

Risks

issue no 184 – 27 November 2004



Editor: [Rory O'Neill](#) of [Hazards](#) magazine. Comments to the TUC at healthandsafety@tuc.org.uk.

CONTENTS

- [Union news: Work stress and strains are getting worse, says TUC](#) * [London roadmap for a safety rep in every workplace](#) * [Union concern at rising deaths and injuries](#) * [Unions call for action on driver hours](#)
- [Other news: Manslaughter law should hit bad bosses too, says TUC](#) * [Union anger at manslaughter law delays](#) * [Scotland plans "corporate homicide" law](#) * [UK slips down world safety rankings](#) * [Strong enforcement action is the key to safety](#) * [Work stress can leave you demented](#) * [Union "appalled" at sluggish sea safety action](#) * [Police get power to search pupils at random](#) * [Company fined for subbie's death](#)
- [International news: Australia: Union outrage at Pee&O breaks ban](#) * [James Hardie asbestos fund could fold](#) * [China: Owners arrested after 61 die in mine fire](#) * [Global: Unions up pressure for total asbestos ban](#) * [New Zealand: Docks union calls for methyl bromide inquiry](#) * [USA: Industry bid to shut up dissenting academics](#)
- [Resources: The Hazards you shouldn't avoid](#) * [New on the HSE website](#) * [20 things you should know about Dow](#)
- [Events and courses: TUC courses for safety reps](#)

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.](#)

UNION NEWS

Work stress and strains are getting worse, says TUC

Stress, repetitive strain injuries (RSI) and back strains are the top three health hazards facing UK workers and the problems are getting worse, according to new TUC figures. It says its 2004 biennial survey shows the incidence of stress is up two per cent since the 2002 survey (now cited by 58 per cent of reps), and RSI and back strain are up by three and four per cent (to 40 and 35 per cent). *Focus on union safety reps* also reports problems caused by slips and trips moving into the workplace hazards top five, up from seventh place in 2002. The survey, based on responses from 4,521 safety reps, suggests only half (53 per cent) of UK employers are meeting their legal duty to carry out adequate risk assessments. Almost one in ten reps (eight per cent) said that their employer had never carried out a risk assessment. Commenting on the survey results, TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "A simple risk assessment involving the expert guidance of trade union safety reps could dramatically reduce the risk of hazards in most workplaces. Yet, despite being required by law to carry them out, large numbers of employers still fail to do so. The Health and Safety Executive must get tougher with negligent bosses who continue to be reckless with the safety and well-being of their workforce." Other safety concerns raised by the union reps were display screen equipment (32 per cent cited the problem), working alone (27 per cent), long hours (25 per cent), violence (22 per cent) and chemicals and solvents (21 per cent).

- **[TUC news release](#). The Trade Union Trends report *Focus on union safety reps* is the fifth biennial survey of safety reps from the TUC, and is available from [TUC Publications](#) price £30 (£20 to educational and voluntary organisations, £15 to unions).**

London roadmap for a safety rep in every workplace

London's unions have prepared an ambitious roadmap for a health and safety rep in every workplace and a "positive and meaningful partnership between that rep, the employer, unions and the Health and Safety Executive." A conference last week organised by HSE

London and the Southern and Eastern Region TUC (SERTUC) attracted more than 200 London-based health and safety reps. Mick Connolly, SERTUC regional secretary said: "Our vision for London is that every workplace should have a workforce safety representative in order for London to achieve its place as a world leader in workplace health and safety. This event marks the beginning of a new era of trade union partnership with the HSE in London and one step closer to our shared vision of world class health and safety for a world class city." Bill Callaghan, chair of the Health and Safety Commission (HSC), told delegates: "Prevention built on partnering and prioritisation is vital to meet the changing health and safety needs of the 21st century. The evidence is clear. Safety reps and employee involvement and consultation prevent accidents and ill health." He added: "We want London to be a world-class city for health and safety. I want this event to spur effective partnerships between HSE, local authorities, trade unions and employers, to produce positive change that the rest of the country will want to follow."

