

Risks

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**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](#).

SPECIAL FEATURE: The risky business of long hours

UK stalls progress on working hours limit



The UK government has led a minority group of European ministers which on 2 June successfully blocked moves to end the UK "opt-out" from the European Working Time Directive's 48 hour ceiling on the working week. EU employment ministers were to make a decision on removing the clause, after the European Parliament in May voted to scrap the opt-out by 2012 ([Risks 206](#)). However, enough ministers opposed the plan to prevent the vote taking place. The issue now returns to the parliament and is likely to go through a conciliation process and will drag on into 2006. The European Parliament and a number of EU member states want all nations to uphold a working week of no longer than 48 hours. But the UK and other countries want employees to be able to work additional hours if they volunteer to do so. The UK says the opt-out is vital for competitiveness and job creation – although a report this week from the TUC presented strong evidence that the opposite is true and said most long hours workers want to work fewer hours. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber commented: "It is no surprise that the EU is in crisis when a small UK-led minority can block this compromise on working time. The Commission proposals already went a very long way to meeting employer concerns - far more than the much more balanced position put forward by the Parliament." He added: "This does not settle the issue. Other member states who wanted a compromise that met their concerns about on-call working, particularly in the health sector, will not be satisfied with this delay. UK ministers have made the mistake of going to the last ditch on behalf of the CBI. Britain's long hours workers will be the main losers from this political brinkmanship."

- [TUC news release](#). [The Guardian](#). [BBC News Online](#). [The Scotsman](#).
- [TUC It's about time](#) and [Changing Times](#) webpages.

Long hours are bad for health and productivity

Long working hours are damaging the health of UK's industry and its workforce, new research from TUC has shown. Almost one in three workers - more than 8 million employees - say that long hours or

stress have stopped them taking up some training or education in the last three years, according to a poll conducted for the TUC.

Commented on the poll findings, TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "Employer lobbyists claim that long hours working is essential to business success, but most experts agree that one of the biggest brakes on UK productivity is the poor skills of too many of the workforce." He added: "Long hours is not a sign of economic success but badly organised workplaces with tired inefficient staff." The poll found 29 per cent of the workforce agree that "My current job has such long hours or so stressful a workload that I do not have the time or energy to take up a course." This rose to 35 per cent among full time workers. A second TUC report last week rebutted seven myths surrounding the working time directive. According to the report, employers' organisations have wrongly claimed that long hours are not a health and safety issue; that employees are happy to work them; that bosses are simply defending workers' right to work overtime; and that the UK economy - and particularly small business - depends on people putting in extra hours at work. Number 1 on the myths list was the claim that long hours are not a safety issue. The report cited a string of UK and international reports showing higher accident levels and higher rates of heart disease, mental illness, bowel problems and diabetes in those regularly working in excess of 48 hours a week.

- [TUC news release. Slaying the working time myths report. Reuters. The Guardian plus Polly Toynbee commentary. Sky News. BBC News Online.](#)
- **Hazards [worked to death](#) and [getalife](#) webpages.**

Burnout hits half Britain's workers

More than half British workers claim they have experienced problems associated with overwork and burnout during the past six months, according to a new survey. A third of people questioned said they had experienced physical or emotional exhaustion, while 26 per cent said they had lost sleep or been ill as a result of worrying about work, according to human resources consultancy Hudson. Just under half of employees said they thought the situation had got worse during the past five years. They blamed the problem on faster, more competitive business, coupled with more demands being made on fewer staff. But while 92 per cent of employers said they thought burnout existed, just 35 per cent thought it was a problem in their own company and 59 per cent said they had no system in place to help a worker who was suffering from it. Around 14 per cent of human resources managers

said they had lost staff due to burnout, while 36 per cent said they had seen a decline in productivity and 79 per cent said there had been an increase in the number of sick days being taken.

- **Hudson news release** [[pdf](#)]. [BBC News Online](#). [The Guardian](#).

