

Risks

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ASBESTOS
HSE RISK MANAGEMENT

Editor: [Rory O'Neill](#) of [Hazards](#) magazine. Comments to [Owen Tudor](#)
Complete the **Risks** [online survey](#) by 12 January

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Complete the **Risks** online survey now!

The second **Risks** reader survey is underway. Responses to the survey will be collated on a non-attributable basis, and any personal

information will be deleted before any use is made of the figures.

- **Please reply to the [Risks 2nd online survey](#) by **Sunday 12 January 2003 at the latest. [Read the findings of the last Risks readers' survey](#)****

Risks is the TUC's weekly online bulletin for safety reps and others, read each week by over 5,500 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 statement](#). The TUC website lists future health and safety events in [What's On - new events](#) are covered below.

ACTION

Back the safety penalties Bill

The TUC is urging trade unionists and safety campaigners to back MP Lawrie Quinn's ten-minute rule bill to raise fines for health and safety offences and non-insurance, and extend the range of offences for which imprisonment is a possible punishment on Tuesday, 7 January. Lawrie Quinn MP said: "As a trainee Civil Engineer over 30 years ago I quickly recognised the importance of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 to the workplace which employed me before entering Parliament in 1997. This legislation has served working people and the community well over these three decades. I hope to use this early opportunity in Parliament in 2003 to celebrate the Act's achievements by bringing key sections up to date to reflect the realities of today's workplaces through strengthening the penalties against the persons responsible for taking a risk on safety at work." TUC general secretary elect Brendan Barber said: "This is good news for health and safety and bad news for cowboys. Lawrie Quinn is doing us all a great service."

- [TUC briefing on Lawrie Quinn's ten minute rule bill.](#)
[Lawrie Quinn MP's website](#)
- [Find your MP](#) – you only need to know your postcode
- [Centre for Corporate Accountability](#)

FEATURE: it's a no-smoking world

Two conferences on passive smoking are taking place in April – at Congress House in London on [9 April](#) and at Haydock Park on

Merseyside on [10 April](#). [National No Smoking Day](#) is on 13 March.

- [Action on Smoking and Health](#) (including a [list of recent news](#) on restrictions on smoking around the world), [European Network for Smoking Prevention](#)

Pub chef tackles smoking gun threat

A man has been arrested after a chef in a Swindon pub was threatened with a gun. The incident happened shortly after a "heavily intoxicated" man, smoking in an area designated for non-smokers, was asked to leave by a member of staff. He eventually left the Brook House Farm pub "very disgruntled" said a spokesperson for Wiltshire Police. Police said a man wearing a balaclava returned to the pub three hours later, entered the kitchen and pointed a gun at the chef's head. The chef "acted very courageously and bravely in a situation which could have caused him some real danger," the police spokesperson said. "Fearing for his life he quickly grabbed the man, spun him round, threw him against the wall and managed to drag him to the floor and disarm him." The man was arrested for firearms offences. The chef was unhurt.

- [BBC News Online](#)

No smoke *behind* bars, either

Jails will be ruled "no smoking" zones as part of New York City's new tough anti-cigarette policies ([Risks 84](#)). New corrections commissioner Martin Horn is poised to make the move "one of his top priorities," said his spokesperson, with bans on smoking for both prison officers and inmates to be introduced by March. Officials say jails are also workplaces, and should be smoke-free like restaurants, bars and offices – the initial targets of the anti-smoking law signed by mayor Michael Bloomberg. Prison officers are reported to be split between those who see second-hand smoke as a serious health threat, and others who fear a sudden smoking ban could raise inmate tensions. At New York's health department, spokesperson Sandra Mullen said the agency is prepared support the jail smoking ban any way it can.

- [Newsday](#)

Model smoking ban may spread

A Canadian town has made smoking illegal in all public places and private businesses from 1 January 2003. Fines for breaking the rules in

Kenora, Ontario, range from Canadian \$5 to \$25,000 a day (£2 to £10,000). The move comes after the Medical Health Officer for Northwestern Ontario, Pete Sarsfield, declared second-hand smoke a workplace health hazard. Under Ontario's public health act, workers are not allowed to be exposed to health hazards. Environmental health manager Bill Limerick says he has received threatening calls at home and has been threatened in the street. But Limerick says officials will continue to back Sarsfield, and hopes other regions follow the example. "We're going to make, I hope, case law for Ontario (and) maybe for the country," Limerick said. Also in Canada, a Nova Scotia law introducing smoking controls in public places took effect province wide on 1 January. And the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees has said the provincial government should ban smoking in all public facilities, warning that the alternative is costly compensation claims from public employees affected by second-hand smoke.