- [TUC news release](#). [HSE workers' webpage](#).
- [Safetyreps.org](#) and the [union safety effect](#).

Union concern at rising deaths and injuries

Unions have expressed alarm at Health and Safety Executive figures showing an increase in fatalities, major injuries and over three-day injuries ([Risks 183](#)). "These appalling figures vindicate the full recommendations of the Work and Pensions Select Committee, including a greater say for safety representatives, larger fines for companies breaching safety guidelines and a stronger case for legislation on corporate manslaughter," said Derek Simpson, general secretary of Amicus ([Risks 180](#)). Tony Woodley, general secretary of TGWU, said: "The rise in deaths and injuries at work are quite simply unacceptable. They show safety regimes are falling short of what workers can and should expect." He added: "Each of those individual tragic cases should be a knock on the door to the Prime Minister to say we are not just looking for, we expect to see legislation on corporate killing now not later." In Scotland, STUC said it was concerned at the government's failure to provide extra resources for HSE. STUC safety specialist Ian Tasker added: "As the government continues to support a more business friendly health and safety agenda in parallel with their desire to reduce the regulatory burden on businesses the STUC is extremely concerned that the outcome of these policies will be more workplace fatalities and accidents."

- [Amicus news release](#). [TGWU news release](#). [STUC news release](#).
- [TUC/Hazards deadly business campaign](#).

Unions call for action on driver hours

Transport unions TGWU and URTU have linked up to call for safer hours for commercial drivers. General secretaries Tony Woodley of TGWU and Bob Monks of URTU, whose unions represent well over 100,000 professional drivers, warned at a 24 November conference that the government's draft regulations to implement the EU Working Time Directive are not up to the mark. Tony Woodley said they will have little or no effect on reducing drivers' working hours to an average 48 hours per week and, worse, could create a two-tier workforce. Both unions have been highly critical of the government's draft regulations, arguing that in spite of detailed work with ministers to prepare for the directive, "it seems the employers have had an undue influence." TGWU has highlighted as major problems the exclusion of waiting time from the total hours worked calculations, using holidays to calculate average hours and different restrictions on occasional drivers. The conference will inform the unions' response to the government's consultation, which ends on 12 December. The event informed their campaign strategy to win a reduction in working hours to the 48 average with no loss of pay, say TGWU and URTU.

- [TGWU news release](#).

OTHER NEWS

Manslaughter law should hit bad bosses too, says TUC

Companies will be more likely to face manslaughter charges if workers or members of the public die as a result of their neglect, under measures announced in the Queen's speech. A draft bill will introduce a new offence of corporate manslaughter in England and Wales for cases when death takes place because of management failure. However, the government said it would only publish the bill in draft, meaning it has no commitment to turn it into law, and has not included new legal duties on dangerous directors. With a general election looming next year, only a select few of the bills proposed in the Queen's speech will actually be heard in parliament. And what happens to the bill on corporate manslaughter will depend entirely on whether the Labour government is re-elected or not. Under the draft bill, the

new offence would be clearly linked to existing health and safety requirements, and the government has promised that no new regulatory burdens will be created. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber commented: "After many years of waiting, we are pleased to see a draft bill on corporate manslaughter finally make it into the Queen's Speech. The proposed legislation will make life more difficult for the bosses who show scant regard for the health and safety of their employees and the public." He added however, that "we are disappointed that the bill doesn't threaten individual directors with the ultimate sanction of a jail sentence, nor does it end Crown immunity. The government should be leading by example and we will continue to press ministers to change their minds on these crucial points."

