture there failed. Mr Suleman, 56, was prosecuted by

the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) for failing to ensure the work he arranged to be carried out was properly planned, supervised or carried out in a safe manner. He pleaded guilty to a criminal breach of the Work at Height Regulations 2005. At Leicester Crown Court he was given a 12 month prison sentence suspended for two years. He was also ordered to pay compensation of £13,800 to Mr Jozwiak's family and full costs of £17,337. Passing sentence, Judge Simon Hammond said Mr Jozwiak's death was a terrible tragedy that could have been prevented, adding "there were clear lessons to be learned". After the hearing HSE inspector Karl Raw said: "The roof was made of corrugated asbestos cement sheets, and the work required careful planning and consideration of the risks involved. Tragically, Mr Suleman failed to do this and to properly supervise the work which resulted in the needless death of a husband and father."

- [HSE news release](#) and [Shattered lives webpages](#). [Leicester Mercury](#). [Daily Mirror](#).

Businessman fined £112k over roof fall death

A Liverpool businessman has been fined £112,000 after a labourer died following a fall from the roof of an industrial unit, just months after another worker was injured in a fall at the same site. John McCleary fell 15 feet while fitting roof panels at the construction site in Toxteth being managed by Taj ul Malook Mann, who failed to report the incident to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Mr McCleary lost his balance while on a narrow beam being used as a work platform, as no scaffolding had been erected. The 51-year-old father-of-two was paralysed from the waist down and died of pneumonia just over seven months later as a result of his injuries. Mr Mann was prosecuted by HSE following Mr McCleary's death. Liverpool Crown Court heard Mr Mann had hired Mr McCleary to fit roof panels on an industrial unit he owned. But no scaffolding was supplied and Mr McCleary had to carry out the job while standing on four-inch wide steel beams, leading to him losing his balance and falling. He underwent an eight hour operation after the incident on 12 June 2008 and was readmitted to hospital in December with illnesses related to his condition. He died on 27 January 2009. During the HSE investigation, video was discovered which had been filmed by Mr McCleary on his mobile phone in the weeks before his fall. It showed labourers carrying out work while on top of the narrow roof beams. Investigations also revealed a bricklayer had escaped with minor injuries after falling from scaffolding at the site in an earlier incident. The worker had refused to continue working for Mr Mann after the fall. Taj ul Malook Mann admitted four criminal breaches of health and safety regulations, including failing to report Mr McCleary's fall. He was fined £112,000 and ordered to pay £19,331 in prosecution costs.

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

Steel beam crushing death was preventable

A specialist crane supplier has been fined £180,000 after a worker was killed when a large steel beam fell on him at an incinerator in

Slough, Berkshire. Colin Dickson, 38, of Motherwell, Lanarkshire, died when the temporary suspension points on a suspended beam he was under failed at the Lakeside Energy from Waste installation in Colnbrook. In an 29 August 2007 incident the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) described as "entirely preventable", the 1.4 tonne beam fell five metres onto Mr Dickson causing fatal injuries to his chest, and fractures to his legs and back. HSE prosecuted Mr Dickson's employer JH Carruthers Ltd and one of its supervisors, John Hamilton. Maidenhead Magistrates' Court heard a team of five people were lifting two steel crane beams to a height of approximately 18 metres in the hall of a new incinerator building. The HSE investigation found the lifting operation could have been successful if the whole process had been planned, appropriately supervised and carried out in a safe manner from the outset. HSE's inspector Karen Morris said: "This tragic incident shows the importance of carrying out a thorough assessment of hazards and properly managing all lifting operations." She added: "This incident was entirely preventable and it should act as a reminder to others that standards need to be maintained to ensure the safety of workers at all times." J H Carruthers Ltd (formerly Konecranes (UK) Ltd), pleaded guilty to a criminal safety breach and was fined £180,000 and ordered to pay costs of £74,000. Supervisor John Hamilton pleaded guilty to a criminal breach of the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 and was fined £1,500 plus costs of £400.

- [HSE news release](#).

Horrific death of plastics technician was avoidable

An experienced technician at a plastic products factory in Cornwall was killed after he was crushed between the plates on a machine used to make plastic lids. Shaun O'Dwyer, 54, died in the incident on 30 May 2008 at the Curver UK Ltd factory. The Health and Safety Executive prosecuted Curver UK Ltd (formerly Contico Europe Ltd) for a criminal failure to provide adequate safety measures. Truro Crown Court heard that in preparing the machinery Mr O'Dwyer needed to access the plastic mouldings machine's plates. This was normally done via a guard which, when opened, prevented the machine from operating. However in this instance, one of the conveyors on the machine had been removed and Mr O'Dwyer was able to access the machine through an unguarded gap. As he was working inside the press, it started up and the plates closed crushing him at a pressure of over 1,000 tonnes. HSE inspector Trevor Hay said: "This tragic incident could have been avoided if the company had observed standard industry guidance from the British Plastics Federation and the British Standards Institution. Conveyors should be bolted into position, or fitted with an electrical cut-off switch which removes power to the machine when the conveyor is taken away." Curver UK Ltd pleaded guilty to criminal breaches of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The firm was fined £160,000 and ordered to pay £32,000 costs.