- **CBC News on the [Kenora](#) and [Nova Scotia](#) bans and [Edmonton Journal](#) on the Alberta ban call**

Study finds smokers would welcome ban in pubs

About a quarter of smokers who go to nightclubs, pubs and clubs would quit smoking if it was banned inside the venues, a study has found. The Australian study, published in the December 2002 issue of the journal *Tobacco Control*, reveals at least seven out of 10 so-called social smokers binge smoke during a night out. The report found about two-thirds of smokers who regularly go to social venues would approve of, or not mind, if smoking was completely banned in those places. From 1 January 2003, licensed premises in New South Wales have been required to introduce and promote designated non-smoking areas. They must also ban smoking at all their counter and bar areas. Since September last year, restaurants, clubs and pubs were ordered by the state government not to allow smoking in existing food service areas. The smoking restriction push was helped by lobbying from unions representing hospitality workers who feared their health was being damaged by working in a smoke-filled environment. Unions have won backing from the official workplace health research body NOHSC ([Risks 85](#)).

- **[Sydney Morning Herald](#). L Trotter, M Wakefield and R Borland. Socially cued smoking in bars, nightclubs, and gaming venues: a case for introducing smoke-free policies, *Tobacco Control*, vol.11, pages 300-304, 2002 [[abstract](#)]**

UNION NEWS

Employers slip up on workplace safety

Workers are falling foul of traditional workplace hazards as employers shift their gaze to more newsworthy problems like stress and RSI, a TUC report has revealed. Every year some 9,000 people suffer broken bones and other serious injuries, having slipped or tripped at work, according to *Falling down on the job: preventing slips and trips at work*. The TUC is calling on employers to carry out risk assessments following major slip or trips in their workplace in an attempt to tackle the problem which is currently costing the UK economy around £1.1 billion a year. TUC's 2002 safety reps' survey found slip and trip incidents were a problem in 84 per cent of the organisations surveyed. TUC general secretary-elect Brendan Barber said many employers seem to have forgotten all about the more "old-fashioned" workplace hazards, "but slips and trips are the biggest cause of major injuries sustained at work: every hour, someone in Britain breaks a bone at work." In addition to risk assessments, TUC is calling for more publicity and for "the promotion of a partnership approach towards tackling the problem."

- [TUC news release](#) and the full report: [*Falling down on the job: preventing slips and trips at work*](#)
- [BBC News Online](#). [Startups.co.uk](#). [Sky News](#)
- HSE [leaflet](#) on preventing slips and trips

TUC wants research to make bosses behave better

The TUC wants to see a fundamental change to the research the HSC/E carries out into the influence of human factors on workers' health and safety. In its comments on the safety watchdog's safety research proposals, TUC says it wants "to see less research into 'behavioural safety' approaches, and more into the positive role which workers' own initiatives can make - especially partnership and consultation with safety representatives." Research priorities should include investigating the positive role of Worker Safety Advisers, union reps in construction and union inspection and improvement notices, says TUC. It adds that the proposed research strategy is "very thin" on women's health and safety, so "gender differences are ignored or obscured, and the problems which do impact differently on women are therefore not tackled."

- [What workers need from health and safety](#)

[research - better behaviour or more consultation?](#)

The TUC's submission to the HSC/E [draft strategic research outlook 2002/3](#)

- TUC web resources on [Worker Safety Advisers](#) and [women and hazards](#). More on [safety reps at work](#), [women and work hazards](#) and [behavioural safety](#)

Unions call for safer call centres

Finance sector unions have launched a new guide for employers and staff in finance call centres to tackle stress and very high staff turnover. UNIFI researcher and author of the guide Liz Cairns said the industry needs to shed its sweatshop image. "To do this employers need to start treating their workers with dignity and fairness and issues such as the misuse of electronic surveillance, unhealthy workstations and inadequate breaks need to be challenged," she said. The call centre industry employs 150,000 people in the finance sector, a third of all UK call centre employees. The guide suggests ways to tackle unacceptable targets, lack of control over workloads, boring and repetitive work, noise pollution, and surveillance. It has been produced by the Alliance for Finance, a partnership involving 21 trade unions and staff associations who are active in the UK financial services sector. Unions say that call centres with recognised unions have healthier workplaces and better terms and conditions.