- [TUC news release and briefing. BBC News Online, Queen's speech at a glance and in full. Reuters. The Guardian. CBI news release. IoD news release.](#)
- [TUC/Hazards deadly business campaign.](#)

Union anger at manslaughter law delays

Unions have expressed dismay at continuing delays in progress towards a new corporate manslaughter law with legal duties on company directors. Commenting on a commitment to a draft bill in the Queen's speech, Derek Simpson, general secretary of Amicus, said: "A draft bill represents serious slippage in terms of time - we had expected a corporate manslaughter bill in the parliament just gone or at least before the election. We are also concerned about speculation that senior directors' accountability will only extend to fines." Tony Woodley, TGWU general secretary, said: "The government are right to take action, but legislation must be effective and hold individual directors responsible. Our experience in industries such as construction shows that fines alone do not change health and safety culture." He added that the bill should also apply to Crown bodies. CWU health and safety officer Dave Joyce said he was "very disappointed that the bill does not impose individual liability for the new offence either in a direct or contributory way upon individual directors with the ultimate sanction of a jail sentence. I think the campaign goes on in this regard and we must continue to press government ministers to change their minds on this crucial point." The Centre for Corporate Accountability said the government's failure to introduce new legislation in its second term "can be seen as a breach of its manifesto commitment. The failure to legislate in the current term means that what happens depends on the outcome of the election in May 2005."

- [Amicus news release](#). [TGWU news release](#). [GMB news release](#). [CWU news release](#). [CCA news release](#) and [corporate manslaughter reform webpage](#). [The Scotsman](#).

Scotland plans “corporate homicide” law

An offence of “corporate homicide” could be introduced in Scotland. Plans have been announced for a specific offence for corporate and public bodies which cause death through failures of management – this would take the scope beyond that of the Westminster draft bill, which would not apply to Crown bodies. The Scottish Executive will publish a consultation paper in the new year, putting forward options for changes to the law. Unions in Scotland have campaigned for such a law and welcomed the announcement by the justice minister, Cathy Jamieson. STUC general secretary Bill Speirs said he hoped it would hold company directors responsible for the failure to protect workers properly under health and safety laws. He added that Scotland should introduce measures similar to those announced for England and Wales in the Queen’s speech. “As part of our Unions Work campaign, the STUC continues to press the Scottish Executive to urgently introduce similar legislation to ensure the protection of Scottish workers,” he said. Announcing the consultation in Scotland, Ms Jamieson said: “I know there is public concern that there is a possible gap in the law that makes it difficult for companies to be prosecuted for deaths that are attributable to management failures. The first minister and I have already made it clear that if legislation was required to reform this area of law then we will not hesitate to bring forward proposals for legislation.”

- [Scottish Executive news release](#). [BBC News Online](#). [The Scotsman](#). [The Herald](#).

UK slips down world safety rankings

The UK is slipping down the world safety rankings and is now outside Europe’s top 10. The new issue of *Hazards* magazine says a slew of new reports raise urgent warning signs about current government safety policies. High on the list of critical evidence is a new International Labour Office world ranking, which puts the UK 21st out of 23 developed nations in its “work security index” rating of health and safety performance. The UK failed to make the top “pacesetter” group, instead relegated to a second tier group alongside countries

including Barbados, Argentina, Chile, Estonia and Latvia. In an indepth online interview with *Hazards*, report co-author Ellen Rosskam said: "Pacesetter countries perform better in protecting workers' health than countries that do not make the pacesetter group." She added that low government spending on compensation and benefits for sick workers meant the UK only made 77th out of 95 countries rated for "process." On "outcome," the UK came 11th out of 12 western European countries assessed, with the poor showing attributed to less complete legal protection and methods to show laws are observed, although Europe overall scored better than all other regions. The Health and Safety Commission's current 2010 health and safety strategy could drive the UK further away from the world's safety elite, the *Hazards* article warns.

