

Risks

issue no 79 – 9 November 2002

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Editor: [Rory O'Neill](#) of [Hazards](#) magazine. Comments to [Owen Tudor](#)

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Risks is the TUC's weekly online bulletin for safety reps and others, read each week by over 5,500 subscribers and 1,000 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 statement](#). The TUC website lists future health

and safety events in [What's On – new events](#) are covered below.

ACTION

Tell your MP why we need a dignity at work law

The campaign led by the union Amicus against bullying at work is going straight to the top. A meeting with MPs on Monday 25 November 2002 will give affected workers the chance to tell MPs about just how damaging bullying can be, and why they must do something about it. Amicus says: "We are asking Members of Parliament to support the Dignity at Work Bill. This will be a crucial time for us as we approach the period when MPs ballot for places in the timetable for private members' bills. It can play a part in informing (and hopefully convincing) MPs that bullying at work is an issue that needs legislation, rather than the naively optimistic formula of 'good will on all sides,' if it is going to be outlawed from workplaces." Amicus, The Andrea Adams Trust, the Work Foundation and IRS Employment Review have just published a campaign pack on bullying. Copies of this will be available at the meeting.

- [Amicus briefing](#). **If you wish to attend the meeting send your name and contact details and say whether you intend to make a statement, to: [Janet Golds](#), Amicus, 40 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 3UD. The meeting will be held in the Attlee Suite, Portcullis House (the new office block for MPs directly opposite Big Ben, adjacent to Westminster Tube Station) and will commence at 7.15pm**

FEATURE: stress awareness day, 6 November

Work overload is main cause of stress at work

Work overload is the main cause of stress at work across Britain, a TUC survey has found. And TUC's survey of 5,300 union safety reps shows that stress is the main health and safety concern in Britain's workplaces. Eighty per cent of the safety reps reporting that stress was a problem at their workplace said workload was a major cause, half of the reps also citing change and staff cuts as factors. TUC general secretary John Monks said: "Britain's workplaces are some of the most stressed in Europe, and it's time to stop working harder and start working smarter. Long hours and heavy workloads combine to make a lethal mixture which leads to heart attacks, mental illness and social problems like divorce and alcoholism." Central government, banking insurance and finance and the health service topped the list of

most stressful workplaces, with more than seven in every 10 safety reps surveyed worried about the effect stress was having on their colleagues. TUC's workplace "stress MOT" was launched last month as a tool to help workers identify and tackle workplace stressors. And there is good reason for employers to welcome the union move - a survey this week by consultants Work Stress Management found over 80 per cent of employers felt vulnerable to work stress compensation claims. TUC's John Monks said: "It's plainly a false economy to work people into the ground, and it's the number one problem that needs to be tackled."

- [TUC news release](#). [Wales TUC on stress](#). [ISMA news release](#). [Personnel Today](#). [FT.com](#)
- **TUC tools for tackling stress: [TUC stress MOT](#) and [Tackle the hassle: risk assessing stress](#) – a step by step powerpoint guide with notes on how to assess and tackle workplace stress**

UNION NEWS

Risks shortlisted for national media award

TUC's *Risks* e-bulletin has been recognised in the WorkWorld Media Awards 2002. Editor Rory O'Neill made the three person shortlist for the award of Online Journalist of the Year. Announcing the shortlist, Will Hutton of The Work Foundation said: "This award recognises the rise of the online journalist and the exceptional skills that the medium demands." TUC's Owen Tudor said: "Already an award-winner in the US, now Rory's been honoured in his own land! Thanks to him, *Risks* is essential reading for anyone involved in workplace safety." The other shortlisted journalists were BBC News Online's Sara Toyne – who took the top award – and Ciaran Dunne of the workplacelaw Network.

- **WorkWorld Media Awards 2002 – [background](#)**

TUC calls for action to protect kids at work

The law governing how much and what kind of work school-age children in England and Wales can do is too complicated and confused, the TUC and children's safety watchdog NSPCC have warned. In a new report - *Too much too young: Sorting out the law on teenagers at work* – they say the absence of a single piece of legislation or statutory code to protect children at work can lead to situations where young children are exploited and put at risk. The report says that there are 172 local by-laws governing the employment of young people, 15

European and international directives and conventions, and 16 domestic Acts of Parliament and statutory instruments. TUC general secretary John Monks said: "The law regulating the employment of schoolchildren is a complete mess. With over 200 different acts, conventions, directives and local by-laws, it's easy for parents, their teenagers and employers to be confused and uncertain of the law. This sorry situation cannot continue. Children at work must have the same legal protection as working adults. Until the law is changed and simplified, unscrupulous employers will continue to exploit young people, putting their safety and welfare at risk."

