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1. Non smoking rules from 1 July

New statutory rules on smoking are being introduced in England from July 1st, following on similar changes elsewhere in the UK.

UCU has produced two fact sheets – a short summary of the changes and some negotiating issues and a longer explanation of the rules available at www.ucu.org.uk/hsfacts.

Further advice for safety representatives on the implementation of the ban is available on the TUC website at www.tuc.org.uk/extras/smokingguide2007.pdf.

2. UCU conference and health and safety

Several excellent resolutions on health and safety issues were agreed at UCU's recent annual Congress. They were:

- updating the safety representatives and safety committees regulations
- investigation into stress
- bullying in post 16 education.

We'll be working out how best to implement them in the next few weeks. To see all conference resolutions visit www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2392.

3. UCU good practice

We are very keen that health and safety reps share good practice. We would like to hear from institutions where:

- you feel you have a good group of health and safety reps, working well together and with some influence over health and safety and the work environment and/or
- you have had a recent success, however small, on health and safety.

There is nothing better for reps elsewhere to be able to point to successes by the union. Please email John Bamford at jbamford@ucu.org.uk.

4. Work safety and government policy

The **HSE inspector's trade union, Prospect**, has claimed that the government enforces financial regulations better than health, safety and welfare laws. Between 2002 and 2006, the Financial Services Agency (FSA) increased its workforce by 25%, while the HSE's workforce reduced by a tenth. The average fine for breach of financial regulations last year was £216,000, the average fine for health & safety offences was under £30,000.

An **internal audit by the HSE** has revealed a serious shortfall in potential prosecutions. The audit team examined 126 cases involving death or serious injury; only 7 of which resulted in criminal charges against the employers. The audit team concluded that tougher action should have been taken in another 18 of the cases examined, and that prosecution would have been a possibility in 12 of these. The report is at:

www.corporateaccountability.org/dl/hse/enfaudit/hseaudit.doc

An **Early Day Motion** posted by John McDonnell MP calls for an increase in HSE resource. 76 members have already signed; please ask your MP to sign this EDM. If they haven't already done so, to show that there is strength of feeling in the country on this issue. The address is <http://edmi.parliament.uk/edmi/edmdetails.aspx?edmid=33095&session=885> where the signatories are listed. You can e-mail your MP via www.writetothem.com/ website - just enter your postcode.

At the same time, the **Institute of Directors** has consulted on draft new guidance for directors' responsibilities for health and safety. This was drawn up at the request of the Health and Safety Commission. Although the TUC will be responding to the draft guidance, they will be making it clear that guidance will be of little use unless backed up by a legal duty on directors. Existing HSC guidance for directors has had little effect. Our response will be short and sharp. The draft guidance is at www.hse.gov.uk/consult/condocs/cdiiod.htm.

Meanwhile, the government's **corporate manslaughter bill** has still not reached the statute book following a stalemate between the House of Commons and the House of Lords over the issue of deaths in custody. The House of Commons agreed a compromise, which would have allowed deaths in custody to be included in the bill at a later stage. The bill will now go back to the House of Commons on the 5th of June, when the government will attempt to reverse the Lords' decision. If no compromise is reached between the two Houses by the 17 July, then the bill will fall.

5. Young workers safety - doing our bit

In the past 10 years, 66 young people under 19 have been killed at work, and 14,500 have suffered major injuries. The Institute of Occupational Safety & Health, (IOSH) is calling for health & safety to be a mandatory part of the school curriculum. That call should extend to young people in further and higher education as well, and UCU members are well-placed to lead by example in many areas of training and education.

UCU asked the LSC for information about the numbers of young people either killed or injured in the FE sector, but the LSC doesn't collect this information, they said. They do issue a questionnaire on health & safety to organisations they fund - it is available at http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/EastOfEngland/learner-health-safety_questionnaire.doc. It might be of interest to UCU safety reps in the FE sector.

UCU members are asked to also please support the current PM petition on young workers safety at <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/youngpeoplework> .

6. Chemicals at work

REACH, the new European standards on chemical substances, came into force on the 1st June this year. The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) remain in force, and will continue to be the regulatory standard applied to the use, handling and storage of chemical substances in UK colleges and universities. More information at www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/index.htm

Although REACH has come into effect, for trade unions, there will be little practical difference until the HSE starts to consult on new regulations. The actual process of registration, evaluation and authorisation will not start for some time. There is guidance on the TUC website at www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/tuc-12870-f0.cfm.

