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UCU health and safety web pages

The UCU health and safety resource centre on the website is now up and running. Lots more information will be added in the coming months. If you have ideas on the page, for additional information, or for links we should provide, please let us know! See it at:

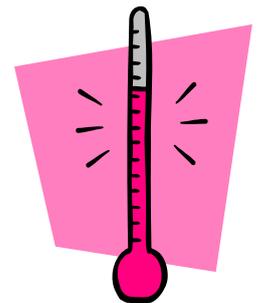
www.ucu.org.uk/healthandsafety.

Hot, hot, hot

It's summer again, and safety reps can expect more queries on high workplace temperatures.

The following link to the HSE sets out useful information which you will want to draw to management attention as appropriate:

www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/index.htm?ebul=hsegen/08-may-2007&cr=2.



Dignity at work

UCU has now published jointly with UNISON and the Equality Challenge Unit for higher education an excellent guide to dignity at work. The guide looks in detail at good practice, model procedures and how employers and unions should approach bullying and harassment at work.

It is available electronically at www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/0/4/digatwork_1.pdf.

Directors' health and safety duties

The draft guidance on Directors' Duties prepared by a working group convened by the Institute of Directors on behalf of the HSC has been published. It can be seen at www.iod.com/hsguide

The closing date for responses is 22 June and UCU will be making a brief response. This guidance is a weak attempt to be seen to be doing something, but it is unfortunately a sop. The TUC and all unions are unhappy with the failure to make any progress towards establishing a statutory duty on directors and other senior managers making them responsible for the health, safety and welfare of workers. We will still campaign for legislation on directors' duties for health and safety.

Watch your step in education – HSC alert

'55% of all accidents in education are caused by a slip or a trip. Last year, almost 2000 major injury slip and trip accidents in the education sector were reported to us, 571 of which were to employees, a 5% rise on the previous year. 90% of major accidents resulted in a broken bone causing considerable personal distress and a significant amount of time away from work.

'When taking action to prevent accidents, there is a tendency to focus on protecting and educating students, but staff and others in educational establishments are equally as important and have a major role to play in preventing slips and trips.

'To bring attention to this issue, an awareness raising initiative is taking place over the next 12 months. Workshops are being held around the country, primarily intended for those responsible for health and safety in higher and further education and local authority health and safety advisors for schools. A range of materials has also been produced to enable duty holders to identify and tackle the problem and promotional aids to assist with raising awareness amongst employees.

'Union representatives are welcome to attend the events and can further assist us by bringing the events and promotional material to the attention of employers and also by checking standards in their workplace'.

More from www.hse.gov.uk/slips/education/index.htm.

Health and safety inspections in HE – no comment

Here is a Parliamentary Answer on Tue, 01 May 07 on Higher Education Health and Safety Inspections

Sir Peter Soulsby: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the frequency of health and safety inspections in higher education. [116641]

Bill Rammell: No such assessment has been made. It is the duty of governing bodies of higher education institutions, as employers, to ensure that their organisations comply with all legislation

including the Health and Safety at Work Act 1976 and subsequent regulations. Inspection and enforcement is a matter for the Health and Safety Executive and local authorities and will depend on the nature of activities carried out in individual higher education institutions.



TUC conference on the ENVIRONMENT

4 June 2007 - TUC, London



This TUC conference, opened by Environment Secretary David Miliband, will explore what the Government's Climate Change Bill means for trade unions - how it will work, and what are the practical implications of a low carbon economy for industry, jobs, skills and transport.

The conference is aimed everyone with an interest in the challenge of climate change, particularly in the world of work.

Key speakers include **Frances O'Grady**, TUC Deputy General Secretary, **Tony Juniper**, Director of Friends of the Earth, speakers from government, the trade unions and energy specialists.

Six workshops will give you the chance to contribute to the debate on key issues including:

Climate Bill Briefing, Greening the Workplace, A Green Economy, International Union Action, Sustainable Transport, and Local and Regional Action.