- [Hazards magazine. Hazards online interview with Ellen Rosskam, ILO Socio-economic Security Programme.](#)

Strong enforcement action is the key to safety

A real threat of enforcement action by official safety agencies is the best way to secure improved safety standards, a major international review has found. A team led by Dr Emile Tompa of Canada's Institute for Work and Health looked at 44 studies published between 1977 and 2002 in the economics and workplace health literature. The researchers investigated what worked best – economic incentives, workplace inspection or enforcement action. "Simply knowing that an inspector might visit a workplace and do an inspection does not lead to fewer or less severe injuries," Tompa concluded. "On the other hand, there is strong evidence that when companies are given orders or fines as the result of inspections, there is an impact on the rate and severity of injuries." The study was welcomed by Dr Ed McCloskey, Director of the Occupational Health and Safety Branch at the Ontario Ministry of Labour. "This is exactly the kind of research we're looking for," he said. "In fact, the review will be considered as we develop our front-line enforcement strategies." In July, the ministry announced it would be recruiting 200 more health and safety inspectors by 2008, increasing total numbers from 230 to 430. This new strategy has been welcomed by unions. "This proves what unions have been saying all along, effective enforcement is key to ensuring employers comply with health and safety laws," Cathy Walker, head of safety at the auto union CAW told *Risks*. UK unions have criticised an HSC shift towards a system including "advice free from the fear of enforcement."

- [Institute for Work and Health newsletter](#). E Tompa, S Trevithick, C McLeod. **A systematic review of the prevention incentives of insurance and regulatory mechanisms for occupational health and safety, Institute for Work and Health, number 213, 2004** [[abstract](#), [summary](#) and [order form](#) for the full paper].
- [8 July 2004 Ontario Ministry of Labour announcement on increased inspector numbers.](#)
- **What's happening in the UK? – see the [Hazards Commission Impossible webpages](#).**

Work stress can leave you demented

New research shows that workers with better jobs with a lot of control run a lower risk of developing dementia. The report comes on the heels of a US study that found mind-numbing jobs were linked to a higher rate of Alzheimer's ([Risks 169](#)). Now a German study has compared 229 patients with dementia from 23 general practices in the city of Frankfurt-on-Main and surrounding area in 1998–2000. A structured interview was used to establish work history, and jobs were classified for their demand and control opportunities. The research team found those with high challenge, high control possibilities, and high social demands at work had a lower risk for dementia. High risks for error at work had a significant link with the diagnosis of dementia. The same held when the researchers looked in turn at just those patients developing Alzheimer's disease or those developing vascular dementia. The paper, published in the December issue of the journal *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, concludes: "The results of this study indicate a potential protective effect of psychosocial work factors - especially of a high challenge at work and high control possibilities - on dementia." The authors add that further investigation is needed to check whether other factors could be responsible, for example whether workers going on to develop dementia tended to take certain types of job.

- **A Seidler and others. Psychosocial work factors and dementia. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, volume 61, pages 962-971, 2004** [[abstract](#) and [full text](#)].

Union "appalled" at sluggish sea safety action

Shipping minister David Jamieson has revealed that the UK government has begun an investigation into safe ship staffing levels. The move came to light after ships officers' union NUMAST raised concerns at the government's failure to act on a Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) report highlighting the role in groundings and collisions played by fatigue and reduced crewing. The MAIB analysis found that fatigue was a contributory factor in 82 per cent of incidents and called for changes in safe staffing rules. David Jamieson told MPs that only an international response was appropriate. He added, however, that the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) is conducting a study to examine the crewing levels required across Europe and the links between crew levels and fatigue related accidents. NUMAST general secretary Brian Orrell said he was appalled by the complacency of the minister's response. "We know there are serious concerns about the inadequacy of safe manning certificates and the role of fatigue in accidents, and the MAIB report produced substantive evidence based on analysis of actual incidents," he said. A major research project involving NUMAST, the MCA and the Health and Safety Executive has also produced extensive evidence of serious fatigue and working time problems in major sectors of the shipping industry, he added ([Risks 140](#)). Mr Orrell said he was concerned that the UK's unwillingness to take unilateral action on the problem of fatigue reflected commercial considerations.

