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UCU Health and Safety News is a monthly newsletter keeping UCU branches and health and safety representative informed of UCU activities and health and safety developments. Please ensure all those in your branch or LA who are interested, receive this.

Health and safety reps on the move in UCU

More UCU branches are realising how effective health and safety reps can be. There has been a substantial rise in the number of UCU safety reps applying for health and safety training courses. Details of current courses can be found at the end of this newsletter.

A warm welcome to a number of safety reps from former AUT LAs which are receiving this newsletter for the first time. The number of reps getting this newsletter direct is now at its highest level. You can see previous copies at

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=1739>

The new UCU health and safety web page will be launched soon and we'll alert you when it does. If you think you have a good UCU health and safety set-up in your institution we'd be really keen to know so we can publicise it to others – let us know what you've done and how you did it.

Smoking Ban



Restrictions on smoking in workplaces and public places come into effect in Wales from the beginning of April and in England from the 1st July. The TUC has produced guidance for trade unions outlining what steps should be now taken now to ensure the phased introduction of restrictions and support for those who currently smoke. The guidance is available on the TUC website at <http://www.tuc.org.uk/smoking>

National Hazards Conference - 27-29 July, Manchester

This is the biggest annual conference of safety representatives in the UK, and has a programme packed with thirty excellent workshops and discussions on issues that are of relevance in the workplace. To find out more about the conference and how to attend contact the national Hazards campaign at www.hazardscampaign.org.uk or hazconf@gmhazards.org.uk

It is highly recommended, as is Hazards magazine

TUC launch internet guide for reps

Whether it's in researching legislation, connecting with other reps, or distributing union material to members, the internet is becoming ever more important to the work of the UK's 220,000 plus trade union reps. A 2004 survey found that two thirds of reps were using the internet more than twice a week and numbers continue to grow. The TUC has put together a short guide to introduce reps to some of the services out there to help them in their roles. It also includes a handy directory of union related web links offering suggestions on where to look to solve a particular problem. More details at www.tuc.org.uk/connectedreps

Corporate Killing Bill

The Corporate Manslaughter Bill has now completed its passage through both the House of Commons and the Lords. The Bill now has to go back to the Commons. No timetable has been set for this although the Bill must get Royal assent by early June or else it falls.

Trade unions support the broad intentions of the legislation. However, the TUC is concerned that the government has not addressed the issue of the role of individual directors. The TUC believes that the Bill should have established Secondary Liability for those who connive, conspire, or collude in an act which results in death and have continued to campaign for a specific duty on Directors in respect of health & safety.

Safety Representatives Rights

Over the past three years the HSC have been looking at ways of improving worker involvement, including the way that safety representatives operate. This has led to a number of changes including the new safety representatives' pages on the HSE website, guidance for safety representatives on asbestos and sickness absence, and advice to inspectors. In addition the HSC consulted on a number of changes including placing a duty to respond to representations from safety representatives, and requiring employers to consult with safety representatives on risk assessments.

However at the March meeting of the HSC, the Commission failed to reach agreement on these changes despite strong arguments from the TUC Commissioners. They did however agree to continue discussions on the issue. It was agreed to revise the current "Brown Book" on safety reps and committees and work on that will be starting shortly.

24-7 work life balance

Last Autumn Keele University conducted its annual 24-7 survey into working life and work life balance. UCU publicised it and a number of UCU members responded.

This year, in addition to the main report there are a number of regional reports that are available for download. If you are interested in these please visit the following website:

www.24-7survey.co.uk

CIPD issues new stress guidance

Rising levels of work related stress have prompted new guidance for employers. Around one in five people experience high levels of stress at work, costing UK employers an estimated £9.6 billion per year. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) has published three new guides, in association with the HSE. The guides are free to download from

<http://www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/health/stress/>

European Health and Safety Week 22 – 26 October 2007

This is an annual event organised by the European Health and Safety Agency. This year the main focus will be on Musculoskeletal Disorders. The TUC and HSE are working on a range of checklists for safety representatives on Manual Handling and RSI, and there will be four training events in various parts of the country on MSDs. The Wednesday of the Week is National Inspection Day and there will be an inspection checklist on MSDs available for use by safety representatives. More information is on <http://ew2007.osha.europa.eu/>

Display Screens

The Hazards magazine website has listed various checklists from round on the world, for checking VDU workstations. and drawn out some key points from them. There is also

information about the risk of glaucoma from sitting at a VDU for long periods. See www.hazards.org/workstations

New Construction Regulations rumpus

The HSC approved new Construction regulations last year. These were generally supported by trade unions and simplified the management arrangements for construction work while retaining worker protection. As such they were seen as a model of "better regulation" as opposed to "de-regulation". They were approved by the minister last month and laid before Parliament, with a view to implementation on 6th April.

Unusually for health and safety regulations, these are being opposed within the House of Commons. Andrew Selous MP, Shadow spokesperson for health and safety, has called for a debate on the CDM. On 15 March David Cameron laid an EDM in House, "praying" that the CDM be annulled. No date has been set for the debate but it is expected in the next fortnight. Construction unions, and the TUC have been supportive of the new regulations and the TUC will be preparing a parliamentary briefing on the issue prior to the debate.

