

# Risks

issue no 174 – 18 September 2004



**HAZARDS  
MAGAZINE**



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

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**Risks** is the TUC's weekly online bulletin for safety reps and others,

read each week by over 10,000 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 statement](#).

## ACTION

### Get ready for Hazards 2005!

It's the biggest and best health and safety event on the UK union calendar – and next year it will be in Leeds. The National Hazards Conference will run from 29-31 July 2005 and looks like being the best yet, building on the runaway success of the 2004 event in Manchester. Thanks to the support of an army of volunteers and a record 300 sponsors, this attracted well over 500 delegates who went away better informed and very enthused. But these essential annual conferences can only run with your support. The organisers of the union backed event want you to do what you can to get cash support from your branch, region or national union for next year's conference. All sponsors are acknowledged in the conference materials and at the venue. It is a great way to demonstrate support and show your union means business on health and safety.

- [Further details and sponsorship form](#). If you need more information, you can [email](#) the Hazards 2005 organisers or phone on 0161 953 4037.

## UNION NEWS

### HSE strategy shift threatens lives says Amicus



A sea change in strategy by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) will reduce the number and frequency of workplace inspections, is reckless and will endanger lives, says the union Amicus. *Making companies safe*, a new report commissioned by Amicus

from the Centre for Corporate Accountability, reviews the UK and international evidence and concludes inspection and investigation backed by legislation are most effective in guaranteeing safety at work. Yet the HSE are moving away from regulation and is instead favouring voluntary approaches, says Amicus. As well as being dangerous, says the union, the change of direction has been dictated

by a lack of resources, which has forced a recruitment freeze and a reduction in the number of HSE inspectors and the frequency of inspections. On top of this, a Treasury-led review is looking at the possibility of conducting "targeted inspection programmes" that could exempt some companies from HSE inspections altogether. Derek Simpson, general secretary of Amicus, said: "There is overwhelming evidence that the threat of legal action is the key driver for companies to improve their health and safety standards. The HSE's new focus on education and information through voluntarism is not enough unless backed by rigorous and effective enforcement action." He added: "Companies have to be compelled to act and the current low levels of inspection, enforcement and prosecution do not provide a sufficient deterrent to those who have little regard for the health and safety of their employees."

- [Amicus news release](#). [CCA news release](#). **Making companies safe: What work? – [introduction](#), [main findings](#) and full report [[pdf](#)].**

### **TUC general secretary calls for fairness at work**

The UK must retain a respect for fairness at work, TUC general secretary Brendan Barber has said. He told delegates at this week's TUC Congress in Brighton that the country should not follow the US model, characterised by "deregulation, casual hire and fire, minimal levels of social welfare, long working hours." He added: "In union workplaces our people work safer - with half the accident rates of non-union Britain." In the US, where safety protections have been rolled back and unionisation is half the level it is in the UK, the workplace fatality rate is three times higher. The TUC boss said that unions had put the spotlight on another workplace peril, a long hours culture where "we have the combination of the longest hours and fewest public holidays in Europe. Countless workers do unpaid overtime, effectively working for free until the end of February." Mr Barber praised the TGWU for its successful campaign for the regulation of gangmasters, adding that the terrible tragedy of the cocklepicker deaths in Morecambe Bay "shows exactly what happens in a globalised, deregulated, casualised and non-unionised economy. It shows why our vision has to prevail."

- [Brendan Barber's speech to TUC Congress](#).

### **Food retailers should use legal gangmasters says TGWU**



Plough to plate trade union TGWU says major food retailers should use their buying power to make sure the new gangmaster legislation works. The union says it will press retailers to put their suppliers on alert that only legitimate, licensed labour providers will be allowed to supply workers. Jack Dromey, the TGWU's deputy general secretary, told a fringe meeting to the TUC Congress this week: "The campaign to win

legislation was enormously successful thanks to the tremendous coalition which united around this issue and the support from the government which ensured a swift passage to law. But we are under no illusions as to the scale of the challenge we face." He said there are hundreds of gangmasters operating illegally in agriculture. "The new legislation will allow us to separate the legal from the illegal but until it bites in 2005 we are looking to the food retailers to send a clear message to their suppliers and labour providers - the abuse of workers will not be tolerated and only legal operators will be contracted." Defra minister Alun Michael told the meeting: "As with any other business, labour providers must pay their taxes and abide by the laws of the land, which is why the new legislation means that the arm of the law will shortly be embracing them to ensure that they do exactly that. In effect we are creating an anti-social behaviour order for gangmasters."