- [UNIFI news release](#)
- **Call centre news from Australia:** [ACTU's Call Central campaign](#)

Knock off on time, says union

Civil service union PCS has called on its members to make a new year resolution to go home at 5.00pm at least once a week. This call for a more 'civil' service comes in a new union self help guide to dealing with long hours culture at work. A PCS research report, *Long hours working by professionals and managers*, found professionals and managers average 11.6 hours of overtime a week, with two-thirds putting in the extra hours for free. Colin Sambrook, PCS senior national officer, said: "Britain's long hours culture is a national disgrace. We have the longest working hours in Europe as well as the least bank holidays and minimum annual leave, yet we trail well behind France and Germany in terms of productivity. It goes to prove that it is not about working long hours but about working well." He added: "Our report highlights many of the problems experienced as a result of the long hours culture in

Britain. The self help guide aims to empower people to improve their working conditions for themselves but it is only a first step, a revolution in the way Britain works is required."

- [PCS news release, report and self-help guide](#). [Sky News](#). [The Scotsman](#)
- [TUC's Changing Times News](#) for news on campaigns for decent working hours and work-life balance

Union charges transport police with abuse

British Transport Police (BTP) seems to have resolved to handcuff vital support staff to "antiquated and scrooge-like" working conditions, says the transport union TSSA. TSSA, the union for BTP support staff, says management wants to introduce new and potentially illegal working contracts that include a ban on paid overtime. Staff signing the new contracts will waive their rights under the working time directive, and be forced to work over the legal limit of a 48-hour week, says the union. It adds that workers who are injured or have accidents will be expected to repay sick pay to the police authority from any compensation they receive. Seyi Clement, TSSA negotiations officer, said: "Instead of addressing bad employment practice...BTP is penalising staff who are vital to ensuring the safety of passengers throughout the railway network."

- [TSSA news release](#)

TGWU to set up "flexible hours" watch

Transport and General Workers' Union negotiators are to keep a close watch on employers to make sure they become their employees' flexible friend. The initiative comes as new government figures showed over a third of all workers believe flexibility is more important to them than a pay rise. New flexible working regulations to take effect on 6 April 2003 give workers the right to request flexible work patterns, but do not compel employers to grant the request. The regulations say an employer must justify turning down a request, however, and uncooperative employers could face a tribunal if they can't argue a proper business case for their actions. Bill Morris, TGWU general secretary, commented: "The TGWU has always said the 'right to ask' with nothing to oblige the employer to agree is too weak. It begs the question as to what happens when an employer says no. A 'right' that cannot be enforced is a phoney right. What we need is the right to work flexible hours enshrined in employment contracts not treated as a discretionary favour by management. In the light of our workplace

experience we will continue to press the case for the so-called 'right' to be enshrined in law."

- [DTI news release](#). [BBC News Online](#). [Sky News](#).
- [DTI guidance on the new employment regulations](#)
- [Acas helpline service](#) providing guidance about the new rights 08457 47 47 47 (or textphone 08456 06 16 00)
- [TGWU](#). Union guidance: [TUC Changing Times website](#) and [Hazards "get a life!" webpages](#)

Rail deaths whitewash attacked

A rail union executive member has condemned "preposterous" and "wilfully misleading claims" about railway safety. The criticism came after Railway Safety told *The Guardian* newspaper that rail safety was improving, citing figures for the only year in the last five in which there had been no multiple rail fatalities ([Risks 85](#)). Alex Gordon of rail union RMT said Railway Safety was putting a gloss on a woeful accident record that included 31 deaths in the Ladbroke Grove disaster on the year prior to the one cited ([Risks 20](#)), and 7 deaths in the Potters Bar crash in the May of the following year ([Risks 54](#)). He told *Risks*: "Public concerns about safety are not irrational but are based on grim experience of the waste, mayhem and carnage associated with private sector involvement in the rail industry in Britain. Until the issues which go to the heart of this government's PFI/PPP/privatisation agenda are addressed - neglect of public sector infrastructure, proliferation of sub-contracting and fragmentation of responsibility for safety in the dash for easy profits by private firms - such concerns are likely to continue, for good reasons."

- [The Guardian](#)
- [RMT](#)

OTHER NEWS

Health staff "face HIV tests"

Compulsory HIV checks on new doctors and nurses in the UK are to go ahead, the government has confirmed. The plan, which health service union UNISON warned was "unnecessary" and "a serious overreaction" when it was first mooted in December ([Risks 84](#)), is spelled out in a new consultation paper. All new medical staff wanting to work in certain "high risk" specialties will be tested for HIV and hepatitis. Deputy chief medical officer Dr Pat Troop said: "These new measures,

based on expert advice, are designed to improve protection for patients still further by extending existing health checks." However, critics say that despite the high prevalence of HIV in some countries, there have been only two recorded cases in which the virus has been passed from a health worker to a patient. There are no known cases of staff to patient HIV transmission in the UK.