You can register for an e-bulletin on news updates on Construction issues from HSE on www.hse.gov.uk/construction/infonet.htm

Workers Memorial Day - 28th April

This is the day when Trade Unions remember those who have died as a result of their work either through injury or disease. It is also the day when we remember our role in fighting for the living to ensure that others do not die in the future.

Details are on the TUC website at http://www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/tuc-11563-f0.cfm

USHA

The Universities Safety and Health Association (www.usha.org.uk) held their annual conference in Newcastle this year. It was well attended with large numbers of health and safety officers present (many UCU members and quite a few ex-health and safety reps).

Roger Kline from UCU was one of two key note speakers and we hope to develop good relations with USHA over the coming months.

Learning and Skills Council has no idea on accidents stats

"Our contact at head office has been back in touch regarding information about statistics for health and safety in colleges in regards to injuries – especially within craft workshops within the 14-19 age group. Unfortunately this is something that we do not have information on. We would usually recommend getting in touch with HSE which you already have done".

Email from LSC in response to our inquiries. We'll be pursuing.

Mesothelioma

"Mesothelioma: The human face of an asbestos epidemic" is a DVD produced by the national Forum of Asbestos Victim Support Groups. It contains an 8-minute presentation plus interviews with the relatives of a few of the many thousands of workers who have already died of mesothelioma after being exposed to asbestos by their employers. This terrible disease is an incurable cancer of the pleura, the lining of the chest cavity, and can result from a relatively brief exposure to asbestos dust. It can take anything between 10 and 50 years to develop, and has affected all kinds of workers from engineers and joiners to teachers and consultant surgeons.

The DVD costs £5.60 per copy, including postage and packing. You can order one or more by contacting Tony Whitston at GMAVSG by phone on 0161 636 7555, or e-mailing a request to whitston.a@virgin.net. They will send you an invoice with the DVD.

Trades union and the environment course

There are still a few places left on a Trade Unions & the Environment Course for Reps and Safety Reps on 11 - 13 July 2007 at South Thames College in London.

This course will help union reps to: - Identify environmental changes affecting the workplace - Research and identify appropriate environmental legislation, policies and information - Identify environmental problems and opportunities for trade union action.

For more information please contact Graham Petersen, TUC Course Coordinator (and UCU rep), on 020 8918 7378 or email graham.petersen@south-thames.ac.uk

Download application form at www.unionlearn.org.uk/extrasul/education/application.pdf

Preventing occupational cancer

A new guide, 'Occupational Cancer/Zero Cancer: A union guide to prevention', published to mark the launch of the campaign, is backed by all 10 global union federations and the global union confederation ITUC. It is being distributed worldwide.

Cancer/Zero Cancer: A union guide to prevention

<http://www.imfmetal.org/main/files/07031915130979/ZeroCancer-Update.pdf>

Preventing occupational cancer

<http://www.imfmetal.org/main/index.cfm?n=47&l-2&c=15708>

Occupational cancer prevention online resources

Hazards occupational cancer web pages

www.hazards.org./cancer

Hazards occupational cancer prevention kit
www.hazards.org/cancer/preventionkit

Early Day Motion 1125

Workplace Environmental Representatives

You could ask your MP to sign Early Day Motion 1125, which calls for facilities and facility time for trade union Environmental Representatives or visit <http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-13125-f0.cfm> for more information.

UCU Health and Safety training

UCU runs health and safety courses which are open to all members but in particular to new health and safety reps and those who are interested in becoming a health and safety rep.

We are currently in the middle of running the UCU H&S stage 1 course which consists of the following 5 x two day modules;

- Health and Safety Induction
- Understanding Health and Safety Law
- Using your rights as H&S rep
- Dealing with Accidents & Tackling Hazards
- Trade Union Action to Tackle Stress

Modules 2-5 should only be attended by those who have completed the health & safety induction course.

We also run a two day Harassment and Bullying course and we are currently working on a one day Tackling Harassment and Bullying at Work conference planned for September 2007.

All the above courses are available both regionally and nationally. For further information, dates and venues please contact Linda Ball at lball@ucu.org.uk. Travel expenses are reimbursed against claims made. Lunch and light refreshments are provided by UCU.

UCU Health and Safety Advice Line

UCU's Health and Safety Advice Line for safety reps and branch officers offers information about health and safety legal standards, and how they can be applied and advice on dealing with health and safety issues/problems.

The Health and Safety Advice Line is for branch officers and safety reps only, not for individual members. The advice line will be staffed two days a week only. When you phone the advice line you will be asked to leave a message. You will then be contacted as soon as possible.

The **advice line number** is **0161 636 7558**
Email healthandsafety@ucu.org.uk

Or by post to John Bamford, UCU Health and Safety Advice Line, Greater Manchester Hazards Centre, Unit 2.5 Windrush Millennium Centre, 70 Alexandra Road, Manchester M16 7WD

And finally

The Observer Sunday March 25, 2007 reported that "Employers send staff on comedy courses to cut stress and raise productivity".

Joke-telling is the latest plan by managers to try to get their staff to work better. After resident poets and away days where staff build boats out of wood and oil drums, it is hoped that humour classes will give a new perspective on team work.

Those involved deny that the scheme has a whiff about it of David Brent - Ricky Gervais' character in The Office who said: 'There may be no "I" in team, but there's a "me" if you look hard enough'. The report is at

http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,,2042226,00.html

UCU's health and safety team

- **John Bamford**
- **Linda Ball**
- **Sharon Russell**
- **Roger Kline**