- [NUMAST news release.](#)

Police get power to search pupils at random

Police will be allowed to carry out random searches for knives on school premises under sweeping new powers to improve discipline. The move, welcomed by teaching unions, means heads will be able to invite the police into school unannounced to search pupils for weapons. The proposal is just one of a string of measures announced by Charles Clarke, the education secretary, in a crackdown on poor behaviour. Mr Clarke said: "I want to make it clear that there are simply no excuses for having a knife in school. It is unacceptable and will not be tolerated." He said he believed the random searches "could be an effective measure to detect and deter knives in schools." Steve Sinnott, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers (NUT), said: "The education secretary is to be congratulated. The government now realises the damaging effects a few young people with unacceptable behaviour can have on the morale of teachers and the learning of pupils." NASUWT general secretary Chris Keates said: "I am

very pleased that the proposed measures include the facility for the random, unannounced police searches suggested by NASUWT. This has the potential to be not only a method of detection but an effective deterrent.”

- [The Independent](#). [NUT news release](#). [NASUWT news release](#).

Company fined for subbie’s death

Defence company BAE Systems has been fined £250,000 after a sub-contracted welder died while working on a North Sea platform. Billy Farrell, 35, fell to his death as he carried out maintenance work on a crane. Norwich Crown Court heard last week that despite the crane being 90ft above the North Sea, there were no safety rails or toe boards. BAE Systems Operations Ltd admitted failing to ensure the safety of a person other than an employee. The Hon Mr Justice Cresswell said that the scaffolding used for the work was “unsafe and unsuitable.” The judge said that although the work was subcontracted to Ark Offshore International, based in Great Yarmouth, health and safety on the tower “remained the ultimate responsibility of BAE.” BAE said that until the accident it had an impressive safety record and had reviewed its procedures since.

- [BBC News Online](#).

INTERNATIONAL

Australia: Union outrage at Pee&O breaks ban

A UK-registered company which forced Australian call centre workers to carry a “pee pole” to signify they’re going to the toilet has responded to staff protests by banning all breaks. Over 45 telephonists at P&O Cruises must take one of three garishly decorated half metre “pee poles” from in front of their manager’s office if they want to use the toilet, reports *Workers Online*. It says workers responded to the introduction of pee poles by bringing in their own poles, decorated with patterned wrapping paper, and starting a petition. Employees sneaked to the toilet, where the fake pee poles were hidden, and returned to their desks carrying them. Call centre manager, Andrew Crawford, reacted by taking the poles away altogether and banning all breaks except a half hour for lunch. Australian Services Union (ASU) organiser, Naomi Arrowsmith, said the pole policy was “simply

demeaning, it's embarrassing in front of fellow workers." Earlier this year, German supermarket chain Lidl demanded that women workers in its Czech Republic and Polish stores wear special headbands during their monthly periods. It said the move was to identify women who could take additional toilet breaks. The policy was abandoned after critical media coverage worldwide.

- [Workers Online. UNI on the Lidl policy.](#)
- [Hazards toilet breaks webpage.](#)

Australia: James Hardie asbestos fund could fold

Disgraced Australian asbestos multinational James Hardie Industries is facing fresh controversy after a foundation set up to compensate its asbestos disease victims this week started proceedings to go into liquidation. The massively under-funded Medical Research and Compensation Foundation set up by the building products company to meet future asbestos claims says it must fold because it has failed to secure the money needed to keep going. It is thought the fund has a shortfall of about £1 billion. An expected contribution of Aus\$85 million (£35.6m) due this week failed to materialise because James Hardie demanded indemnity from being sued as a condition for the cash transfer. If the Foundation does go into liquidation, it is probable that all compensation payouts would be frozen until the matter is resolved, with some reports saying victims could lose out entirely. The company, which has embarked on an aggressive public relations drive denying any wrongdoing, has been hit hard by the scandal. It admitted this week that legal fees and effective product boycotts had contributed to a nine per cent decline in half-year profits to Aus\$77.7 million (£32.6m). But although the company conceded it was losing market share due to public antagonism, its disgraced former chief executive Peter Macdonald is still being paid Aus\$76,580 (£32,100) a month as a consultant and will be on the payroll for more than two years. Unions and asbestos victims' groups expressed outrage at the continued employment of Mr Macdonald, who was found by the NSW Jackson special commission of inquiry to have breached corporate laws which could put him in jail for up to seven years. Australian union CFMEU got support at last week's Global Asbestos Congress in Tokyo for a global ban on James Hardie building products.

