

Risks

issue no 208 – 28 May 2005



HAZARDS
MAGAZINE



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Risks is the TUC's weekly online bulletin for safety reps and others, read each week by over 11,000 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

TUC sees red herring in Brown red tape call

The TUC has told the Chancellor Gordon Brown his push for a reduction in the red tape "burden" on business is more like a red herring, as Britain is already the most lightly regulated OECD economy. The TUC statement came after the Chancellor announced a new deregulation drive in a Downing Street meeting with approving business leaders. He said he would introduce "a risk based approach to regulation to break down barriers holding enterprise back." The Chancellor added: "In a risk based approach there is no inspection without justification, no form filling without justification, and no information requirements without justification. Not just a light touch but a limited touch." A TUC spokesperson responded: "Nobody is in favour of regulation for the sake of it, but business arguments about red tape are, in fact, a red herring. Professor Michael Porter's study for the Department of Trade and Industry pointed out that the UK has the lowest level of product and labour market regulations in the OECD. The TUC will remain vigilant to ensure that proper standards do not slip as a result of this initiative." A number of unions have said they will oppose any attempt to weaken health and safety enforcement.

- [Treasury news release](#). [IoD news release](#). [CBI news release](#). [Financial Times](#) and [related editorial](#). [BBC News Online](#).

Unions warn against attack on safety enforcement

Angry unions have told the Chancellor Gordon Brown his plans to reduce the red tape on business by taking a "light touch" on laws and inspection must not result in weaker safety enforcement. Dai Hudd, assistant general secretary of HSE union Prospect, said the regulation review must not turn into a "cowboy's charter." He said: "Injuries and deaths at work increased last year and we fear this trend will accelerate that process. The government must respect the experience and expertise of staff in the frontline and not follow a slavish employer-driven agenda. Effective regulation is not just about being nice to business, it is about maintaining standards." Paul Kenny, acting general secretary of the union GMB said: "Any suggestion that we can build trust with employers who put profit and cutting corners before the rights and safety of workers is complete and utter nonsense. The road to the current legislation, which is totally inadequate, is littered

with the broken bones, the blood and the bodies of workers killed by company negligence." Kenny added: "Mr Brown should go and talk to the widows and children and widowers of people killed and maimed by company mismanagement, by gross negligence of employers on health and safety". Bob Crow, general secretary of rail union RMT said: "Gordon Brown is wrong in his neo-conservative belief that unregulated business will act responsibly and that reputation with customers and investors is more important to behaviour than regulation. Inquiries after all the recent major railway accidents have shown that the companies did act irresponsibly leaving many people dead. Railways are high risk and will only be safe if the risks are controlled and tightly regulated." Ian Tasker of Scottish union federation STUC said a Work and Pensions select committee last year had agreed with unions and concluded rigorous safety regulation and enforcement was necessary ([Risks 167](#)), adding: "We would urge the Chancellor and the Labour government to concentrate on delivering its previous commitment to protect workers before subscribing to business leaders' red tape myths".

- [Prospect news release](#). [RMT news release](#). [STUC news release](#).
- [Why regulation and enforcement is necessary – Hazards "Commission Impossible" webpages](#).

Prospect muscles in on bad backs



The union Prospect has thrown its weight behind a major national campaign by the Health and Safety Executive to reduce the number of back injuries at work. A new workplace poster is part of a drive by the specialists' union to educate staff and management. Prospect says work-related musculoskeletal disorders affect more than one million people a year. It is urging safety reps to organise inspections focusing on reducing back injuries. The campaign comes ahead of an HSE series of seminars and health awareness days to run over a four-week period starting on 13 June. Prospect assistant general secretary Mike Clancy said: "Our members are as much at risk as any other group of employees. We need to spread the message that healthy backs means healthy workers and healthy business. Taking sensible practical precautions, including the use of handling and lifting aids, can reduce back injuries." He called on safety reps to: Display Prospect's 'Backs! 2005' poster; promote the back pain message through branch

newsletters; review risk assessments; and organise seminars or other events at work to share information and expertise.