Fatigue is causing ship collisions

Fatigue among sailors on merchant ships caused a "worrying number" of collisions or near misses in 2004, the chief maritime investigator has reported. Poor judgment or anticipation by officers on watch – "classic symptoms of fatigue" - also contributed, said Stephen Meyer in his annual report. He said that while the details of the accidents varied, "the fundamentals remain depressingly consistent." In 2004, the Maritime Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) conducted a safety study covering 1,600 accidents over the last 10 years, 66 of which were examined in detail. The main concern was the lack of staff on certain cargo vessels plying the short sea trade, leading many to falsify their timesheets. "It is an anachronism in the 21st century, that seafarers are falsifying their timesheets to prove that they are working only a 98-hour week," Meyer said. Ship officers' union NUMAST backed the MAIB's call for urgent action to tackle the "scandalous" problem of overwork and said it is "a miracle that there had not been a major accident caused by fatigue." NUMAST spokesperson Andrew Linington said research underway showed half of shipmasters did not get the required amount of rest ([Risks 206](#)). Half felt this lack of rest was a potential threat to their own safety, and one-third felt it was a risk to the ship's safety. "Although we have had working time limits for the past four years, the situation has actually got worse, but essentially there is no decent enforcement of the rules," Linington said.

- [MAIB annual report 2004](#). [BBC News Online](#). [NUMAST news release](#).

UNION NEWS

Union anger at waste firm death

A union organisation has condemned a "scandalous" lack of safety enforcement at a London waste transfer station and says a life could have been saved if safety reps had extended powers. Battersea and Wandsworth TUC (BWTUC) was commenting after London-based

World's End Waste (Investments) Ltd, was fined £100,000 and ordered to pay £4,982 costs at the Old Bailey last week. The prosecution, brought by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), followed its investigation into the death of Sam Boothman at a Wandsworth waste transfer site on 1 June 2004. BWTUC spokesperson Geoff Martin said: "Although we are pleased that World's End Waste have been successfully prosecuted and hit with a hundred grand fine, this case highlights the scandalous lack of any pro-active health and safety on this manor by the HSE and the other authorities." He said Wandsworth Council had approved the site despite its "appalling working conditions" and added: "I would also have expected the HSE inspectors to have made regular site visits rather than waiting for a man to die." Mr Boothman, a 32-year-old tipper truck driver, was hit from behind by the bucket of a shovel truck driven by another employee. His Honour Judge Focke QC, said: "Companies must be deterred from operating in a slack way." BTWUC safety experts had tried to approach workers at the site and had offered safety advice, but were chased off by site bosses. "We went down to World's End Waste and were told in no uncertain terms to **** off," said Geoff Martin. "If we had statutory powers to inspect non-union companies lives like that of Sam Boothman could be saved."

- [BWTUC news release](#). [HSE news release](#).
- [Safetyreps.org](#)

Union warns of offshore safety sackings

North Sea oil and gas workers are still being fired for raising safety concerns with their bosses, the union Amicus has said. Graham Tran, regional officer for the union, spoke out at a press conference where the oil and gas industry's "Step Change in Safety" leadership team was outlining steps being taken to accelerate the pace of improvement in offshore safety ([Risks 169](#)). Oil industry boss Gary Luquette, chair of the team, said the vision was for the UK to be the safest place to work in the worldwide oil and gas industry by 2010. He said the plan included creating "personal ownership" for safety at all levels in organisations by demonstrating commitment, competence and leadership. Graham Tran queried whether this new approach was just another initiative to blame the workforce. He said obstacles and barriers had to be removed so workers were not frowned upon for raising safety concerns. "Even this week, I am dealing with cases where people have been sacked for raising safety issues within a company," he said. "This sort of thing has been going on for decades."

He added that if staff and the employers worked together, then improvements were possible. The Amicus official said operators should stop giving contracts to firms which work against the principles of the Step Change programme, which is based on a union, employer and HSE cooperation.

- [Aberdeen Press and Journal](#).
- [Step Change in Safety website](#). *Hazards news and resources on [workplace safety whistleblowing and victimisation](#)*.

Strike off as union wins action on Tube safety

Strike action by drivers on the Tube's District Line has been averted after London Underground and the British Transport Police announced a series of initiatives to target yobs, vandals and trespassers on the line ([Risks 207](#)). The threatened strikes were the result of ASLEF demanding action to protect its members and the public from gang violence and intimidating behaviour in east London. ASLEF's London organiser Steve Grant said attacks on District Line trains have increased by 50 per cent. He added that the dispute resulted from London Underground's consistent failure to live up to promises to increase security. The strike was called off after the announcement of new initiatives by LU and transport police. A joint operation targeting trespassers and vandals began on 28 May. It will involve mobile patrols, off road motorbikes and a helicopter and will monitor the District, Central, Metropolitan and Bakerloo lines. ASLEF acting general secretary Keith Norman said he was pleased at the outcome but saddened at how difficult it had been to reach this sensible conclusion.