- [BBC News Online. Department of Health news release. Health clearance for serious communicable diseases: new health care workers. Draft guidance for consultation. Comments should be sent by 30 April 2003 to: Dr Linda Lazarus, Department of Health, Room 631B Skipton House, 80 London Road, London SE1 6LH](#)

Roy Castle's widow in work conditions protest

A row has broken out after the widow of entertainer Roy Castle demanded his name be removed from a cancer charity. Fiona Castle has accused the Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation of treating staff badly, and wants her late husband's name taken off all paperwork. She claims its former chief fundraiser Sylvia Ingham was forced out and said charity shop workers had called her to say they were treated "like slaves," with no injury compensation in place and shop bills going unpaid. She said she did not want the good name of her husband, who died from lung cancer in 1994, to be ruined. Foundation chief executive Mike Unger said he had not seen the email from Mrs Castle requesting the name removal.

- [Ananova](#)

PM names and acclaims

Prominent health and safety figures are among those recognised in the new year's honours list. Health and Safety Commission members Maureen Rooney and Margaret Burns both received CBEs. Maureen is a member of the TUC general council in addition to being a commissioner and Margaret chairs the Railways Industry Advisory Committee. Professor Anthony Newman-Taylor, chair of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council and an occupational lung disease specialist, was also awarded a CBE. Among the trade unionists honoured, Bill Connor, the general secretary of shopworkers' union Usdaw, was knighted, and David Falconer, leader of GMB Scotland, received an MBE. Maurice Storey, Chief Executive of the Maritime and Coastguard

Agency, becomes a Companion of the Order of the Bath.

- **BBC News Online on [general](#) and [business honours](#)**

INTERNATIONAL

China: Cyber cafes clampdown is a "safety measure"

China has closed more than 3,000 internet cafes, in what the government says is part of a national workplace safety campaign. China's official Xinhua news agency said the closures were a safety measure prompted by the deaths in June 2002 of 25 people in a fire at an internet cafe in Beijing. Many of China's internet cafes are unlicensed and have no fire exits. The report says nearly 12,000 other internet cafes have been closed until safety improvements are put in place. China's minister for the State Economic and Trade Commission, Li Rongrong, said that more than 45,000 internet cafes had been inspected in the country in the past six months, the news agency reported. Although ostensibly the crackdown is to improve worker safety, BBC correspondent Holly Williams said that China is keen to crack down on web usage, especially internet chatrooms where anti-government opinions may be expressed.

- **[BBC News Online. Xinhua \(official news agency\) report on the June 2002 fire](#)**
- **[China Labour Bulletin](#): the best source of reliable, independent news**

Finland: Stressful work makes you grind your teeth

People who feel stressed out at work are more likely to grind their teeth frequently, according to Finnish researchers. In the study, researchers gave questionnaires asking about tooth grinding to more than 1,300 managers, journalists, technicians, researchers, administrators, and maintenance employees at the Finnish Broadcasting Company, asking them to also gauge their level of workplace stress. Women and employees who reported the highest levels of stress were more likely to be teeth grinders than men or their colleagues whose jobs were less stressful, according to the study. Overall, 26 per cent of women said they ground their teeth at least some of the time, compared with 17 per cent of men. The amount of tooth grinding did not vary according to occupation, but employees who reported higher levels of stress were much more likely to grind their teeth. They also spent more time at the doctor's or dentist's.

- **J. Ahlberg and others. *Reported bruxism and stress experience* Community Dentistry and Oral Epidemiology vol.30, pages 405-408, 2002. [Yahoo News/Reuters Health report](#)**

Mexico: Fireworks explosion kills 28

Emergency workers had to comb through the smouldering rubble of two city blocks after a New Year's Eve fireworks explosion and fire killed 28 people in the Mexican port city of Veracruz. Dozens more were injured, many from smoke inhalation, after an explosion in a street market full of fireworks stalls sparked a blaze that spread to nearby buildings. Fireworks accidents in factories, warehouses and stores are common in Mexico. In September 1999, more than 60 people died in an explosion at a gunpowder and fireworks warehouse in Celaya. While Mexico has laws controlling the manufacture and sale of fireworks, enforcement is often lax.