- [TUC news release](#)

GPMU ays that pee is for organising

Advertising staff at Bristol United Press used to have to ask permission to use the toilet at work - until their union started a protest leafleting campaign. GPMU South West branch organiser Gavin Brooks said: "We received a fantastic response to the leaflet and management have backed down over the issue." He told *GPMU Direct* magazine the toilet breaks campaign was just the beginning of an organising drive at the company. And he has told newspaper staff: "If it is possible for the union to solve a problem just by giving you a leaflet, imagine what you could do if you got your union recognised."

- [Hazards magazine](#)

UNISON gets the (safer) needle

Workplace health campaigners have said preventing potentially life threatening needlestick injuries is "a no-brainer", and have slammed the government for failing to act. The Safer Needles Network, a campaign group including the union UNISON, says a nurse, paramedic or doctor who gets "stuck" could face a range of chronic conditions from HIV to hepatitis. It says it wants official guidance requiring the use of retractable needles, self blunting devices or those with protective shields and adds: "If the Department of Health and trusts will not listen to logic the possibility of industrial injuries claims running to tens of thousands of pounds might concentrate their minds." Ian Lindsley of the SNN says solving the problem is a "no-brainer" - it could be done easily and at very little cost. Network representatives have recently met with the All Party Occupational Health and Safety Parliamentary Group. Members of the Group have promised to write to ministers seeking a meeting to explore the issue further. UNISON says about one sixth of all NHS injuries relate to needlesticks. Operating

department assistant Herbert Busby, a UNISON member, was recently awarded £58,000 after a needlestick injury ([Risks 77](#)).

- [U magazine. UNISON needlesticks campaign page. Safer Needles Network. More union guidance on needlesticks](#)

Appeal over hospital glove allergy claim

A nurse who claims an allergy to hospital gloves ended her career has launched a fresh appeal for compensation. Earlier this year, UNISON member Alison Dugmore, 34, from Baglan near Port Talbot, lost her claim for damages against the trusts that managed the hospitals in which she worked. The Appeal Court in London heard how Ms Dugmore had suffered a severe allergic reaction to latex gloves. Her original case was dismissed at Cardiff County Court, when the judge said hospital authorities could not have been expected to know of the dangers of latex until January 1997. In June this year TUC and health campaign organisations called for action to stop an epidemic of work related latex allergies ([Risks 62](#)), and a further "latex summit" takes place at the TUC on 19 November.

- [BBC News Online](#)

Union wins asbestos office risk fight

Senior managers in Lewisham Council have backed down after union members said they did not want to remain in a building during work to remove disturbed asbestos. TGWU says for months it had pressed managers for months to relocate staff out of the building. The managers had however insisted that there was nowhere to go and that the building was perfectly safe. Two well-attended lunchtime joint union meetings made it clear to managers that if a last minute move from the building was not organised, many people would not be returning to work in the building. TGWU says it is now pressing the Health and Safety Executive to prosecute Lewisham Council for failing to protect workers from exposure to asbestos and for lack of proper management control over contractors. TGWU's Nick Long said: "After all the publicity about the high risk of exposure to asbestos, we are pleased that Lewisham Council has now acted, but it should never have gone to the wire like this."

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

OTHER NEWS

Turner and Newall administrators sue RSA over asbestos

Royal and Sun Alliance is facing an asbestos liability lawsuit being brought by administrators for Turner and Newall, the UK engineering group and former asbestos producer. Turner and Newall, acquired by US company Federal Mogul five years ago, is in administration. It claims that RSA is liable because of an employer liability policy it provided to the company between October 1969 and March 1977. The claim is also being brought against a Lloyd's of London syndicate that then provided similar cover up until 1995. Both RSA and the syndicate deny liability. RSA admits it had an employers' liability contract with Turner and Newall, but says this specifically excluded asbestos cover. "They, to our belief, are self-insured for the asbestos part of the cover and they actually have very high level re-insurance cover for that purpose," RSA said. "We take our responsibilities as an insurer extremely seriously and have a great deal of sympathy for any affected ex-employee of Turner and Newall." The case is set to come to trial in January. The insurance giant has been in serious financial trouble, and announced this week it is to sell off parts of its business and shed 900 jobs.