- [ASLEF news release](#). [Transport for London news release](#).

OTHER NEWS

PM is half right on risks

The prime minister's acknowledgment that there is no such thing as "compensation culture" has been welcomed by the TUC, but the union body has warned the PM not to go soft on workplace risks. Speaking last week at the Institute of Public Policy Research, Tony Blair said: "Health and safety legislation is necessary to protect people at work," adding: "As the OECD and the IMF have recently said, the UK is very

lightly regulated by international standards." But among examples to illustrate what he saw as an excessive reaction to risk, he cited care workers faced with a patient who had fallen and who must "find some hoists before they can help. No doubt, most care workers help anyway but if basic human acts of care like this are being prevented by intrusive regulation, it is absurd. We cannot guarantee a risk-free life." In fact, a care worker's life is far from risk free. US research show care workers are at the highest risk of back injury – and a patient may well be lifted faster and more safely with the aid of a hoist. TUC head of safety Hugh Robertson said unions are pleased the prime minister "has recognised there is no 'compensation culture' in the UK and that claims are falling." He added: "As a recent *Hazards* report made clear the main problem with compensation in the UK is the difficulty in workers getting it ([Risks 207](#)). We were also pleased that there was proper recognition of the role of health and safety legislation." He said TUC was, however, "disappointed that the prime minister failed to differentiate between those who chose to take risks in their everyday lives, and those who have risks foisted on them by their employer." Robertson added: "We will be eager to see what the exact proposals of the proposed Compensation Bill are, and will be aiming to ensure that it does indeed regulate 'claims farmers' while at the same time support the work of others such as advice centres and union legal services."

- [10 Downing St news release](#) and [PM's speech in full](#). [APIL news release \[pdf\]](#). [BBC News Online](#). [ABI news release](#).

The new generation of asbestos claims

A new wave of asbestos cancers is being seen in people who contracted the disease simply by being a family member of an asbestos-exposed worker. Research in the United States has identified a growing number of claims for compensation from these "paraoccupational" victims of the incurable lung cancer mesothelioma. The study, based on a survey of law firms involved in asbestos claims and published in the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, found 32 cases of mesothelioma diagnosed since 1990 among family members of workers exposed to asbestos. Wives and daughters - who often washed the work clothing used by employees - were most often affected. Dr Albert Miller of St Vincent Catholic Medical Center in New York obtained medical records and other data on asbestos claimants from 15 US law firms. Asbestos specialist Adrian Budgen, a solicitor with law firm Irwin Mitchell, confirmed he had seen several similar

cases in the UK and in one instance had represented three members of one family, only one of whom had worked with asbestos. "I am also representing the widow of the UK's youngest known mesothelioma sufferer, Barry Welch, who died on 27 April at the age of 32," he said. "He'd been exposed to asbestos dust brought home on his stepfather's work overalls as a young boy" ([Risks 205](#)). The number of mesothelioma deaths each year in the UK is now about 2,000 and rising, with many of those dying of working age ([Risks 207](#)). Mesothelioma deaths reported in the press this week include John Little aged 59, Derek Wharton aged 61 and Michael Hogg aged 60.

- [Yorkshire Evening Post](#). [Reuters Health](#). [The Gazette](#). [This is Somerset](#).
- **Albert Miller. Mesothelioma in household members of asbestos-exposed workers: 32 United States cases since 1990, American Journal of Industrial Medicine, volume 47, number 5, pages 458-462, 2005 [[abstract](#)].**