- [TGWU news release.](#)

### **Challenging the myths on agency workers**

Agency workers are often employed on inferior terms and conditions, without sick pay, pensions or training, and are exposed to greater health and safety risks, retail union Usdaw has said. Deputy general secretary Paddy Lillis, speaking at the TUC Congress in Brighton, called for tighter controls on employment agencies and improved rights for agency workers. He said agency workers "are often employed, quite deliberately, on inferior terms and conditions. They rarely have access to sick pay and pensions. They receive little or no training. They're exposed to greater health and safety risks, and they have little protection on maternity rights." He added that employers were using agency labour "to undermine established pay and conditions, and drive a cheap labour wedge through the existing workforce." Lillis said that it was a "myth" that agency labour was used largely to cover spikes in demand or holidays and sickness absence. "Barely a third of agency workers have worked for their existing employer for less than three

months," he said. Congress delegates called for the introduction of the EU's agency workers' directive at the earliest opportunity. Earlier, Prime Minister Tony Blair, in a speech to the TUC Congress, had said: "You know our concerns on agency workers to maintain necessary labour market flexibility. But whilst we must meet those concerns, we will support the EU Directive on Agency Workers."

- [Usdaw news release](#). [Personnel Today](#). [Tony Blair's speech to Congress](#).

### **Physios' union offers a hand to injured workers**

Physios' union CSP is alerting employers and unions to the part physiotherapists can play in helping injured workers return to the job market. Latest figures from the union show that over half a million people (501,700) are currently off work and claiming benefits for musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). CSP says the steady increase in physiotherapist numbers in recent years has helped reduce levels of work-related absence, but MSDs are still the second highest cause of ill-health for those receiving incapacity benefits. The CSP says too little is being done to give individuals rapid access to treatment. CSP chief executive Phil Gray said: "Being forced to stay off work can have a devastating impact on an individual's personal and professional life. And research shows that the sooner people are able to access treatment for their injuries, the better their chances of returning to work and getting off incapacity benefit." Calling for measures to allow greater self-referral to physiotherapists, he added: "Developing more physiotherapy self-referral schemes within the NHS would not only help individuals, they would also benefit business and the economy and relieve pressure on GPs, who collectively bear the brunt of over one million visits from people with MSDs each year."

- [CSP news release](#).

### **Stop the abuse and violence, says Usdaw**

Retail union Usdaw has called for greater respect for the millions of workers whose jobs involve regular face-to-face contact with the public. John Hannett, Usdaw general secretary, revealed that many of the union's 337,000 members are suffering attacks, threats, physical injury and verbal abuse on a daily basis. Speaking at this week's TUC Congress in Brighton, he said: "Many of our members move heaven and earth to deliver what I believe is a first-class service. But they're

doing it in an increasingly hostile and dangerous environment. Violence and abuse from customers plagues our members in the UK, particularly in the retail sector." He added: "We need a concerted, co-ordinated approach to dealing with violence against frontline workers. Working with the appropriate authorities – including the police – to resolve crime and disorder in and around our workplaces. Working with employers to build a healthy, safe and stress-free working environment and supporting our members to organise around issues that really matter to people who are doing a fantastic job." He said Usdaw's Freedom From Fear campaign has successfully raised awareness of the problem of violence and abuse in the retail sector and received support from many retail companies, trade organisations, politicians and other stakeholders.

- [Usdaw news release](#) and [Freedom from fear campaign](#).