- [Financial Times](#). [Ananova](#). [BBC News Online](#) on [RSA's asbestos compensation woes and job cuts](#)

New regulations to protect workers from dangerous substances

New regulations to protect workers from the risks of hazardous substances will take effect on 21 November 2002. The HSC says the new regulations will bring the UK law up to European Union required standards. Bill Macdonald of HSE said: "The new Regulations and ACoPs [Approved Codes of Practice] are a significant further development of a well-established system, and will again highlight the risks of exposure to hazardous substances in the workplace. I urge employers to use them as an incentive to take a fresh look at their workplace procedures and systems to ensure that they are doing everything practicable to protect the health of their workers." HSE's Dr James Neilson said changes to the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations "are designed to make it clear that the Regulations apply to both chemical and biological agents, whether or not exposure to such biological agents is deliberate, such as for laboratory workers, or incidental, for sewage workers, cleaners, farmers." TUC has welcomed the changes, particularly the implementation of the asthma

ACoP, tougher controls on vinyl chloride monomer, and the extension of COSHH principles to cover sewage workers, cleaners and farmers who are at risk from biological as well as chemical agents.

- [HSE news release](#). **Laws that will change: Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) 2002, the Control of Lead at Work Regulations (CLAW) 2002 and the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations (CAW) 2002, apart from Regulations 4 and 20, already announced by ministers, will replace the COSHH Regulations 1999, CLAW Regulations 1998 and the CAW Regulations 1987**

Jobs linked to hand and wrist arthritis

Certain jobs appear to increase a person's risk of developing arthritis of the hand and wrist, according to US researchers. A study by the US government's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) found the highest prevalence of hand/wrist arthritis was seen among technicians, machine operators, assemblers and farmers, as well as in the mining, agriculture and construction industries. Writing in the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, the investigators said jobs that required repetitive bending and twisting of the hands and wrists had a 43 per cent increased risk of developing arthritis. They add: "Among workers with hand arthritis, 7.4 per cent had made major changes in their work, 7.6 per cent missed work and 4.5 per cent stopped working or changed jobs because of the problem." The researchers evaluated survey information from a national sample of 30,000 working adults.

- [Reuters Health](#). **Charles Dillon and others. *Self-reported hand and wrist arthritis and occupation: Data from the US National Health Interview Survey-Occupational Health Supplement, American Journal of Industrial Medicine, vol.42, pages 318-327, 2002* [\[abstract\]](#)**

Doctors call for public smoking ban

Doctors are calling for laws to ban smoking in public places and workplaces to be introduced "as soon as possible." *Smoke-free public places* warns 1,000 people are dying every year as a result of passive smoking. The report from the British Medical Association calls on the

government to learn from successful smoke-free policies in other countries and implement similar measures here. It recommends that the introduction of smoke-free public places and workplaces should be coupled with support for smokers who wish to quit. It adds that the European Commission should introduce legislation for smoke-free workplaces and public places. In the UK, smoking restrictions in public places have strong public support – 86 per cent of the public recently said they were in favour of smoking restrictions at work ([Risks 60](#)). And yet three million people are still exposed to tobacco smoke in the course of their work. TUC has called on the government to quit stalling on promised legal controls on workplace passive smoking risks ([Risks 74](#)).

- [BMA](#) and [ASH news releases](#). [BMA report summary](#). [BBC News Online](#). [Reuters Health](#)

Sheep dip linked to pain and depression

Sheep dip chemicals have been linked to headaches and depression in exposed workers, a report has found. Professor Graham Dunn, from the University of Manchester's School of Epidemiology and Health Sciences, carried out the study of the effects of organophosphate chemicals, examining evidence from more than 600 cases. "The more farmers use sheep dips, the more likely they were to report depression and other problems," he concluded, adding "the longer they had used the dips, the more they likely they were to have problems." The report's findings have been considered by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) independent expert advisory group, the Veterinary Products Committee. It said that the study does not justify a ban on the chemicals but the results do underline the need for further research. Farmworkers' union TGWU has argued for stricter controls on sheep dip chemicals, and points to a range of mental and physical health problems it says are linked to their use.