- [ABC News. Egoli news flash. The Australia on public antagonism to James Hardie and its removal from ethical share index.](#)

- [ACTU news release](#). [Victorian Trades Hall Council news release](#). [CFMEU news release](#).

China: Owners arrested after 61 die in mine fire

Chinese police have detained nine people in connection with a massive blaze at an iron ore mine that killed at least 61 people and left four missing, according to the official news agency Xinhua. Most of the miners killed in last Saturday's fire at a complex of mines in Shahe, in northern China's Hebei province, were suffocated by smoke. The bank accounts of those who owned or operated the mines were frozen, reports cited Hu Chunxing, the head of Shahe's information office, as saying. The fire erupted after an electronic cable caught fire inside one of the mines. It spread quickly to five connected mines. The thick smoke slowed rescue efforts. Official figures show that 4,153 people died in mining accidents in China in the first threequarters of this year - a figure 13 per cent lower than last year. But correspondents say the total may be higher, since some deaths go unreported. These often occur in illegal, unregulated mines, which have mushroomed as China's industrial revolution drives the country's huge demand for coal.

- [Independent Online \(SA\)](#). [BBC News Online](#).

Global: Unions up pressure for total asbestos ban

The world's construction unions are to step up the campaign for a global asbestos ban. A joint declaration from the international building trade union federations made at last week's Global Asbestos Congress in Tokyo said the were "committed to actively promote the global ban of all forms of asbestos from the construction industry and from all other industrial sectors, and to promote the effective regulation of work with in-situ asbestos in demolition, conversion, renovation and maintenance works by law." The declaration, signed by general secretaries of the International Federation of Building and Wood Workers (IFBWW), the World Federation of Building Workers (WFBW) and the International Union of Building and Wood Workers (UITBB), calls on governments to "take immediate steps to ban all mining, manufacture, recycling and use of all forms of asbestos and asbestos-containing materials as soon as possible." It adds that the International Labour Organisation "should adopt a clear health-based position in favour of the elimination of the use of all forms of asbestos and asbestos containing materials" and should "assist member states by drawing up national action programmes for the management,

control and elimination of asbestos from the working and social environment." The conference attracted over 400 trade unionists, activists and asbestos experts from 36 countries.

- [Tokyo asbestos declaration. Japan Times.](#)
- [International Ban Asbestos Secretariat. More on the Hazards website.](#)

New Zealand: Docks union calls for methyl bromide inquiry

The New Zealand maritime union is backing calls for an inquiry into the toxic gas methyl bromide, used as a timber fumigant in New Zealand ports. The wives of six former port workers first raised the alarm after their husbands contracted motor neurone disease. Five of the affected workers have died. Union general secretary Trevor Hanson said waterfront workers have particular concerns about the gas because they work with it in confined spaces. He added that health officials should investigate whether the cases of motor neurone disease are linked to methyl bromide poisoning. Hanson said that precautionary blood testing of workers would be a useful step, but added the union also wants workers to be able to test toxics levels when they are working with fumigated timber. "Methyl bromide is a toxic gas and we are concerned about anecdotal evidence that in the past there has been a too relaxed attitude towards its use around workers," he said. In the mid-1980s, the US government's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health warned that "monohaloalkanes" including methyl bromide could be a cancer risk in humans.