### **Union hopes for no more tragedies**

Union reps at Felixstowe docks are hopeful improvements to machinery will prevent further deaths after a company was fined £250,000 after a docks trainee was killed in a fall from a crane ([Risks 173](#)). Senior TGWU union convenor Geordie Landles was "not surprised" by the huge fine – but said many changes had been made to the cranes and procedures since the tragedy a year ago. Speaking after Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company (FDRC), which operates the port, was handed the fine last week, Landles said: "It should not have been less than £250,000 – this was a tragic accident in which one of our members was killed. A number of things have changed since the day of the tragedy, and the union, Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the port have worked very closely together on a number of modifications to the cranes which will hopefully prevent any kind of accident like this happening again. I am confident that a similar accident will not happen again." After the prosecution, HSE warned of the need for an effective risk assessment for all persons involved in the operation of cranes. "A suitable and sufficient risk assessment would have identified the potential for a fatal or serious injury," said HSE inspector David Gregory.

- [Evening Star. Health and Safety Executive news release](#).

### **Safety will remain top priority, says UCATT's Ritchie**

Alan Ritchie, the incoming leader of construction union UCATT, has vowed to make health and safety a top priority. Ritchie takes over

from George Brumwell as general secretary of the union on 21 October. He said: "UCATT has been at the forefront of health and safety debates under the leadership of George Brumwell. I aim to continue this and maintain the pressure on employers and government to make the changes the construction industry desperately needs." Ritchie said there was still a big job to be done: "The industry overall has failed to implement proper health and safety procedures for its workforce. It has accounted for some 30 per cent of all fatalities to workers in all industries consistently over the past ten years, despite government health and safety summits and increased profile on the industry by the HSE." He warned against the current deregulatory trend, saying: "Every worker in this country should be worried by the appointment by the Conservative Party of John Redwood as shadow minister for deregulation. Our industry needs more legislation on such things as corporate manslaughter to stop the deaths. We need a culture change and government must take the lead to achieve healthier, safer sites where building workers are treated with dignity and respect."

- [UCATT news](#).

### **Act now on corporate manslaughter, says RMT**

Bosses responsible for the deaths of workers must be held to account, RMT general secretary Bob Crow has said. Speaking at TUC's Brighton congress, he called for corporate manslaughter legislation to be included in the next Queen's Speech. "This is one Labour promise we must make sure is kept. We owe it to the families of our members who died at Tebay, and to those of the countless numbers killed in avoidable tragedies, year after year after year, to make sure that this legislation is enacted - now, and not in the dim and distant future." Reports last week suggested that a draft Bill would be published late this year, a point reiterated by the Prime Minister speaking at TUC Congress this week. However, it is unlikely a law will reach the statute books ahead of the election, and even then would not include new legal duties on company bosses ([Risks 173](#)). Crow indicated that further delay and loopholes for "killer bosses" were not acceptable. "As it stands the law is a mess and the prospect of calling killer bosses to account is next to zero. Only in the last couple of weeks we have seen charges over the Hatfield disaster dropped ([Risks 172](#)). Four years on and we are no nearer seeing anyone held to account. What a shambles, and what an insult to the memory of those who died."

- [RMT news release. TUC/Hazards deadly business campaign.](#)

### **TUC announces Safety Rep of the Year 2004**

GMB safety rep Elizabeth Corbett is the 2004 TUC Safety Rep of the Year. Elizabeth, who received her award at this week's TUC Congress, is a safety rep at Automotive Lightning UK Ltd in Hednesford, Staffordshire. She has negotiated a bullying and harassment policy, a rehabilitation programme and led several initiatives to improve rest areas in her workplace. And Elizabeth did not just restrict her activities to traditional workplace health and safety matters. She was actively involved in an anti-domestic violence campaign and the launch of the GMB's domestic violence pledge card in June 2003. Commenting on the award, TUC head of safety Hugh Robertson said: "Elizabeth exemplifies what makes a good union safety rep – she works hard with the backing of her members to prevent workplace health problems, but is equally concerned that those suffering work-related ill-health and injury or with other concerns are given the support they need." He added: "It is encouraging that there was no shortage of first class safety reps nominated for this award. The TUC has trained over 300,000 safety reps and all the evidence suggests we now have a formidable army of better, better prepared union safety advocates at work."