Health groups push for tougher smoking ban

Health secretary Patricia Hewitt has come under renewed pressure from leaders of the medical profession to strengthen the government's softly-softly approach to banning smoking in public places in England. The British Medical Association (BMA) and cancer charities were responding to hints that she may be ready to reconsider the compromise position adopted by her predecessor, John Reid. He proposed a smoking ban in most enclosed public places in England and Wales by 2008, with exemptions for pubs and clubs that do not serve prepared food. Unions criticised this approach because it would leave bar and hospitality staff at risk from secondhand smoke ([Risks 183](#)) while health charity ASH described it as a "ridiculous bodge". Ms Hewitt is due to publish a consultation paper in the next week explaining how she intends to implement the Reid approach. However, she has told Department of Health officials she might consider strengthening the ban in England if anti-smoking campaigners could demonstrate public support for an outright ban. An official said: "There is an opportunity and it depends whether those people who want to go further manage to seize it." Commenting on the current proposals, BMA's Vivienne Nathanson said: "If you work in a restaurant, your health will be protected. But if you work in a non-food pub, your health won't be. These proposals are totally inequitable." Alex Markham, Cancer Research UK's chief executive, said: "Stopping smoking in workplaces

and in closed public places is the most effective action countries can take to halt the damage wreaked by secondhand smoke." A report this week in the journal *Circulation* concluded the heart risk from exposure to secondhand smoke can be nearly as large as that from "active" smoking.

- [The Guardian](#). **Joaquin Barnoya and Stanton A Glantz. Special report: Cardiovascular effects of secondhand smoke nearly as large as smoking, *Circulation*, volume 111, pages 2684-2698, 2005.**
- [Hazards smoking webpages](#).

Cancer hit lollipop lady grilled on sick leave

A lollipop lady who survived stomach cancer has been ordered by bosses to explain her time off work. Mary Strang, 64, returned to the job she has held for almost 20 years five weeks ago after a two-year battle back to health. But now council bosses are hauling her before a disciplinary hearing, saying her absenteeism is "sky-high," reports the *Daily Record*. Mum-of-four Mary returned to work in March last year but eight months later she became seriously depressed and was signed off by her doctor, who said she needed time to come to terms with her cancer scare. She was delighted to be back at work after a further five months on the sick - until her bosses pulled her up about her sickness absence. Mary, who works outside Ibrox Primary School in Glasgow and whose sick leave was covered by medical certificates, said the council's action "was a bit of a kick in the teeth," adding: "I was very rarely off work during the 18 years before I came down with cancer. It seems I'm being punished over an illness I could do nothing about." A representative of her union, TGWU, will accompany her to the disciplinary hearing.

- [Daily Record](#). **Hazards news and resources on sickness policies**.

Pesticide use link to Parkinson's

Exposure to pesticides could increase the risk of developing Parkinson's disease, researchers have warned. The European study concludes anyone using pesticides should wear protective clothing. The research, featured in *New Scientist* magazine, looked at almost 3,000 people in Scotland, Italy, Sweden, Romania and Sweden, including 767 with Parkinson's, and found that people with Parkinson's disease were

more likely to have used pesticides regularly during their lives. High level users, such as farmers, were 43 per cent more likely than non-users to develop the disease. Those classed as low level users, such as amateur gardeners, were 9 per cent more likely. Dr Anthony Seaton, of the University of Aberdeen, who led the research, said: "It considerably strengthens the case for pesticides being relevant to occupational risk of Parkinson's disease." Dr Finlay Dick, of the University of Aberdeen, who also worked on the study, said it was true other factors including genetics were linked to a higher increased risk of developing Parkinson's. He said: "There is a moderate increased risk linked to exposure to pesticides. I wouldn't want to over-emphasise the significance of the effect. But it's important that there are things people can do to reduce that risk - you can't change your parents." A spokesperson for the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said a panel from the government's Advisory Committee on Pesticides had last year identified a "correlation between individuals' memory of exposure to pesticides and Parkinson's disease" but it did not establish a "specific link" between exposure and the development of this illness.

- [New Scientist](#). [BBC News Online](#).

Essex Council fined £200k over tree feller death

Essex County Council has been fined £200,000 over the death of a park ranger. Hadrian Robinson died when a tree he was helping to cut down fell on top of him. He was using a chainsaw at the time but a court heard how he had missed two chainsaw refresher courses because he had flu. There had been no risk assessment of the possible danger. Chelmsford Crown Court heard Essex County Council admit safety offences. The council was also ordered to pay prosecution costs of £15,013. Gerard Forlin, representing the council, said procedures had been changed since the accident and the council was profoundly sorry for what happened. Mr Robinson's brother Shaun said the family were still thinking about a compensation claim over the accident.

- [Essex Evening Gazette](#).