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

INTERNATIONAL

Top safety jobs for Europe's unions

Europe's trade union health and safety research body, the Trade Union Technical Bureau for Health and Safety (TUTB), is looking to recruit two experts. One post is for a specialist in ergonomics, the other dangerous substances. Applications should be with TUTB by 20

December 2002 at the latest, and should be accompanied by a detailed curriculum vitae and a list of relevant publications. TUTB is offering: A permanent contract and a gross monthly salary on the current wage scale of between €3,520 and €5,615 (amounting to a net monthly salary of approximately €1,925 [£1,230] to €2,810 [£1,800] according to family circumstances) depending on qualifications and age, plus bonuses in the form of a thirteenth month's salary and a month's holiday pay.

- **Information from [Laurent Vogel](#) at TUTB or from the [TUTB webpage](#). [Job adverts](#) [pdf format]**

Australia: Campaign call for a "SmokeFree '03"

Australian union federation ACTU and hospitality and entertainment unions have joined with public health leaders to demand smoke-free pubs, clubs and casinos by the end of 2003. The coalition's "SmokeFree '03" campaign is calling for "an end to government delay over workplace smoking - as 25-30 per cent of workers are still exposed to tobacco smoke toxins at work, despite nearly a decade of safety laws requiring employers to provide safe workplaces." Tim Ferrari, of LHMU, Australia's largest hospitality union, said: "Employees in bars still spend up to eight hours a day in smoky venues. The onus is on governments to protect workers, as the hotel industry has been blocking smoking bans and lobbying governments to delay action for nearly a decade." SmokeFree '03 is calling for country-wide laws to ensure all workplaces are smoke-free by the end of 2003 - a position the campaigners say is supported by workplace safety laws and the federal government's National Occupational Health and Safety Commission.

- **[LHMU news release](#), [union-health coalition weblinks](#) and [smoke-free workplaces factsheet](#) [pdf format]. [ACTU campaign speech](#). [AAP](#), [Daily Telegraph](#)**

Global: Deadly "slave labour" racket exposed

International unions are investigating a South Africa-based "slave labour" racket, exposed after the death of two workers at a Lake Cargellico, New South Wales, construction site. Australian e-magazine *Workers Online* reports the case of a black South African worker who entered the country on a business visa, but was working for Aus\$100 (£36) per month on the NSW government-subsidised site. It says Oagiles Malothane, who was also injured in the accident, was rushed

out of hospital by a friend of his dead boss just six days later and put onto a flight to Johannesburg. South African High Commissioner to Australia, Zolile Magugu, said that Malothane was the victim of a 'mafia-style' immigration racket. Andrew Ferguson of the construction union CFMEU said the Australian government "talks tough on border protection and refugees but when it comes to serial exploitation of vulnerable migrant workers they are nowhere to be seen." International union federation ICEM is working with South African affiliate the National Union of Mineworkers to expose the international visa scam.

- [Workers Online](#)

India: Passenger train kills seven track workers

Seven rail workers have been killed after they were hit by a passenger train while repairing the track. The men were working on the rails near Porlupalem, Andhra Pradesh, when the train hit. Two others were seriously injured. Reports say the workers, who were part of a 22-strong team, could not hear the train coming because a goods train passing on an adjacent track drowned out the sound.

- [Ananova](#)

Japan: Compute this – too much screen time makes you sick

The more time spent in front of a computer, the more likely you are to suffer a host of physical, mental and sleep-related ills, researchers in Japan have found. Dr Tetsuya Nakazawa of Chiba University and colleagues surveyed over 25,000 office workers who responded to three questionnaires between 1995 and 1997. The findings, published in the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, found screen-based workers commonly complained of headache, eyestrain, joint pain and stiff shoulders. Mental symptoms such as lethargy, anxiety and 'reluctance to go to work,' as well as sleep-related problems including insomnia and fatigue, were most common among workers who spent more than 5 hours a day glued to their computer screen. "This result suggested that the effect of duration of daily VDT [visual display terminal] use on these scores has a threshold effect, and the prevention of mental disorder and sleep disorder requires the restriction of VDT use to less than 5 hours per day," the researchers found.