- [TUC news release. Find out more about the TUC's health and safety work and the trade union safety rep's job. TUC guide to the "union effect" in the UK; Hazards global guide to the union effect.](#)

### **OTHER NEWS**

#### **Blair promises unions movement on workplace safety**

Prime Minister Tony Blair has said the government will honour commitments made on workplace safety, including a corporate killing law and action to protect migrant and agency workers. Speaking to delegates on the opening day of TUC's annual Congress this week, he said the government will "act to root out abuse at the very bottom of the labour market where working people are most vulnerable." Mr Blair added: "We will publish proposals on corporate manslaughter in the current parliamentary session, and introduce legislation to ensure that corporations are prosecuted for a serious criminal offence where they

show such wilful disregard for their employees that it results in death.” The Prime Minister told delegates the government would “ensure greater safety for frontline workers in retailing, transport, and the public services, those who working to help others, face the constant daily threat of violence and anti-social behaviour.” He added that the government would strengthen measures against employers who seek to exploit migrant workers. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber responded: “This was a serious, and seriously good, speech... it showed the Prime Minister at ease with the trade union movement, setting out a clear role for unions in making Britain a fairer place.”

- [Tony Blair’s speech in full](#) and [Brendan Barber’s response](#). [Financial Times](#). [The Independent](#). [The Guardian](#). [BBC News Online](#). [GMB news release](#). [Reuters](#).

### **Tackling work violence in Scotland**

The Scottish Executive and Scotland’s unions have teamed up to tackle violence and abuse at work. A new Executive-commissioned report, *Protecting public service workers: When the customer isn't right*, is the result of the Executive working in partnership with the STUC, trades unions and trade bodies. Accepting the report, public services minister Andy Kerr said that physical and verbal abuse of public service workers was bang out of order. He added: “I welcome the approach this report takes to tackling the problem of work-related violence, sending out a clear message that it is unacceptable and helping key players to recognise and fulfil their roles in bringing such abuse to an end. By involving not just employers, but employees, the general public and the perpetrators of this abuse, we can start to address this problem.” STUC general secretary Bill Speirs said: “This report is an excellent example of the progress which can be made when government and unions work in partnership, and demonstrates quite clearly that unions work for workers who serve the public.” A lay member of the STUC was seconded to the Scottish Executive to develop the strategy, in consultation with a steering group from the Scottish Executive, the STUC, employers and professional bodies, including the Health and Safety Executive.

- [Scottish Executive news release](#). [Udaw news release](#).
- **Full report:** [Protecting public service workers: When the customer isn't right](#).

## **Ethnic workers five times as likely to be bullied**

Research in Wales has revealed that ethnic minority workers are bullied five times more than their white colleagues. Around 250 staff in both the public and private sector were interviewed by Dr Duncan Lewis of the University of Glamorgan's Business School and the Valleys Race Equality Council. His survey revealed that 25 per cent of ethnic minority workers said they had been bullied - compared with just 5 per cent of white staff. The research found they were suffering bullying from both managers and colleagues. Dr Lewis said: "Those who reported being bullied claimed to have reduced job satisfaction, motivation and attendance patterns. They also reported suffering stress burnout and increased levels of depression and anxiety." He added: "We need trades unions, human resources departments and everyone working within organisations to recognise this is a problem which is humiliating, demeaning and has a business impact."

- [The Western Mail](#). [Manchester Evening News](#). [BBC News Online](#).