- [Yahoo news](#)

RESOURCES

New, improved ASLEF safety webpages

Train drivers' union ASLEF has revamped its website's safety pages. The new look pages include general and rail industry specific guidance, a guide for members and safety reps on how to tackle safety concerns, and news on government rail safety enquiries and corporate safety crimes.

- [ASLEF health and safety](#)

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!

Turn the screw on Turner and Newall, 23 January 2003

Demonstrations in Liverpool and London by victims of the rogue asbestos giant Turner and Newall are scheduled for 23 January 2003. The demos will coincide with court cases to determine whether post-1972 insurance cover provided by Royal and Sun Alliance and Lloyds Syndicate to the company includes liability for asbestos-related health

problems ([Risks 38](#)). Liverpool demonstration [details](#): assemble head office Royal and Sun Alliance, 12 noon, Thursday, 23 January 2003. Contact: [Tony Whitston](#). London demonstration: Royal Courts of Justice, The Strand, 10am, Thursday, 23 January 2003. Contact: [London Hazards Centre](#).

ABI/TUC rehabilitation event, 28 January

TUC and the Association of British Insurers (ABI) are to hold an all day rehabilitation seminar on Tuesday 28 January 2003. The event will be held at the Barbican Centre, Silk Street, London. Speakers will include the Hon. Nick Brown MP, minister for work, Owen Tudor from TUC, Professor Mansel Aylward, chief medical adviser to DWP, and John Parker from ABI. The purpose of the seminar is to identify and agree some actions to move forward rehabilitation in the UK. There will be a report back on responses to the *Getting back to work* consultation, jointly published by ABI/TUC in June 2002 ([Risks 58](#)). A registration form will be posted shortly.

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](#).

National No Smoking Day, 13 March

["No Smoking Day"](#), the charity behind a 13 March 2003 no smoking day, says there are around 13 million smokers in the UK and nearly 70 per cent are sick of smoking and want to stop. It is urging organisations and individuals nationwide to back the day.

Risks 100 conference, 4 April

A day-long conference celebrating the 100th issue of Risks which will be issued that day, addressing the themes that Risks addresses - union and international news, action and resources. Note the date for now - booking forms will be available in due course.

Passive smoking at work conference, 9 April

The TUC are getting together with anti-smoking campaigners [Action on Smoking and Health](#) and the [Chartered Institute of Environmental Health](#) (professional body of local authority EHOs) to hold a national conference to call for the implementation of the long overdue

Approved Code of Practice on passive smoking. International speakers, examples of good practice and a review of the civil, criminal and disability law are on the agenda, and registration forms will be advertised when available. More news on workplace smoking bans and on [union approaches to workplace smoking](#).

Tobacco smoke pollution conference, 10 April 2003

A national tobacco smoke pollution conference will feature Professor Stanton Glanz who was instrumental in banning smoking in public places in California ([Risks 52](#)) and is the leading authority on this topic. The event at Haydock Park racecourse on Merseyside, will include a panel (involving trade unions) on introducing legislation for smoke free workplaces, followed by questions from the audience and debate. Further information: [Brenda Fullard](#), regional tobacco policy manager, Directorate of Health and Social Care (North), Government Office for the North West, Sunley Tower, Piccadilly Plaza, Manchester, M1 4BE. Tel: 0161 952 4104. [Conference flyer \[word format\]](#). More news on workplace smoking bans and on [union approaches to workplace smoking](#).

UK stress conference, 12 April

The UK National Work Stress Network's conference will take place on Saturday 12 April 2003 at Hillscourt Conference Centre, Rednal near Birmingham, sponsored by NASUWT. [Conference details and flier](#).

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. Order a poster from the [TUC](#) (single copies free) or bulk copies at a good price from [Hazards](#)

Hazards Conference, 5-7 September

The Hazards Conference will be in London. Margaret Sharkey at the London Hazards Centre is the co-ordinator of the London end of the organisation. You can contact her via e-mail at margaret@lhc.org.uk or on 020 7794 5999.

Road Safety Week, 22-28 September

Organised by Brake, the road safety charity. Contact [Rebecca Kilner](#) at

Brake for more information (t: 01484 559909).

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

The theme for the Week in 2003 will be 'dangerous substances' (EU Agency [press release](#)). 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. [Future years' themes](#) have also now been decided.

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 JANUARY TO MARCH 2003:

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

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What's new in the [HSC/E](#) and the [European Agency](#).

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