7. Slips and trips in institutions

A reminder about Watch Your Step in Education - new HSE initiative to stop slip and trip accidents happening in schools, colleges and universities which your institution should be discussing with safety reps. More details at www.hse.gov.uk/slips/index.htm.

You should also note that the HSE Slips Assessment Tool (SAT) has been updated and can be downloaded at <http://www.hsesat.info/>.

You should also note that an HSE Revised flooring assessment information sheet is now available. This technical information sheet describes a number of test methods for assessing floor slip resistance. This sheet also describes the test methods used by HSE/HSL in more detail. www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/web/slips01.pdf

8. Asbestos checklist and booklet

UCU has issued a new asbestos checklist for health and safety reps. It is available at www.ucu.org.uk/hsfacts. If you would like a copy of the new excellent authoritative Labour Research Department booklet on asbestos at work please email Linda Ball at lball@ucu.org.uk and we will send it to you free.

9. Not just in further and higher education....

A recent survey by teachers union NASUWT ([link](#)) has found that 94% of teachers have worked in excessive summer temperatures, 66% say they have been bullied or harassed at work.

25% said that health & safety was not taken seriously by the school or college, only 58% of schools carried out regular health & safety checks and audits, and 57% of teachers in the survey did not know if they had asbestos present in their school or college.

10. UCU and the environment

UCU Congress unanimously passed an excellent resolution on climate change and the environment which will be of particular interest to many health and safety reps. The motion read:

Motion 22 - Environment (South Thames College)

UCU recognises:

- 1 the ecological impact of national and global policies and activities which are damaging the ecosystem
- 2 the need for the adoption of the principles of sustainability to combat these policies.
- 3 the positive role which the education sector can play in promoting sustainability.

Congress therefore commits UCU to:

- 4 promoting action at institution level to develop sustainable workplace policies and practices, such as 'greening the campus'
- 5 developing the environmental role of union reps and campaign to extend legal rights to paid release for their duties and training
- 6 contributing to efforts to promote sustainability via all elements of the curriculum
- 7 support appropriate organisations and campaigns in pursuit of these objectives
- 8 instruct UCU NEC to organise a fringe meeting on the environment at the 2008 UCU congress.
- 9 explore the policy options for reducing the 'environmental footprint' of UCU.

Carried unanimously

We are currently collating names of members who have expressed an interest in this area of work and an email newsletter will be started in the near future. If you would like to receive this or a copy of the latest Labour Research Department booklet on *The environment and climate change – a guide for union reps*, please email Sharon Russell srussell@ucu.org.uk with your details.

11. Work-related road deaths

ROSPA estimates that 20 people a week killed in road incidents are at work at the time. Most are not employed as drivers, but are people whose job requires them to travel from one place to another to do their work. In FE and HE, this particular risk can affect part-time staff and those who travel between sites. A petition jointly presented by the Preston Workers Committee and Greater Manchester Hazards Centre on the pm website is calling for action on the current level of enforcement, and for all road-related deaths where the victim is at work be recorded as work-related deaths, not as road traffic incidents. Please sign the petition at <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/petitionforkaren>

12. Dates for your diary

National Hazards Conference - 27-29 July in Manchester.

This is the biggest annual congregation of safety representatives in the UK and has a programme packed with workshops and discussions on issues that are of relevance in the workplace.

UCU health and safety reps are strongly recommended to attend. More details at www.gmhzards.org.uk/Haz2007%20BgFm.doc

European Health and Safety Week - 22-26 October.

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 the 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.

National Stress Conference - 10 November in Birmingham.

The UK's National Work Stress Network's 2007 conference will be on the theme of 'Enforcing the stress management standards.' The event will feature a speaker from the groundbreaking 'Whitehall II' research programme, the UK's biggest ongoing occupational health study and the one that has turned up links between job insecurity and lack of control and increased risks of heart disease, depression and long-term sick leave. An HSE stress expert will also speak, and there are plans to feature an employer's experiences implementing the stress management standards.

13. 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