- [HSE news release](#) and guide on safety at injection moulding machines [[pdf](#)].

Social care firm fined for violence risks

A social care organisation has been fined for exposing workers to the risk of violence and aggression. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) launched an investigation at Dimensions (UK) Ltd, a not-for-profit organisation that provides support services for people with learning disabilities, after a support worker was kicked in the eye by a client on 31 December 2009. The investigation revealed that Dimensions did not have adequate processes in place to control the risk of workers being exposed to violence and aggression from this client, who cannot be named for legal reasons. Newcastle Magistrates' Court heard the client posed an ongoing risk of violence and aggression, and had been involved in a number of incidents where staff were injured. Dimensions (UK) Ltd was fined a total of £14,000 and ordered to pay £30,000 in costs after pleading guilty criminal safety offences relating to the risks of violence posed to both their employees and agency workers. Speaking after the sentencing, HSE inspector Carol Forster, said: "The risk of violence and aggression from clients with challenging behaviour is common in the social care sector. Workers can suffer not only physical injury but also psychological effects such as stress and anxiety, which can also affect their family and social life." She added: "Social care organisations have a duty to ensure that proper management systems are in place to control the risk of violence and aggression to the lowest level possible." The firm had failed to identify the factors that triggered the aggressive behaviour or take action to reduce the risks, she said. It had also "failed to act on incidents and near misses which indicated an escalating risk." Provisional HSE figures show that in 2010/11 there were 2,348 reported injuries to workers in non-residential social care.

- [HSE news release](#) and [health and social care webpages](#).

Safety fraudsters given jail terms

Health and safety fraudsters are facing lengthy jail terms after being caught in two separate scams. Gurpreet Singh and Parampreet Singh took health and safety tests on behalf of other construction workers to obtain skills cards. Both were handed nine month prison sentences last week after pleading guilty at Luton Crown Court. They were caught by staff at the CITB-ConstructionSkills' test centre taking the test, which costs £17.50. CITB-ConstructionSkills' product delivery manager Chris Little, said that staff discovered the fraud, known as proxy testing, after realising the men had taken multiple tests using several other workers' identification passes which bore their own photographs. He said: "Both men were being paid to take the test by other candidates, and it soon became clear to us that the same men were taking the test for other people each time." Both men are foreign nationals and will be deported once they have served their sentences. In a second incident, eight people have been sentenced for fraud after more than £500,000 was claimed from two colleges for safety training that did not take place. The eight were found guilty at Nottingham Crown Court after a three-year police investigation. Documents were forged to show the students took courses at Nottingham's Castle College and North Warwickshire and Hinckley College in 2007. Castle College, which has since merged with South Nottingham College, paid out £475,391 for 583 students

who it was told had taken a customer services or health and safety course. North Warwickshire and Hinckley College paid £27,108 for 249 students it was led to believe had completed an occupational health and safety course. The eight guilty people worked for training firms Training Options UK and FE Options and for Castle College. Ringleader Andrew Leathwood, 43, was jailed for five years. Leslie Hayes, 44, and Carolanne Ravenscroft, 57, received three year terms, Kieran England, 37, and Kay Edwards, 45, were both handed 33 month sentences, and Claire Hayes, 38, was sentenced to 18 months in jail. Damion Johnstone and Steven Johnson, both 39, received suspended sentences.

- [Construction Enquirer](#). [BBC News Online](#). [CITB-ConstructionSkills health and safety test](#).

Safety concerns prompt new cockling plan

A plan to police the Ribble estuary cockle beds has been put forward to the fishing authority. Fylde council met this week with the North West Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) to discuss cockling. The beds off the Lancashire coast were closed in November for safety reasons after 26 lifeboat rescues in what was described as a "gold rush" for cockles ([Risks 531](#)) by up to 400 cocklers. Proposals from Fylde Council include reducing the number of permits and daily catch quotas. The council is also looking at requiring training on vessel safety for licensed cocklers and bringing the opening of the season forward from September to July, when sea conditions are safer. Cabinet member for environment and partnerships at Fylde Council Tommy Threlfall said: "Extreme pressure was put on the cockling stocks - and also on the lifeboat crews - so that the long-term sustainability of cockle stocks was jeopardised." He added: "The aim is to see cockling return in a safe and orderly fashion."

- [BBC News Online](#).