## **Night shift work can be bad for pregnancies**

Working a night shift can lead to longer pregnancies and lower birth weight babies, researchers have found. The study of more than 40,000 Danish women looked at the experience of groups who worked during the day, evenings, nights, and those who worked rotating shifts. Writing in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, the researchers say they found no statistically significant differences in the length of pregnancy or the birth weight of the baby among women when comparing all non-daytime shifts with those who worked only during the day. However, singling out night shift workers, they found a high risk of post-term birth; fixed evening workers had a high risk of full-term low birth weight; and shift workers as a group showed a slight excess of low-weight babies. Low birth weight is seen as warning sign for bad health in a baby, with these babies having a higher mortality rate. The researchers conclude: "Night work may prolong the duration of pregnancy and reduce fetal growth, especially among industrial workers."

- **Jin Liang Zhu, Niels H. Hjollund and Jørn Olsen.**  
**Shift work, duration of pregnancy, and birth weight: The National Birth Cohort in Denmark,**

**American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology, volume 191, number 1, pages 285-291, 2004** [[abstract](#)]. Related information: [National Sleep Foundation alerts](#).

### **Cancer research body says smoking ban is the miracle cure**

A law to ban smoking in public places could save more lives more quickly than the development of a single new anti-cancer drug, according to Cancer Research UK. Professor Alex Markham, the charity's chief executive, says the single most important contribution to tackling cancer in the next decade is legislation to stub out smoking in the country's pubs, restaurants and other enclosed workplaces. Prof Markham said "secondhand smoke is also a real concern. I believe a single piece of legislation would be the most effective thing we could do to save lives when you compare it with the time and money it takes to develop a first class drug." His report, *The cancer challenge: agenda for change*, argues that a ban would not only protect workers in the hospitality industry but would also encourage people who smoke in pubs and clubs to give up. The report says non-smokers exposed to smoke in the workplace increase their lung cancer risk by up to 19 per cent. It adds that new research suggests that secondhand smoke in the workplace causes about 700 deaths each year across the UK – including the death of 50 hospitality workers annually. Health secretary John Reid this week argued that there is no "overwhelming" demand for a ban. Latest US evidence shows action short of a ban leaves bar workers at risk, with ventilation and air cleaning methods not working.

- [Cancer Research UK news release](#). [Sky News](#). [BBC News Online](#).
- **James Repace. Respirable particles and carcinogens in the air of Delaware hospitality venues before and after a smoking ban. Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, volume 46(9), pages 887-905, September 2004** [[abstract](#)].
- [TUC SmokeatWork website](#). [Hazards smoking news and resources](#).

### **Unions back new workplace asthma charter**

Trade unions have backed a new asthma at work prevention charter, launched at this week's TUC Congress. Asthma UK's new guide,

*Asthma at work - your charter*, was produced with the backing of some major UK companies, the TUC and bakers' union BFAWU. It sets out ten recommendations to reduce the impact of asthma in the workplace, and provides information on asthma triggers and symptoms, instructions on what to do if someone is having an attack, and guidelines for employers on making the work environment an asthma-friendly zone. Asthma UK says each year in the UK, 750,000 employees who have asthma find that conditions at work trigger their symptoms. A further 3,000 people develop occupational asthma because of the substances they are exposed to while doing their jobs, says the report. In a recent poll on the Asthma UK website, almost 60 per cent of respondents thought that changes could be made to their workplace that could improve their asthma. Donna Covey, chief executive of Asthma UK, said: "Forty per cent of workers with asthma have told us that things at work make their asthma worse and this simply shouldn't be the case." She added: "It is outrageous that almost a million people in the UK are in a working environment that makes them sick. Asthma UK is helping employers to address this issue by launching the charter, which outlines the simple policies and measures which can be taken to ensure employees are safe and healthy."

- [Asthma UK news release. Asthma at work - your charter \[pdf\]](#).
- [TUC work asthma webpage](#).