- [ABC 7 News](#). Tetsuya Nakazawa and others.
Association between duration of daily VDT use and

***subjective symptoms*, American Journal of Industrial Medicine vol.42, pages 421-426, 2002**
[\[abstract\]](#)

New Zealand: Labour minister wants brutal safety message

New Zealand labour minister Margaret Wilson wants the impact - and \$4 billion (£1.265bn) annual cost - of workplace injuries and deaths rammed home in road-crash style advertising. She said that although New Zealanders no longer tolerated drink-driving or speeding, the same could not be said for workplace accidents. The call came as the government published the findings of a major two-year government study into the financial and emotional impact of workplace accidents. The *Aftermath* study researched 15 workplace accidents and deaths. The documented cost of the cases was \$1.1 million (£348,000), and a further \$3.9 million (£1,234,000) in future workers' compensation payouts and other insurance costs. The indirect and immeasurable costs were estimated to be many times more. The human cost, though, was what report best illustrates - workplace accidents and disease can destroy your health and your family. New Zealand is about to pass a new workplace safety law, after a lengthy campaign by unions for measures to address the country's "appalling" workplace safety record ([Risks 76](#)).

- [New Zealand Herald](#). ***Aftermath - The social and economic consequences of workplace injury and illness*** – [full report](#) and [case histories booklet](#)

USA: Work causes wheezy diseases

Nearly 1 in 5 cases of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) – the potentially life-threatening wheezy conditions including emphysema, chronic bronchitis and asthma - can be attributed to workplace exposures, according to US government researchers. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) adds that in people who have never smoked, nearly a third of cases are job-related. Researcher Dr Eva Hnizdo said "we found that 19 per cent of COPD cases can be attributed to working in industries and occupations that pose a risk for such illnesses." She added: "In persons who never smoked, the proportion was even higher – 31 per cent... The findings demonstrate that job-related COPD contributes significantly to the overall burden of COPD in the US adult population." The investigators, writing in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, reported that COPD was twice as common in blue-collar industries such as rubber, plastic, and leather manufacturing; utilities; office building services; textile mill

products manufacturing; the armed forces; and food products manufacturing than in white-collar industries. This was true even after taking into account smoking and socioeconomic factors.

- [Reuters Health](#). **Eva Hnizdo and others. *Association between Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and employment by industry and occupation in the US population: A study of data from the Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.* American Journal of Epidemiology, vol.156, pages 738-746, 2002 [\[abstract\]](#)**

RESOURCES

Euro newsletter

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work's latest newsletter is available online. It includes an update on the European Union's occupational health and safety strategy, news from the agency and EU news.

- **European Agency [newsletter, No.13](#)**

EVENTS

Only newly announced events, events next week and very important events will be listed here in future. But there is a comprehensive listing of [health and safety events](#) on the TUC website – bookmark it for easy reference!

TUC Organise 2002 Conference, 23 November

Worker Safety Adviser Janice Bentham and Health and Safety Minister Nick Brown MP are part of a glittering array of speakers at the TUC's annual organising conference in London on Saturday, 23 November. [Details](#) are on the web.

Tell your MP about bullying at work, 25 November

Amicus has asked people with stories to tell about bullying at work to come to Parliament and tell MPs why we need a 'dignity at work' bill. See [action](#).

Conference on Violence at Work, 2 December

Hosted by the TUC, this conference will be run by the Government Inter-Departmental Committee on Violence to Staff. For further

information contact [Tom Mellish](#).

Dates for 2003

International RSI Awareness Day conference, 28 February

The RSI Association are holding a conference in Nottingham to celebrate international Repetitive Strain Injuries awareness day (the last day of February is the only non-repeating date of the year). Further details from the [RSI Association](#).

International Workers Memorial Day, 28 April

This year the theme will be corporate accountability for workers' health and safety. The TUC will be co-ordinating a series of events around the country. A background [briefing](#) on the 2003 theme is available on the [page](#) of the TUC website devoted to Workers' Memorial Day.

European Week for Health and Safety at Work, 13-19 October

The theme for the Week in 2003 will be "dangerous substances". The TUC will be stressing the hierarchy of control, and especially the need for substitutes and general toxic use reduction strategies. Key hazards dealt with will include asbestos, asthmagens and solvents.

USEFUL LINKS

Visit the TUC 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](#).

TUC courses for safety reps

COURSES FOR SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER:

[Midlands](#), [North](#), [North West](#), [Scotland](#), [South East and East Anglia](#), [South West](#), [Wales](#), [Yorkshire and Humberside](#)

COURSES FOR JANUARY TO MARCH 2003:

[North](#), [Scotland](#), [Yorkshire and Humberside](#)

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