- [NZ worksafereps. New Zealand Herald.](#)

USA: Industry bid to shut up dissenting academics

Academics sticking their heads above the parapet and raising health concerns about work hazards have always risked a career wrecking run-in with the mighty US business lobby. But in a new twist, it is not just the whistleblowers that should be fearful. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* has revealed a case where chemical companies are also going after the peer reviewers of critical academic publications. Lawyers representing more than 20 chemical companies, including many household names, have taken the unusual step of issuing subpoenas to five peer reviewers of a scholarly book as part of litigation over the alleged health risks of vinyl chloride, a widely used cancer-causing industrial chemical. At issue in the subpoenas to the

publishers and reviewers is the book *Deceit and denial: The deadly politics of industrial pollution*, which was published in 2002 by the University of California Press and the Milbank Memorial Fund, a foundation dedicated to research on health policy. "Basically what we tell in the book," said book co-author Gerald Markowitz, "is how the industry kept this secret from the government and how they fought against regulation." According to Jordan Barab, editor of the weblog *Confined Space*: "It's not that any legal actions will befall the peer reviewers or authors. This is all about intimidation. Markowitz was deposed for five straight days. Who would want to volunteer to peer review a publication critical of industry, fearing that they would be dragged into court and harassed?"

- **Chronicle of Higher Education** [[pdf](#)]. [Confined Space](#).
- **Gerald Markowitz and David Rosner**, [Deceit and denial, the deadly politics of industrial pollution](#).

RESOURCES

The *Hazards* you shouldn't avoid



The new issue of *Hazards* magazine, the TUC-backed health and safety quarterly, is now available. Packed full of information, resources and the news you won't hear from HSE, it is the only international award-winning health and safety magazine written especially for you – trade union safety reps. This issue has the latest on the union safety effect, a photofeature on the union campaign against asbestos villain James Hardie, a photofile on global metal union federation IMF and nitty gritty information on issues ranging from new laws to voice loss, to safety penalties and compensation payouts. TUC's health and safety department says *Hazards*, which relies on union subscriptions and support to continue publication, is a "key source" for all union health and safety reps.

- ***Hazards* magazine** – [check out the contents](#) and [subscribe online](#). Unions qualify for special – **massive** - discount rates, particularly on orders of **five or more**. Call the [Hazards subscription hotline](#) on **0114 235 2074**.

New on the HSE website

There have been a couple of noteworthy additions to the Health and Safety Executive website. A new risk management section is intended "to ensure that people in control of work activities manage the risks properly. To do that they have to make sound judgments about the level of the risk and then decide what more, if anything, they should do to reduce the risk to an acceptable level." HSE has also updated its 2001 guidance on acoustic shock ([Risks 182](#)). It says this is because HSE is now "aware of new research which suggests that call centre operators may be exposed to noise levels and conditions that can cause problems with the hearing function.... Organisations that operate call centres are further advised that they should keep up to date with developments in this field through their professional associations and other representative bodies, as well as through their enforcing authority (usually the local authority) via the HSE website."

- [HSE webzone on risk management and updated briefing on acoustic shock.](#)

20 things you should know about Dow

As the 3 December 20th anniversary of the Bhopal disaster looms ([Risks 183](#)), activists from around the world - including union, human rights, legal, health and safety and other experts - are mobilising to demand that Dow Chemical, the current owner of Bhopal disaster company Union Carbide, be held accountable. According to the weekly newsletter *Focus on the Corporation*: "Here we are 20 years after this disaster, and the company responsible for this catastrophe and its former executives are still fugitives from justice. Union Carbide and its former chairman, Warren Anderson, were charged with manslaughter for the deaths at Bhopal, but they refuse to appear before the Indian courts." The report says "in commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the crime of Bhopal, we present here 20 things to remember about Dow Chemical - the company now responsible for Bhopal and a fugitive from justice." The list of Dow dirty dealings includes the production of toxins from Vietnam's napalm to 2,4-D, Agent Orange's pesticide cousin that was heavily used as a herbicide in the UK. One event timed to coincide with the 20th anniversary is the release a book-length rap sheet against Dow, *Trespass against us: Dow Chemical and the toxic century*.

- [Focus on the Corporation. Trespass against us: Dow](#)

Chemical and the toxic century, Jack Doyle,
[Common Courage Press](#), 2004.

- More on the [3 December 2004 Bhopal Day of Action](#).

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](#)

COURSES FOR JANUARY TO MARCH 2005

[Midlands](#), [Scotland](#), [South East](#)

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](#).

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.