To secure your place, email Emma at erichards@tuc.org.uk or phone 020 74671258 for more details. Alternatively, you can also go to the following link for further details and a booking form: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/ontarget.pdf>

Please also note that the labour research department will be publishing a major guide for reps including health and safety reps on environmental issues next month – details to follow.

New health and safety offences bill

Affiliates may wish to know that the Bill, mentioned in the last UCU Newsletter, was debated but failed to progress because there was not a quorum of 40 present.

If you wish to read the rather ill-informed debate on the subject then it can be found at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmhansrd/cm070427/debtext/70427-0006.htm>

More on eye tests and devices – who pays?

The primary principle that anything required to ensure a workers health or safety must be provided free of charge by the employer, was established in Section 9 of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974. Following on from that, the Display Screen Regulations specifically require the employer to fund eye tests for designated users, and to pay for any special corrective devices that the test reveals are needed. If your eye test revealed that you need a separate prescription for working on-screen, then that's what they pay for. It is also clear in the guidance that, if the user wishes to have something

other than a basic pair of specs with single vision lenses specifically for the computer, then the employer should make a contribution at the rate that a pair of basic specs would cost.

The Guidance to the Regulations distinguishes between 'normal' corrective appliances and 'special' corrective appliances. It says that 'special' appliances are to correct vision defects at the viewing distance used specifically for the display screen work concerned, whereas 'normal' are spectacles prescribed for any other purpose. They cannot say that because you already wear spectacles they won't pay - the relationship is to the 'special' need. Neither can they say they won't do anything other than a pair of single vision lenses - the guidance is also clear here, although it does caution that varifocals might not be appropriate - but that doesn't affect their duty to pay.

Paragraphs 81 - 89 of the guidance to the Regulations makes this very clear. This link to a free leaflet gives the basic information. www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg36.pdf

You could ask your employer for a copy of the document - *Work with Display Screen Equipment: Guidance on Regulations* L26. ISBN: 0 7176 2582 6, £8.95 from HSE Books, www.hsebooks.co.uk tel 01787 881165.

Mesothelioma – Early Day Motion

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence is shortly to announce a decision on whether approval should be given for the anti-cancer drug Alimta to be made available, on the NHS, for those Mesothelioma patients who would benefit from it. It is expected that NICE will refuse authorisation. Michael Clapham MP has introduced an EDM on the issue on which the TUC is asking affiliates to consider approaching MP's to add their names to the EDM. 99 MPs have signed so far.

EDM 2848 MESOTHELIOMA AND ACCESS TO ALIMTA 24.10.2006

'That this House is aware that since July 2005 mesothelioma victims in Scotland have had access to the drug Alimta, which is the only licensed treatment for this tumour; welcomes the decision of the Cancer Networks and primary care trusts that have made Alimta available in parts of England and Wales; urges them and the NHS Quality Improvement Scotland to stand by their decision irrespective of what the National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) decides at the appeal hearing on 27th October 2006; notes that Alimta is priced lower in the UK than in other European countries and that the NHS budget impact for 2006 will only be £3 million; is concerned that NICE has indicated that it is currently not minded to recommend Alimta despite accepting its efficacy; calls on it to reconsider the applicability of its appraisal methodology; recognises the additional duty of care on Government to workers from the former nationalised industries negligently exposed to asbestos; and calls on the Secretary of State for Health to acknowledge that, in this case, she has a wider social responsibility that goes beyond the NICE definition of cost-effectiveness.'

There is cross-party support for the EDM - most MP's will have constituents who have developed mesothelioma, a most dreadful and distressing condition that is always fatal, usually within months of diagnosis. Please ask your MP to sign the motion if they have not already done so. Your MP can be contacted via e-mail from www.writetothem.com/ To check which members signed-up to it, the EDM is available at edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=31467&SESSION=875

UCU health and safety training

UCU run a series of health and safety courses which are open to all members but in particular 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 five x two day modules:

- health and safety induction
- understanding health and safety law
- using your rights as a health & safety 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 are planning to run one day health and safety workshops locally focusing particularly on stress. Check with your regional office for further details.

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