- [Prospect news release](#).

Unions call for European Commission to act on hours

Unions across Europe are calling on the European Commission to back worker-friendly changes to the Working Time Directive already supported by the European Parliament ([Risks 206](#)). The call comes in an open letter from the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) to Commission president José Manuel Barroso. It points out that the European Parliament's proposed far-reaching amendments to the initial proposals of the Commission were adopted in its plenary session of 11 May 2005 "with a clear and convincing majority," drawing support from across all major political groups. A key demand approved by the Parliament was for an end to the UK opt-out from the working time directive's 48 hour working week ceiling. ETUC says the democratic vote of the European Parliament "cannot and must not be ignored." It is asking president Barroso and the Commission to "do everything within their competence to preserve the basic principles of the Working Time Directive and put an end to the individual opt-out."

- [ETUC news release](#)

Unions welcome initiative on pupils' behaviour

Teaching unions have welcomed a government initiative to tackle bad pupil behaviour, including the creation of a behaviour "leadership group" with union participation. Steve Sinnott, NUT general secretary, commented: "It is pleasing that the education secretary has acted so quickly on an issue of concern to every teacher in the country." He warned, however that more needed to be done to stop attacks on teachers. "The wider issue of pupil violence also needs to be tackled," he said. "Currently no-one knows the scale of the problem because the statistics are woefully inadequate. Until we know the scale of the problem, whether such incidents are concentrated in particular types of schools or areas, and more, it is impossible to look at ways of combating the problem. There is also an urgent need for advice to schools on protecting teachers working in their classrooms after the end of the school day. The horrific rape of our member on her second day in a new school underlines the urgency of the need" ([Risks 205](#)). The new Leadership Group on Behaviour and Discipline will advise the

government on effective school discipline and how to improve parental responsibility for children's behaviour and deliver a culture of respect in all schools. Teaching unions and other professional associations have been invited to nominate Heads and teachers who have a proven track record in managing behaviour to sit on the leadership group, chaired by Sir Alan Steer of the Seven Kings High School, Ilford. Last week, teaching union NASUWT announced it was to ballot for strike action at the flagship Union City Academy in Middlesbrough because persistent pupil bad behaviour had left some teachers afraid to go to work.

- [NUT news release](#). [NASUWT news release](#). [DFES news release](#). [The Guardian](#). [BBC News Online](#).

OTHER NEWS

Second six figure fine this year for British Sugar

British Sugar has received its second six figure safety penalty of 2005. The company was fined £250,000 this week on charges relating to an incident which saw an electrician seriously injured, losing the sight in one eye. The firm admitted breaking health and safety rules at its Cantley plant in Reedham, Norfolk, in July 2003. Edmund Osborne, from Lowestoft, was working on a sugar elevator tower when he was injured in the explosion. Judge Paul Downes, at Norwich Crown Court, said British Sugar's breaches of safety regulations were "very serious." He ordered the firm to pay a fine of £250,000 and £95,300 costs. He said an aggravating factor was that British Sugar had been before the courts five times in five years. Ken de Haan QC, representing British Sugar, said the company had spent £6 million on safety improvements and was now working in partnership with the Health and Safety Executive to ensure nothing like this ever happens again. British Sugar was fined £400,000 in February for safety offences relating to the death of Lorraine Waspe ([Risks 195](#)). Only 61 workplace safety fines have ever exceeded £200,000 in the UK, and British Sugar has received two of them this year. The double blow is unlikely to impact too dramatically on its bottom line, however. British Sugar's parent company, Associated British Foods, made an operating profit of £478 million in 2004.

- [BBC News Online](#).