### **Ombudsman rules for worker on poor accident investigation**

The local government ombudsman has criticised Hinckley and Bosworth district council for the bodged investigation of a serious workplace accident. The ombudsman concluded that there had been maladministration and ordered that the victim be compensated. The victim, who had been seriously injured in the warehouse accident in March 2000 and who cannot be named for legal reasons, claimed the council had failed to properly investigate. He fell while dismantling storage racking, suffering serious fractures to his arm, face and jaw. The council was told of the accident on 27 March, but after council footdragging the victim's representatives were only told on 17 August 2000 that the council would not be taking enforcement action. The victim felt the council's investigation has been seriously flawed, alleging it had failed to interview key witnesses face-to-face or to recognise the importance of CCTV footage. He made a March 2003 complaint to the local government ombudsman. Jerry White, the local

government ombudsman, criticised the council for its delay in conducting and concluding the investigation and for failing to keep the victim informed. But while he found that the failings had caused the complainant an injustice, he concluded that they did not result in a wrong decision not to prosecute. The council was ordered to make an ex-gratia payment of £1,000 and to review its arrangements for conducting accident investigations.

- [Local Government Ombudsman report summaries webpage](#). **How to complain to the [Local Government](#) (for local authority enforcement) or [Parliamentary](#) (for HSE enforcement) ombudsman.** [Environmental Health News](#).

### **Bid to improve local authority safety enforcement**

The Health and Safety Executive and local authorities have signed up to a new deal aimed at improving cooperation on safety enforcement. The move comes after ongoing criticism from TUC ([Risks 168](#)), unions ([Risks 127](#)) and HSE of the poor workplace safety inspection and enforcement record of local authorities. The "statement of intent" from HSE and Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS) covers working in partnership, improving communications between the partners, sharing information, examining the legal framework, developing arrangements for monitoring the work of the enforcing authorities and working with other government departments. Bill Callaghan, chair of the Health and Safety Commission, said: "HSC, HSE and local authority representative bodies are committed to being good partners and working with each other to improve health and safety. The Statement of Intent sets out how we will do this and I am delighted that yet another step in the implementation of the strategy has been reached." Derek Allen, executive director of LACORS said: "We are pleased that the Statement of Intent emphasises that health and safety enforcement is a vital component of worker and public protection that successfully contributes to local community health and well-being."

- [HSE news release](#). **Local authorities working with HSC and HSE to change attitudes and culture in health and safety enforcement - agreement of Statement of Intent [pdf].** [HSE local authority unit webpages](#). [LACORS website](#).

## INTERNATIONAL

### **Australia: Situation vacant – bully required**

Psychometric testing is being used to identify bullies - then give them jobs. The revelation came as a clinical psychologist revealed profiling could identify “psychotic bullies” who terrorise workplaces, reports top Australian union publication *Workers Online*. Greg Chilvers from the New South Wales (NSW) Police Association told the online weekly that an employer used psychometric testing to select “a bully” after another applicant was rejected on the grounds that she lacked aggression and had too much empathy. Chilvers was speaking at the launch of a NSW Labor Council “Dignity and respect in the workplace charter.” The Charter has been developed to give workplaces a “road map” towards developing anti-bullying policies, covering what the Labor Council has identified as the number one occupational health and safety issue. “The changes to the workplace over the last 20 years have created an environment that pits worker against worker,” said Labor Council secretary John Robertson. The daughters of Linda Costa, who took her own life after bullying and harassment at a Speedo factory, attended the event. “Our mum is dead as a result of bullying,” said Aimee Costa. “But we want to make sure it doesn't happen to anyone else.”

- [Workers Online](#).

### **Brazil: Asbestos victims win £90m payout from EU**

#### **multinational**

A European multinational is facing an asbestos disease compensation bill in excess of £90 million as a result of a Brazilian court ruling. The landmark ruling against the company Eternit has been greeted with relief by campaigners. Fernanda's Giannasi, a government safety inspector and founding member of ABREA, the National Association of Asbestos Victims, commented: “After nine years, a Brazilian court has finally recognised the negligence of Eternit for exposing its workers to asbestos. For decades, asbestos production and processing in Brazil produced a steady stream of profits for asbestos stakeholders. Throughout this time, the welfare of workers, consumers and the public was of little concern.” The case was brought to court by the Public Ministry of the State of São Paulo. The court found Eternit responsible for the ill-health of affected workers and directed the company to pay compensation and medical costs. It is estimated the judgment could cost the company US\$160 million (over £90m).