International News

Canada: Red Cross tarnished by asbestos links

A board member of the Canadian Red Cross, criticised for her ties to the asbestos industry, has resigned abruptly from the humanitarian group's governing body. The departure of Roshi Chadha came days after the organisation had rallied behind the "valued member" of its team, spurring protests from asbestos victims and campaigners around the world. Chadha is an executive of Montreal-based Seja Trade Ltd, a subsidiary of Balcorp Ltd that has for years exported asbestos from the open-pit Jeffrey asbestos mine in Quebec to India. Her husband, Baljit Singh Chadha, is seeking to revive the Quebec asbestos industry as the president of Balcorp. After a December 2011 request from asbestos campaigners, the Red Cross agreed to review Roshi Chadha's position on the board. After its January board meeting, the Red Cross, however, endorsed the continued involvement of the "valued member" of its board of governors. This move led to the resignation from the board of Peter Robinson of the David Suzuki Foundation and renewed public criticism of the Red Cross. Cathy Conrad, whose father died of the

asbestos cancer mesothelioma, said Chadha's belated departure would not be enough to get her to return to the Red Cross fold as a volunteer. She told the Montreal Gazette: "I'm just really disappointed with the way this has been handled. I expected the Red Cross to handle this in a humane, looking-out-for-the victim way. That's what they stand for." Chadha remains on the board of other health-related organisations, including Montreal's St Mary's Hospital Foundation. Leah Nielsen of the group Canadian Voices of Asbestos Victims, whose father also died of mesothelioma, said these "board positions are every bit as contradictory as the Red Cross board seat was. We intend to ask for her to be removed from those boards as well, as asbestos exporters have no business representing places of health and wellness."

- [Montreal Gazette. International Ban Asbestos Secretariat.](#)

Europe: Temp jobs are bad for your health

A study of workers in the European Union has found getting stuck in a series of temporary jobs has a significant negative effect on your health. Researchers from Germany's Rheinisch-Westfälisches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung (RWI) looked at data from 27 European countries, including the UK, to evaluate the impact of temporary employment on health. They say their "findings suggest that there are differences in self-reported health by type of employment contract. Regarding temporary employment, one can observe that full-time permanent workers are more likely to be in better health than full-time temporary workers." While they found the health status of temporary and permanent workers was no different at the start of their employment, "repeated temporary contracts have a significant negative impact on health." The report says the health impact is not immediate, but affects those "who have an additional temporary contract compared to workers who find a job with a permanent contract. Therefore, temporary employment seems to have only an impact on health after some time in temporary employment, but not at the beginning."

- Christoph Ehlert and Sandra Schaffner. Health effects of temporary jobs in Europe, Ruhr Economic Papers, Number 295 [[pdf](#)].

Global: Apple supplier audit reveals abuses

Electronic gizmo giant Apple, the company that brought us the Apple Mac, i-phone and i-pad, seems to be adding a far more candid appraisal of problems in its global supply chain to its business portfolio. The firm last week published its previously closely guarded list of 156 suppliers, after a succession of reports had highlighted safety, labour and environmental abuses in some of the firms. New chief executive Tim Cook said: "With every year, we expand our programme, we go deeper in our supply chain, we make it harder to comply". He told Reuters: "All of this means that workers will be treated better and better with each passing year. It's not something we feel like we have done what we can do, much remains to be done." Apple said it conducted 229 audits last year, representing an 80 per cent increase over 2010. The audits found a

number of violations, including underage workers, excessive working hours, using machines without safeguards, testing workers for pregnancy and falsifying pay records. Apple said it will grant access to an independent auditing team from the Fair Labor Association in an effort to overcome criticism regarding working conditions at factories in its supply chain. It also terminated business with one supplier and was correcting the practices of another supplier. Both were repeat offenders, the report said. Suppliers based in China have been a particularly source of bad press for Apple. In 2009, over 100 workers at Apple supplier Wintek suffered adverse health effects following exposure to the industrial solvent n-hexane ([Risks 496](#)). In 2010, Foxconn - Apple's main supplier in China - experienced a spate of suicides ([Risks 539](#)). In response, Apple set up a team of suicide-prevention experts to conduct a wide-ranging investigation into the deaths and recommend ways to support workers' mental health.

- Apple [Supplier Responsibility 2012 Progress Report](#) and [Supplier Responsibility website](#). [Financial Post](#). [This American Life](#). [International Campaign for Responsible Technology](#).

Korea: Speed-up led worker to set himself on fire

A South Korean Hyundai Motor worker set himself alight after management responded to his request to slow the pace of production by stepping up discipline. The 44-year-old trade unionist, Shin Sung-hun, is in critical condition after his 8 January protest at the engine plant in Ulsan. US magazine Labor Notes reports he doused himself with paint thinner and was found in flames, after his repeated requests to management to slow down production went unanswered. Following the incident, union members at the plant implemented an overtime ban, crippling production of sport utility vehicles at Hyundai and Kia. When the union stopped production, management agreed to its demand for a public apology and to reprimand some supervisors. The company said it would seek damages caused by the union's action, however. In the days prior to his horrifying protest, Shin emailed his supervisor to raise concerns about high defect rates caused by high-speed production. He also said the plant had shipped out defective engines. Hyundai responded with a disciplinary clampdown in the plant. The union said notes left by Shin on his computer indicated management had been bullying him since he filed the complaints about engine quality. According to Labor Notes: "Management can impose such fatal discipline because of the emergence of a large temporary workforce. About 83 per cent of Hyundai and Kia's assembly line workers are temporarily hired or outsourced."

- [Labor Notes](#). [Economic Times](#).

Events and Courses

TUC courses for safety reps

COURSES FOR JANUARY 2012 TO MARCH 2012

- [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