BP guilty of "corporate scapegoating"

UK multinational BP is facing a storm of criticism in the US after "scapegoating" workers for the Texas City refinery explosions that killed 15 workers and injured more than 170 in March ([Risks 200](#)), with a US union saying some of the blame can be traced back to the company's London headquarters. A report released by the company last week blamed the blast on "surprising and deeply disturbing" mistakes made by plant operators who did not follow proper procedures. According to Jordan Barab of US safety news service *Confined Space*: "Workers were made the scapegoats despite the fact that BP admitted that the unit that blew up had been 'recognised as potentially hazardous for this type of service' and that BP had bypassed several opportunities to take it out of service." As a result of the interim findings, several operators and supervisors were fired. The *Houston Chronicle's* business reporter said the BP report was "corporate scapegoating." And the "blame the workers" line was attacked by the Steelworkers' union (USW), which represents workers at the plant. USW regional director Gary Beevers said: "BP has not taken responsibility for its unsafe design flaws and process safety procedures. Blaming workers doesn't solve the problem of unsafe conditions in that refinery." Leo Gerard, national president of USW, said the management failures that led to the explosion went far beyond the Texas City refinery to decisions made as far away as BP's London HQ. "As a union, we will do everything in our power to ensure that our members who were disciplined by BP are treated fairly, and are not blamed for mistakes made by their supervisors or by higher level BP management," Gerard added. Questions have been raised recently about the company's safety approach in the UK and elsewhere ([Risks 207](#)).

- [BP website on the Texas City refinery blast.](#)
- [Confined Space.](#) [USW news release.](#) [Houston Chronicle.](#) [Galveston Daily News.](#)
- [Hazards 'Could BP care less?' briefing.](#)

Road firm pays £97,000 after worker burns to death

A road contractor has been fined £75,000 and ordered to pay £22,000 costs after a worker was burned to death while cleaning a tanker. Crawley-based Colas Ltd admitted at Lincoln Crown Court failing to ensure the safety of employees John Gilroy and Phillip Kelly whilst they were cleaning a bitumen tanker at the company's Grantham depot on 20 February 2003. The court heard John Gilroy was cleaning the

bitumen spraying bar at the back of the tanker with a mixture of kerosene, gas oil and diesel, which ignited. He received 60 per cent burns and died from his injuries on 4 March 2003. Phillip Kelly received superficial burns to his face and head. HSE inspector Jon Anslow, who investigated the incident, said: "This was a tragic and avoidable incident. The company failed to control even simple sources of ignition, such as smoking or hot working. Importantly, if a liquid was used rather than a spray, no flammable mist would have been created, and this could have prevented the incident." He added: "This case emphasises the importance for employers to assess and plan work with dangerous substances. Sensible health and safety is about managing risks. This need not be costly, it's just a matter of thinking jobs through and anticipating hazards. Employers must also make sure employees are properly trained and have the proper equipment to deal with danger."

- [HSE news release.](#)

Work continues to take massive toll

Millions of workers are suffering as a result of job hazards, according to a new report from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). 'Self-reported work-related illness in 2003/04: Results from the Labour Force Survey' shows the overall level of work-related ill-health in 2003/04 was similar to 2001/02. For people working in the last 12 months, the incidence of new cases of work-related illness in 2003/04 was lower than in 2001/02, HSE says, with much of this due to a fall in musculoskeletal disorders, in particular those which mainly affect the back. The estimated average number of annual working days lost per worker due to work-related illness in 2003/04 was of a similar order to the estimated rate in 2001/02. The headline figures, which were trailed in November last year, give an estimated prevalence of self-reported work-related illness in 2003/04 of 2.2 million, equating to 5.2 per cent of people ever employed. An estimated 27 per cent of this total, 0.6 million people ever employed, were new cases. Among people employed in the last 12 months, this equates to an estimated incidence rate of 2.0 per cent – 1 in 50 in the working population. The estimated number of working days lost due to work-related illness during the 12 month period was 29.8 million. Musculoskeletal disorders followed by stress, depression or anxiety were by far the most commonly reported type of work-related illnesses with corresponding prevalence estimates of 1.1 million and 0.6 million for people ever employed.

