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**Welcome to the first edition of the monthly UCU Health and Safety newsletter. It is written for UCU health and safety representative, branch/local association representatives and other interested members of UCU. If you have ideas for future editions please let us know. Feel free to forward to colleagues. The newsletter is part of an increase in health and safety support for representatives and members in the new union – more details in the next edition.**

## New fire regime

New legislation on workplace fire precautions is now almost certain to come into effect in October 2006. There has been some considerable delay in this, and implementation has been postponed a number of times because the guides that should accompany the new Regulations have not been published the requisite three months in advance of the legal change.

The new Regulations rationalise the structure of regulatory controls over fire precautions, which were previously under a number of different acts of Parliament and sets of regulations and orders, and now provide one coherent regulatory approach.

The emphasis shifts the regulatory regime from a prescriptive one which emphasised precautions, and where premises were designated under the Fire Precautions Act 1971, required the local fire authority to inspect the premises, set out what needed to be done to ensure compliance and issue a fire certificate, to a preventive approach based on identifying potential fire risks in the workplace by a risk assessment, and then establishing appropriate controls, with the primary emphasis on fire prevention. Under the old Fire Precautions Act, educational establishments were not designated premises, so the requirement to have a certificate did not apply. The new law is The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 No 1541, and all educational establishments in England and Wales will come under the Regulations.

In future the basis for all fire precautions will be a fire risk assessment, and although the Fire Service will still inspect particularly high-risk premises, they have no authority to carry out a fire risk assessment for employers, and will not do so. Any employer seeking their advice will be asked to ensure they have completed the risk assessment process first. They will be available to give advice following the assessment. The requirement to conduct fire risk assessments has been in force since 1997, and since 1999 has been part of the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations.

## UCU Action

**As this is the introduction of a new regime, all UCU safety reps should ask employers to review their fire risk assessments to see if they need to be updated.**

Download a copy of the Order from <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2005/20051541.htm>

The new Regulations are accompanied by a series of guides aimed at particular kinds of workplace. The main guide for UCU reps is Guide No. 5 – Educational Premises, but advice about areas like engineering workshops can be found in Guide 2 – Factories, and for offices in Guide 1 - Offices.

<http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1162115> lists the guides, and click on the link to Guide 5 for the Educational Premises.

You can also download the other guides from this page.

<http://www.odpm.gov.uk/staging/index.asp?id=1162108> lets you download the Education Premises guide directly. Guides 4, 9, 10 & 11 were still not ready on 9<sup>th</sup> June.

The Education Premises Guide is fairly comprehensive, and goes back to basics on fire risk. There is a useful list of things that the employer must do on pages 6-7, and reps can use this as a basic checklist on procedural matters to check employer compliance; and is followed by a comprehensive guide to fire risk assessments. The second part gives lots of detail on key matters like fire alarms and detection, means of escape, fire fighting equipment, emergency lighting, signs and notices; staff training, keeping records and so on. Go and get the guides and start to plan your next workplace inspection.

## HSE Publications to go free by next year.

The Health and Safety Executive has made an 'in principle' decision to make almost all its priced publications available free online from spring 2007. TUC head of safety Hugh Robertson said: *"Unions have been campaigning for this for some time, and it is great news for those safety reps with internet access."*

He added: *"At last representatives will have access to the official approved codes of practice (ACoPs) and guidance they need to enable them to do their job properly. We will be talking to the HSE about ways of ensuring those safety reps who do not have access to the web can get copies. Nevertheless this news will be welcomed by the trade unions. The HSE has now joined the ranks of most other government regulators in giving the public access to the regulations and guidance directly relevant to their work."* The accident book and health and safety law poster will remain as priced publications. We'll let you know when this happens, and where the publications can be downloaded from.

## Risks e-bulletin.

For everyone who doesn't already know, the TUC publish a weekly health & safety e-bulletin called "Risks". Safety reps may also be interested in "Changing Times News" – a newsletter on work-life balance (shouldn't this be life-work balance?), an issue directly related

to stress-related matters. Edited by Hazards Magazine editor Rory O'Neill, Risks is an excellent way to keep up-to-date with current news and events relating to occupational health & safety.

