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UCU annual safety rep award

The TUC annual safety rep award nomination form has just arrived. The TUC will be making an award to the trade unionist who represents the best aspects of being a safety representative. Nominations should come from the safety representative's branch or LA.

The form is available at www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=1953 and must be posted to Roger Kline at head office by 1 May.

Teachers and lecturers top poll of most unpaid overtime

Teachers and lecturers do, on average, more than 11 hours of unpaid work every week, according to TUC figures. If the staff were paid for their additional hours they would be taking home almost an extra £10,000 a year.

Despite a slight downturn in the amount of unpaid overtime, education professionals top the poll of occupations with the most additional unpaid hours.

The TUC figures show that teachers and lecturers who put in unpaid overtime did 11 hours six minutes unpaid overtime a week, which would be worth more than £9,500 a year if paid at the average hourly rate.

Education professionals do the highest amount of unpaid overtime of any significant workforce group, nearly an hour more than the second biggest group - senior officers in the police, fire and armed services.

Details at www.workyourproperhoursday.com

Eye tests



We have received a number of inquiries regarding eye tests for display screens. The relevant legislation is the Display Screen Equipment Regulations 1992 as amended by the H&S Miscellaneous Amendments Regs 2002. These require employers to identify those employees who are users of display screens (using some guidance that accompanies the Regulations), then undertake workstation assessments to ensure the workstation meets the required standard in the Regulations and Guidance.

Once designated as a user, employees then can request an eye test, which must be provided at the employer's expense. If this reveals the need for "corrective appliances" for work on the screen, the employer must then provide the (usually) spectacles, again free of charge to the employee. This principle follows from a requirement in the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 Section 9, which prohibits employers charging an employee for anything that is provided to them to protect their health, safety or welfare, where it is a piece of legislation that requires the employer to provide whatever it is.

Because the definition of a user is flexible, it's left to many local organisations to make an argument for a particular case. Where the employer argues that a lecturer word-processing for two hours a day or chasing research information on the internet for three hours is insufficient to enable them to be categorised as users, the guidance to the Regulations would support such a claim.

The key factors in the decision are

- 1) continuous spells of an hour or more;
- 2) daily use
- 3) fast information transfer
- 4) high level of attention and concentration
- 5) high level of dependency
- 6) little choice whether or not to use it
- 7) special skills and some training needed.

You don't need to score all 7 as yes, 4 or 5 would be enough to get you user status, and 2-3, with the rest maybe could also be sufficient.

The Regulations and guidance to help employers meet the standards required is produced by the Health & Safety Executive in *Work with display screen equipment, Guidance on Regulations: Code L26*. ISBN 0-7176-2582-6; Price £8.85. 2 other HSE publications are essential information sources on the DSE standards: "The law on VDU's – an easy guide", HSG90. ISBN 0-7176-2602-4 £8.50; and "Upper limb disorders in the workplace – A guide to prevention", HSG60. ISBN 0-7176-1978-8; £9.50 from HSE books.

You should ask your employer for either (best option) a copy of these publications for the union's safety reps to use, or (worst option) ask them for open access to their copies of the booklets. There is a statutory duty on your employer under Regulation 4A(2) of the Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations to provide you with this information, as it is assistance and a facility that you reasonably require to help you do your job as a safety rep.

UCU North West training day on stress – Friday 25 April

“The incidence of stress-related absence in education is twice the national average”

This one-day workshop is to help UCU representatives in the north-west deal with work-related stress in our sectors, and what role the local UCU organisation needs to play in this process. It is primarily intended to help UCU safety representatives in branches and local associations to take-up stress-related issues with the employer. Our aim is to work towards improving conditions in workplaces, and consequently improve the quality of working life of our members.

To register, please contact Helen Sidlow at the UCU Hale office, **by 19 April at the latest.**

Tel: 0161 929 7909 **Fax:** 0161 929 7808 **Email:** hsidlow@ucu.org.uk

Cuts to free ESOL classes 'will increase injuries and could threaten lives'

UCU has warned that government plans to restrict access to free English language classes needed by migrant workers would lead to increased risk of accidents at work - and risks to the general public. www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2053.

Research commissioned by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) amongst migrant workers shows that they already experience a higher number of workplace accidents than others because they are concentrated in more hazardous jobs without adequate training and work longer hours and shifts.

Compounding the dangers already facing migrant workers by restricting access to English language courses seems perverse. Ministers are well aware of the tragic circumstances in which the Morecambe Bay cockle pickers died, unable to make 999 mobile phone calls due to lack of English. And in Manchester recently, a bus company had its operating licence withdrawn after the investigation into an accident related death revealed that many of the company's migrant drivers had little or no English and had not been trained to understand road signs and basic instructions.

www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/s/233/233744_bus_company_banned_from_the_roads.html

National guidance to employers on health and safety says they should "take account of workers' capabilities and their level of training, knowledge and experience". This is particularly important for migrant workers. The government says it will cut free English courses because employers should be providing training - but it knows that most employers don't provide English training, yet it is doing nothing about that.

More about the campaign against ESOL cuts at www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=1975

HSE publications

HSE Books contact number is 01787 881165. If you ring them up and ask for a copy of their publications catalogue it's free and it also lists many free leaflets. They will send you a single copy of free leaflets if you ask them.

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

UCU's health and safety team

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