Adverse media coverage has hit Eternit's ordinary share price. The company is also facing compensation claims from workers in Europe.

- [International Ban Asbestos Secretariat report.](#)

### **Europe: Dutch unions boycott EU “deregulatory” safety conference**



Major union groups have boycotted a flagship European Union (EU) conference. Dutch union federation FNV and Christian union CNV says the conference, which took place in Amsterdam from 15-17 September, is a thinly veiled attempt to push a health and safety deregulation agenda. FNV says that while the event, organised under the Dutch presidency of the EU, is ostensibly about “effective intervention” and “sector dialogue,” background documents and the conference poster make an explicit push for “soft law” and “voluntary initiatives.” FNV says this marks it as part of the “liberal campaign for deregulation.” CNV, whose members protested outside the conference, says it objects to the Dutch government’s support for deregulation of safety, social and working time regulations. It said: “We are concerned about the consequences of these propositions to welfare, health and safety in our country.” Similar shifts have been witnessed elsewhere. A draft framework document from the ILO promotes voluntary measures and self-regulation, a dramatic departure from its usual support for meaningful and enforceable regulation of workplace standards. The US is aiming for a 10-fold increase in its Voluntary Protection Programmes ([Risks 173](#)). And the UK government has indicated it too is shifting towards this “enforcement-lite” approach ([Risks 156](#)), a move heavily criticised this week in a report from Amicus and the Centre for Corporate Accountability.

- [TUTB news. Background on the conference.](#)
- **Why voluntary, deregulatory approaches are dangerous – See the [Hazards “Commission](#)**

Asbestos kills.  
James Hardie knew. [3pages.](#)



### **e to fight for asbestos justice**

Global trade union organisations are stepping up international pressure on the Australian building supplies company James Hardie to compensate thousands of victims of asbestos

building supplies company James Hardie to compensate thousands of victims of asbestos diseases. Public rallies took place across Australia on 15 September 2004, with over 20,000 demonstrators calling on the company, which was a major producer of asbestos products, to provide full compensation to those afflicted by mesothelioma and other asbestos-related diseases. The company moved its HQ from Australia to Holland in 2001, in a bid to jettison much of its asbestos compensation liabilities ([Risks 172](#)). The move, however, has triggered an unprecedented and highly effective global union campaign. In a letter to company chair Meredith Hellicar, Guy Ryder, general secretary of global union body ICFTU, called on the company "to act without any further delay to ensure that the victims have full access to compensation, and cease the ongoing manoeuvres aimed at denying them justice." Affiliates of IFBWW and IMF, the global federations for construction and metal unions, joined asbestos campaigners in a protest at the 17 September AGM of the company. And US unions protested outside a US shareholders' meeting earlier this week.

- [ICFTU news release](#). [ICFTU letter to James Hardie chair Meredith Hellicar](#). [CFMEU news release](#). [MUA news release](#). [ACTU news release on US support for the campaign](#) and [Bloomberg.com](#). [Herald Sun](#). [ABC News](#). [Yahoo News](#). [The Age](#). [The Australian](#).
- **Union resources:** [ACTU](#), [IFBWW](#) and [IMF](#) James Hardie webpages.
- [International Ban Asbestos Secretariat](#). [More on the global union campaign](#).

## EVENTS AND COURSES

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

#### **COURSES FOR SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 2004**

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

#### **Future of safety reps conference, London, 7 October 2004**

An October 2004 participatory seminar on the future of safety reps will discuss the work of trade union safety representatives. The London Hazards Centre organised event will examine the great, lifesaving work of safety reps and will examine the barriers to progress towards safe and healthy workplaces in both the organised and non-organised sectors.

- **What should the future hold for trade union safety reps?, Thursday 7 October 2004, 10am to 4pm, University of London Union, Malet Street, London. Further information [online](#) or telephone 020 7794 5999. The event is free but places must be reserved in advance.**

## USEFUL LINKS

**Visit** the TUC [http://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](#).

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