- [HSE news release](#). **Self-reported work-related illness in 2003/04: Results from the Labour Force Survey [pdf]**. **Health and Safety Statistics Highlights 2003/04 [pdf]**.

Worker deaths are not counted

The death of a young British bank employee who fell ill and died in Britain of a work-related disease will not be investigated by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) or included in official workplace death statistics because she caught the disease on a short work trip abroad. Lucy Wilson, 23, a financial administrator for the insurance division of Lloyds TSB, contracted a rare liver infection while in India training call centre workers, an inquest heard this month. She showed flu-like symptoms within three weeks of returning to Newport, Wales, from Mumbai. She died of Hepatitis E and liver failure three days later. An infected cut was ruled out as a cause of death. Birmingham deputy coroner Christopher Ball heard six other Lloyds TSB staff working in India had suffered with symptoms of hepatitis but none was as ill as Ms Wilson, although one was taken to hospital. An HSE spokesperson confirmed the death would not be investigated by HSE because the condition was not a reportable workplace disease and had been contracted outside the UK. He also told *Risks* the case would not appear in UK workplace death statistics. Cases like this are likely to become more commonplace as workers become more mobile and as businesses globalise. Coroner David Morris, commenting last month on the death of Cambridge oil rig worker Nic Edeleanu, who was employed by a French company and who was working off the coast of Nigeria when he died, said "there was a gross failure on the part of his employers. A verdict that he was unlawfully killed by reason of gross negligence is appropriate." HSE says it will not take any action because the incident was outside their jurisdiction. His death will not appear in UK work fatality statistics.

- [BBC News Online](#). [Cambridge Evening News](#).

Stockline owners will not face blast charges

The owners of the Stockline plastics factory which exploded in Glasgow last year, killing nine people ([Risks 156](#)), will not face criminal charges over the tragedy. The *Sunday Times* says the report of a year-long inquiry into Scotland's worst industrial accident in a generation, due to be published next month, is expected to conclude that no single

individual was to blame. A fatal accident inquiry will be launched later this year to determine the circumstances which led to the deaths of the victims. A civil action for damages by their families is expected to follow shortly after. Angela McCracken, a solicitor acting for the relatives of some of the victims, said she has been told there will be no criminal prosecution. She added: "The crown's views are only one set of views — it doesn't mean because the crown says it's right, that it's right." Ann McKechin, the local Labour MP, said there should be a full public inquiry. "It should address every single aspect of this tragedy, both in the period several years before it, the culture within the factory and the HSE policies," she said. Ian Tasker of the Scottish Trades Union Congress, said: "Our position has always been that the only way to find out what really happened is a public inquiry. That certainly doesn't look the case but it's up to us to campaign for one. It's simply not an option to do nothing. The families will be angry, but it's not about holding the company responsible. All the families want to know is why they lost loved ones."

- [Sunday Times](#).

NHS staff shortages up violence risk

Violence against patients and staff is widespread in mental health and learning disability inpatient units, new research shows, and understaffing is a top cause. A national audit found 41 per cent of clinical staff had experienced violent or threatening behaviour and for nursing staff the figure rose to almost 80 per cent. The study, carried out by the Healthcare Commission and the Royal College of Psychiatrists, defined threatening behaviour as anything from raised voices to threat of attack with a weapon. After drug and alcohol abuse, understaffing was identified as the top cause of violent incidents. It found units are having to rely too heavily on temporary staff due to difficulties filling vacant posts. And over a third (35 per cent) of nursing staff thought alarm systems where they worked were unsatisfactory. UNISON head of health Karen Jennings commented: "The mental health and learning disability services are the 'Cinderella' of the health service, under-resourced and overlooked." She added "there are serious staff shortages placing existing staff in vulnerable situations. UNISON calls on Patricia Hewitt to respond urgently to the continuing rise in violence and to take urgent measures before someone else is hurt or abused." Anna Walker, chief executive of the Healthcare Commission, said "we must do more to protect the people who use and work in our mental health services." Around 6,500

questionnaires were submitted as part of the audit - respondents were drawn from 265 units and included over 1,500 service users.