NHS Plus may take on adviser role

NHS Plus, a network of hospital-based occupational health departments across England, could take on a greater role by offering "third party" advice on workplace health to employers and employees,

it has been suggested. The recommendation was one of a number proposed by MPs on a select committee last year that investigated the work of the Health and Safety Executive ([Risks 167](#)), and which has now been taken on board by the government, reports *Personnel Today*. There was a need for an independent “problem solver” for workers and employers, and the government was looking at proposals in this context, said the Department for Work and Pensions. “NHS Plus may have an important role to play as a provider, where capacity is available, and it operates with the range of skills needed to tackle modern work-related health issues,” it concluded. NHS Plus director Dr Kit Harling told the select committee last year that previous attempts to get occupational health training into schools of nursing and medical schools had not been very successful.

- [Personnel Today](#). [NHS Plus website](#).

INTERNATIONAL

China: Safety official owned death mine

The owner of an illegal small coal mine in which 18 miners died was the local official in charge of coal mining safety, an investigation has revealed. The 14 March gas explosion in Xinfu Coal Mine in Qitaihe was caused by a lack of basic ventilation and gas monitoring equipment in the mine, according to Wang Feng, director of the Heilongjiang Coal Production Safety Supervision Bureau. “They still used primitive coal excavation methods there,” Wang said. “The operational excavation area of the mine is like a rat hole and lacks a basic gas monitoring system.” The investigation revealed Peng Guocai, deputy director of the Production Safety Supervision Bureau in Taoshan District in Qitaihe, was the mine’s owner. “It is an extreme outrage,” said Lian Zhandong, deputy director of the Heilongjiang Supervision Department. “As an official in charge of production safety, Peng's activity showed that he deliberately broke the law.” The Chinese authorities announced this week that under a new scheme aimed at tackling mine deaths, about 100,000 senior coal miners will be designated as safety supervisors. They will have the power to order a work stoppage and walk out if they feel miners’ lives are at risk. The unprecedented safety measure will be implemented by the end of the year by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), the state approved union organisation, and the State Administration of Work Safety.

- [China Daily](#) on the [mine scandal](#) and [the new safety](#)

[plan](#).

Global: More calls for a global asbestos ban

Union and public health organisations worldwide are increasing the pressure for a global asbestos ban. Unions worldwide are to launch their campaign on 8 June in Geneva. The event, which takes place in the International Labour Organisation building during an ILO congress bringing together 4,000 union, employer and government representatives, will outline the unions' campaign strategy. In addition to pressing ILO, the World Health Organisation and national governments to support bans worldwide, the unions want industrial regeneration and retraining initiatives to help those currently employed in the asbestos industry. Global union federations representing building workers ([Risks 184](#)), metalworkers and other sectors ([Risks 208](#)) have already backed this approach with their own campaign. In recent weeks, two top public health organisations have stated their support for a global ban. In an editorial in the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, the Collegium Ramazzini, an organisation of top occupational health specialists, reiterated its "call for an international ban on asbestos". The World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA) last month adopted a resolution calling on international organisations "to establish and implement a global ban on the production and further use of asbestos products," saying that the availability of safer substitutes makes such a ban both feasible and necessary.

- **Philip J Landrigan and Morando Soffritti. Editorial. Collegium Ramazzini call for an international ban on asbestos, American Journal of Industrial Medicine, volume 47, issue 6, pages 471-474, 2005 [[abstract](#)].**
- [International Ban Asbestos Secretariat](#).

USA: Bush bid to slash millions from safety training

The US government is on the verge of eliminating one of the most substantial sources of funds for groups that work to mitigate the country's massive work accident toll. Under threat is a long established system that provides US\$10-11million each year for research, training, and educational efforts run by non-profit organisations. The biggest losers if the funding axe falls would be the pro-union network of 22 "committees on occupational safety and health" or COSH groups. The attempt to cut the grants – which could still be rebuffed by the US

Senate – comes despite considerable evidence that the funded programmes can spur dramatic reductions in workplace accident rates. “I think we actually underestimate the role COSH and labour groups play in keeping the workplace safe,” said Tom Juravich, director of Labor Studies at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. “They're out there, they know the system, and a lot of times they just know much more than OSHA [the official safety enforcer] - or even employers - know about the actual conditions that people work in.” Unions are concerned that the funding threat comes on top of controversial cuts in the safety budget of the national union federation AFL-CIO and the elimination of its highly regarded safety department ([Risks 202](#)). Kate Bronfenbrenner, director of labour education research at Cornell University, commented: “If you defund education, and health and safety and other critical functions at the centre, you hurt organising and political action because these are the departments that are at the core of motivating and educating people around the critical issues which you are trying to mobilise them around.”