## UCU Action

**You can register to have this sent to your mailbox every Friday – go to [www.tuc.org.uk/newsroom/register.cfm](http://www.tuc.org.uk/newsroom/register.cfm) and complete the registration form to get either or both publications.**

If you prefer a more relaxed approach, you can read and download the current issue and access back issues (PDF or html) at [http://www.tuc.org.uk/h\\_and\\_s/index.cfm?mins=242&minors=242](http://www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/index.cfm?mins=242&minors=242)

For more in-depth articles on current campaigns and major health & safety issues, subscribe to **Hazards magazine**. Hazards is published 4 times a year, and an annual single-issue subscription for safety reps is currently £15.00. *Hazards* is the only prize-winning, worker-oriented health & safety magazine, and needs subscribers in order to survive. If the magazine folds, its excellent website will also go. You can subscribe directly from the Hazards website – [www.hazards.org](http://www.hazards.org) or contact Jawad Qasrawi, the subscription manager at [sub@hazards.org](mailto:sub@hazards.org). This would also be an excellent resource for the College/university library – why don't you put in an accessions request (if such things still exist).

## More on Stress – The Willing One Hundred

The HSE has finally told us which educational institutions have volunteered to take part in this HSE-sponsored stress reduction project. Eight are in the FE/HE sectors; they are Anglia Ruskin University; Coleg Glan Hafren; Cornwall College; De Montfort University; Swansea College; Sheffield College; Wigan and Leigh College; and York St John University College.

Education Leeds and Eton College are the other two - and yes, Eton College is THE Eton College – where you can educate your son (and only your son) for a mere £24,000 a year in fees.

### UCU Action

**We would like to hear from all UCU Branches in these institutions about how they have been involved in this project. There is plenty of good material on stress on the UCU web site at <http://www.natfhe.org.uk/?id=stresstk>.**

## European Health & Safety Week

This year's European Week of Health and Safety will focus on young workers. The week will run from 23 to 27 October. The European Agency site, with lots of links is <http://ew2006.osha.eu.int/>. The HSE will produce a pack for the week, which will mainly be materials from the European Agency in Bilbao. They usually produce a pack that you can request – or you can download material from the site. IOSH are also planning to produce a web site and training resources. The TUC plans to produce a leaflet for safety representatives on young workers, available in bulk for affiliated unions in late August. They will also set up a website for young workers.

There is a developing tradition in the UK of unions and employers jointly promoting some activity around the European Week, and the HSE will usually publicise events notified to them. You can check for current information on the HSE website – [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk) and click the 'Campaigns' button. HSE has offered prizes for the best activities in the past.

As usual, the TUC is promoting a National Inspection Day for Wednesday the 25th October, so reps can conduct workplace inspections based on the theme. UCU Branches should consider making their contribution to this event.

## Improving Safety Reps Rights

The HSE has now issued a consultation document with some proposals to **increase** specific rights for safety reps. The Consultation Document, "*Improving worker involvement – Improving health & safety*" (CD207) is available free from HSE Books on 01787 881165, or can be downloaded from <http://www.hse.gov.uk/consult/condocs/cd207.htm>

The consultation period ends on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2006, and to help Branches and reps to respond, the TUC has issued a Briefing pack, posted at: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/HSC.pdf>

### UCU Action

**It is important that there is an overwhelming response from trade unions and safety reps, to underline the importance of this move, so please make a contribution. The HSE will consider your response even if you don't reply to all the questions, so if you only want to respond to the questions about risk assessment, that's fine. Your response can include none, some or all the points in the TUC Briefing, but if you just reproduce the TUC words, the HSE will treat all such responses as a single response, and its value will be diminished.**

So, please use your own words, and include examples from local experience – e.g. if you have experienced difficulties with management involving you in risk assessments, say so, and point out how the new rights will help to overcome this, and how all workers in the institution will benefit as a consequence. You could talk to the other unions in your institution and agree a joint response with them.

Finally, it will help to persuade ministers to amend the regulations if there is evidence of positive responses from employers which make it clear that they support extensions of safety rep rights. If your institution respects safety reps, consults and negotiates properly on H&S issues, and generally has a positive approach, please consider asking them to make a joint submission with UCU.

## UCU Survey of health safety

Along with this newsletter all branches and local associations have been sent a health and safety reps survey to act as a baseline audit of where our safety reps are (and aren't) and how we should develop our work. Please ensure your local association or branch return it by 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2006. Thank you.

**Finally, if you'd like to receive this monthly newsletter on a regular basis or have news for the next one, or ideas for the development of UCU's health and safety work please email [h&sadmin@ucu.org.uk](mailto:h&sadmin@ucu.org.uk).**

## UCU HEALTH AND SAFETY ADVICE LINE

UCU has set up a Health and safety Advice Line for safety reps and branch officers offering 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 on Fridays only. When you phone the advice line you will be asked to leave a message. You will then be contacted on the nearest Friday unless your query is urgent.

The **advice line number** is **0161 636 7558**

**Email** [healthandsafety@ucu.org.uk](mailto: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

## UCU's health and safety team

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