- [Healthcare Commission news release](#). [UNISON news release](#). [BBC News Online](#).

HSE metalworking fluids guide ducks cancer issue

The omission of occupational cancer from a new Health and Safety Executive online guide on metalworking fluids has been criticised by a top expert. Dr Frank Mirer, director of health and safety at US autoworkers' union UAW, said in a letter to HSE: "I find the omission of a mention of occupational cancer in the new page on metalworking fluids to be a significant gap." Mirer points HSE to a series of studies showing a link between occupational exposure to metalworking fluids and cancer. These include his own 2003 paper in the journal *Applied Occupational and Environmental Hygiene* which concludes there is "sufficient evidence" of a cancer risk. Guidance published by the Canadian autoworkers' union CAW also makes the link and points to studies at General Motors supported by the company and UAW. It notes: "In the summer of 1992 a major study of General Motors workers in the United States showed excess levels of a number of different kinds of cancers... The GM/UAW study of workers exposed to machining fluids and some other studies done in the US and Europe found excess levels of these kinds of cancers: Skin cancer, cancer of the larynx, cancer of the rectum, stomach cancer, cancer of the oesophagus, colon cancer, bladder cancer, sinonasal cancer, lung cancer, prostate cancer, and cancer of the pancreas." The HSE guide only acknowledges skin and breathing disorders caused by the fluids. A study this year linked breast cancer in female car workers to metalworking fluid exposure ([Risks 196](#)).

- [HSE news release](#) and [metalworking fluids webpage](#). [CAW guide to metalworking fluid hazards](#).
- **Franklin Mirer. Updated epidemiology of workers exposed to metalworking fluids provides sufficient evidence for carcinogenicity, Applied Occupational and Environmental Hygiene, volume 18, number 11, pages 902–912, 2003 [[abstract](#)]. DOI: 10.1080/10473220390237511.**

Safety warning as Hell's Kitchen goes stateside

A leading US ergonomics magazine has issued a workplace safety warning after it was announced that ITV reality programme 'Hell's Kitchen' is to be exported to the US. *Ergonomics Today* says Fox Television's move to bring Gordon Ramsey and his 'Hell's Kitchen' show to America this summer is a safety issue "because the celebrity chef is known best in Britain for workplace behaviour that ergonomists warn against." It adds that "Ramsey's tantrums" are likely to become a case study in many classrooms. Ergonomics is the practice of fitting the job to the worker, which contrasts with Ramsey's approach which involves pummelling the worker into shape. The report comes hot on the heels of a *Fortune* magazine story revealing that two top US law firms have instituted a "no jerks allowed" policy in a bid to attract a better class of worker. *Ergonomics Today*, commenting on the response to the 'Hell's Kitchen' programme in the UK, said: "Many viewers there switch off Ramsey as too abusive to watch. More viewers watch his show just to see his tantrums. The producers just have to sit back and watch the fireworks." It adds: "What will the American public make of Ramsay? Will other US companies be swayed by anti-'jerk' policies? The answers have implications for ergonomists and others interested in workplace trends."

- [Ergonomics Today](#). [Fortune magazine](#).

HSE won't lie down on mattress risks

A three-year national initiative to reduce musculoskeletal injuries and ill-health in mattress manufacturing is being stepped up by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Commenting on planned workshops to be held in Bradford and Leicester in June, HSE's Alan Scobbie, said: "Historically 50 per cent of all accidents in the industry involve injuries or ill-health caused during lifting, carrying and moving mattresses, or are associated with the repetitive work involved in mattress manufacture, including tape edging and tufting. Working together, we feel that we can make significant progress to reduce the number of workers who suffer this type of injury or illness each year." Continuing the HSE pillow talk, he said: "At the forthcoming events, we will highlight the risks and encourage the industry to work with us to develop and implement the often-simple solutions that reduce the risk of musculoskeletal injury and ill-health."