- [The NewStandard. Confined Space.](#)
- [More on COSH groups - National Council for Occupational Safety and Health.](#)

USA: Workplace diseases? Call the spin doctor

A US construction company facing allegations of a major cover-up of work-related accidents and disease has found a novel remedy – it has retained a top spin doctor to cure the problem. California Bay Bridge welders who are victims of the “KFM flu” – poisoning caused by exposure to manganese fume - are suing “a joint venture led by Peter Kiewit Sons' Inc., alleging that they developed serious illnesses from exposure to toxins while working on the Bay Bridge in San Francisco.” The company is also accused of using a behaviour safety programme to discourage accident reports ([Risks 202](#)) and is facing an FBI investigation. It is taking the problem seriously – so much so, it has recruited as its spokesperson Chris Lehane, the ex-Clinton White House public relations guru credited with helping the then-president survive the Lewinsky affair. Veteran Republican campaign and public affairs consultant Dan Schnur commented: “Chris is the best in the business. If you have damage that needs to be controlled, he's the guy to bring in. And if any damage-control challenge is tougher than what he faced with Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky, it might be this one.” Democratic consultant Roger Salazar said Lehane and his partner, Mark Fabiani, also formerly of the White House, are “the masters of

crisis communications — they know how to manage an issue and look at it from every conceivable angle, find all of the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities.”

- [Confined Space](#).
- [Union guide to behavioural safety](#).

USA: Union anger at BP deaths PR

UK multinational BP is paying more attention to public relations than the prevention of future tragedies, the steelworkers’ union USW has said. The union allegations come in a response to a report the company issued in the wake of an investigation into a refinery blast that killed 15 workers and injured 170 others on 23 March ([Risks 200](#)). The union is critical of a series of statements to the press that have swayed between what has been described as “corporate scapegoating” ([Risks 208](#)) and actually admitting the company was to some extent at fault, and says BP should concentrate its efforts on establishing the real root cause of the blast. USW regional director Gary Beevers said: “Their game-playing is an insult to the victims, the workers and the community.” He added: “If they don’t know the definition of a root cause, we can have somebody come in and tell them.” USW national president Leo Gerard said: “We hope the company focuses on its obligation to provide a safe workplace and stops making employees and supervisors scapegoats for this terrible incident.” The USW has assigned one of its own safety team to assist the local union and has pulled together an expert group to help shape its investigation and give the union advice on how the incident relates to safety in the petrochemical industry overall. “We want to make sure that we get the precautionary steps needed for a safe workplace, so we can demand that industry make the necessary changes,” said Gerard. A member of the USW Emergency Response Team has been sent to provide counselling for BP workers. BP tops the US refinery deaths table ([Risks 207](#)).

- [USW news release](#). [Houston Chronicle](#). [Galveston Daily News](#). [The News Standard](#).
- [BP website on the Texas City refinery blast](#). [Find out more from Hazards on BP’s safety record](#).

RESOURCES

ICEM warns of contract labour dangers

A new report from global union federation ICEM warns of the serious employment and safety risks posed by the increasing use of contract and agency labour. ICEM, an umbrella group for chemical, energy and mining unions worldwide, says the findings highlight the need for governments to look at the risks posed by out-sourcing of labour. The report says: "Events like the Piper Alpha disaster in the North Sea oilfields (UK) in 1988, the Phillips explosion in Pasadena, Texas, (US) in 1989, the DSM chemical complex explosion in Rotterdam (Netherlands) in 1991, and many more, make it obvious that the dismantling of a trained, skilled, permanent workforce would lead to a breakdown in standards of health, safety and the environment at work." It adds: "Researchers in Australia have found 76 expert studies from around the world that link precarious employment to lower standards in injury rates, disease risk, hazard exposures, and worker (and manager) knowledge of OHS and regulatory responsibilities." It says factors responsible include: Fierce competition for contracts; payment-by-result encouraging corner-cutting; contracting out of the most hazardous tasks; lack of familiarity with the work; and high turnover of temporary staff.

- **Contract/agency labour: A threat to our social standards, ICEM [[pdf](#)].**

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](#)

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