- [HSE news release](#).

Asbestos claims more lives

Britain is one of the worst hit countries in the world for asbestos deaths, a global epidemic currently claiming at least one life every five minutes. Cases are so commonplace in the UK these days they only merit a few lines in local newspapers. Inquest reports this week include a Stourbridge man who died from asbestos exposure after working as an electrician at a pig farm, where he drilled holes through the asbestos cement roof. Geoffrey Norris died aged 65 on 19 January. At Dudley Coroners Court, Black Country Coroner Robin Balmain recorded a verdict of death by industrial disease. Retired builder John Dickerson, 73, died from the asbestos cancer mesothelioma on 7 April, Derby Coroner's Court heard this week. Deputy coroner Dr Turlough Farnan recorded a verdict that he died from the industrial disease of malignant mesothelioma caused by exposure to asbestos.

- [Stourbridge News](#). [Derby Evening Telegraph](#).

INTERNATIONAL

Global: Metalworker unions push for global asbestos ban



The International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF), representing metalworker unions from 100 countries around the world launched a high-powered campaign this week for a global ban on asbestos. Speaking at the global union federation's international

congress in Vienna, IMF general secretary Marcello Malentacchi said: "While most developed countries are racing to remove asbestos from buildings... some countries continue to sell this deadly substance particularly to the developing world." IMF says each year it is estimated that 100,000 people die from exposure to asbestos. A "death counter" at the congress ticked off the number of asbestos deaths occurring as the event progressed – one additional death every five minutes. And yet demand for asbestos appears to have expanded in 2003, it says, enabling world production to increase by 5.4 per cent over 2002. Asian countries are seen as key markets by the asbestos producers. "No worker, whether in developed or developing countries, should be exposed to asbestos," said Malentacchi. "To continue producing this hazardous substance will only prolong the suffering and unnecessarily loss of life." A conference motion supporting the call for a global asbestos ban was moved by UK union GMB and was passed

unanimously, with no abstentions.

- [IMF news release](#) and [asbestos and congress 2005 webpages](#). [GMB news release and motion](#).

Japan: Migrant worker wins heart attack payout

Authorities in Japan have recognised that a heart attack suffered by a Bangladeshi construction worker was caused by overwork and have ruled he should be paid state compensation. Experts say it is rare for a foreign worker to win recognition that heart problems are related to their job. Migrant worker Rattan Singh, 35, said he was hospitalised in March 2003 after suffering chest pains while removing stones from a garden. He claimed workers' compensation with the help of a union. The Sagamihara labour standard office, an arm of the Health, Labour and Welfare Ministry, took into consideration that Singh had been working more than 100 hours of overtime a month. Singh came to Japan in 1996 and overstayed his visa to work at a construction company, continuing to support his family in Bangladesh. He said that after learning that workers who have overstayed their visa are protected under Japanese employment laws, he decided to file a claim. He plans to return to Bangladesh next month because of his deteriorating heart condition.

- [The Japan Times](#). [Yahoo Asia](#).
- [Hazards guide to death from overwork](#).

New Zealand: Asbestos victims must die poor - official

New Zealand's official compensation agency is challenging the right of those dying from asbestos exposure to claim lump sum compensation. The Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) wants the High Court to overturn last year's district court decision, which opened the way for those exposed to asbestos before April 2002 to seek lump sum payouts. If successful, the rule reverse would bar almost every asbestos cancer victim from claiming for years to come because of the time lag between initial exposure and the development of an asbestos cancer. Last August, ACC was ordered to pay NZ\$100,000 (£39,000) to the estate of Auckland fitter and welder Ross Lehmann, who died in November 2003 from asbestos-related lung cancer. ACC had refused to pay the money, saying the law did not allow it to make payouts to people exposed to asbestos before April 2002. But Lehmann's widow, Dawn Lehmann, argued that eligibility should be determined by when

someone was diagnosed, even if that was after April 2002 and they had been exposed years earlier. ACC spokesperson Fraser Folster commented: "The law needs to be clarified urgently so dozens of potential claimants for workplace asbestos diseases are left in no doubt whether they can receive lump sum payments." ACC has told those paid lump sums to put the money aside pending the result of the appeal. Last year, widow Janette Grafton said she would hide a NZ\$100,000 (£39,000) payout to her husband, who died from mesothelioma in November. He received the money six weeks before his death and was told by ACC it would possibly have to be repaid. Lawyer Hazel Armstrong, who is acting for 10 lump sum recipients, said that without the money, asbestos victims and their families were left with little to cover the expense of coping with the fatal disease.

- [Stuff News.](#)
- **Asbestos news from [Hazards](#) and the [International Ban Asbestos Secretariat](#).**

Nicaragua: First blood for the workers in poisoning campaign

Thousands of Nicaraguan rural workers who have been demanding justice for the victims of an acutely toxic pesticide have scored a notable early victory ([Risks 205](#)). Campaigners encamped in front of the National Assembly building in Managua have reached "Preliminary Agreements" with authorities setting out a 21-point programme intended to ensure medical, social and economic assistance to the victims of Nemagon poisoning and chronic renal deficiency (kidney disease), which have affected workers on banana and sugar cane plantations. The government has also agreed to provide passports to 80 members of the Nemagon victims' groups so they can travel to the United States to testify in court cases against the transnational pesticide and banana companies which manufactured and used Nemagon. The campaigners say the protest camp will continue until the funds are released, a law is introduced providing disability pensions for poisoned workers and the kidney disorders afflicting some exposed workers are recognised formally as an occupational disease.

- [IUF news release.](#)

USA: DJ wins \$10.6 million in stink over perfume

A former top-ranked radio host, who claims she was sickened by a colleague's perfume, has been awarded \$10.6 million (£5.79m) in a US

federal court lawsuit. Erin Weber, who was on the air at Detroit country music radio station WYCD-FM, claimed she was fired in 2001 after she complained about being exposed to Lancome's Tresor perfume. She said she was sickened by the fumes, a condition that began when a co-worker exposed her to spilled nail polish remover in the radio station's Southfield studio. The verdict awarded her \$7 million (£3.82m) in punitive damages, \$2 million (£0.9m) in mental anguish and emotional distress and \$1.6 million (£0.87m) for past and future compensation after a six-woman jury in US District Court in Detroit spent eight days deliberating. Weber claimed exposure to Tresor caused her to lose her voice and take lengthy absences from work. She also said she once "felt an electric shock quell through my entire body" and required heavy medication to combat the effects. Weber says she been unable to get another job in radio since she was fired in 2001 and claims Infinity Broadcasting, which owns the station, "blacklisted her" - a claim the company rejects.

- [Detroit News](#). [Detroit Free Press](#).

EVENTS AND COURSES

TUC courses for safety reps

COURSES FOR APRIL TO JULY 2005

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

COURSES FOR SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 2005

[South East](#)

TUC/CCA corporate manslaughter conference, 13 June 2005

Fiona Mactaggart MP, a junior minister in the Home Office, will speak at the 13 June TUC/CCA conference on the government's draft corporate manslaughter bill. The conference will bring together trades unions, employers' organisations, bereaved families, the police, lawyers and other experts to discuss the planned law. The proposed offence will allow an organisation to be prosecuted if a death was the result of serious failures on the part of senior managers of an organisation. The conference will analyse in detail the effectiveness of the bill in promoting worker and public safety and in holding companies, public sector organisations, crown bodies and directors and senior managers to account.

- TUC/CCA corporate manslaughter conference, 9.45am-4.30pm, Monday, 13 June 2005, Congress House, Great Russell St, London WC1. For further details see the [CCA website](#) or call 0207 490 4494. Online registration form [[pdf](#)].
- For background on the proposed law, see '[No real convictions](#)', *Hazards*, Number 90, 2005.

USEFUL LINKS

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