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1. UCU health and safety reps – ensure those legal rights are replaced

We believe there are a considerable number of post-16 institutions where UCU is a recognised trade union but where reps are not using their health and safety statutory rights. To help remedy this, UCU's H&S web page has a number of briefings for H&S reps to ensure that every employer in post-16 institutions recognises and implements the legal minimum requirements.

We have a number of briefings/factsheets on:

- facility time for H&S reps
 - establishment of H&S committees
 - safety policies
 - organising health and safety in your branch/local association
 - workplace inspections
- and many more

Later this autumn, we will be unveiling a sector standard for H&S Agreement. If you think YOU have a really good H&S agreement, please send this in to John Bamford at jbamford@ucu.ac.uk

2. Workplace deaths rise

Recently published HSE figures for work-related deaths for 2006-07 reveal that last year 241 workers were fatally injured at work, an 11% increase on the 217 deaths in 2005/06, and the highest number of workplace fatalities for five years. Most of the increase was in construction, although there was also an increase in service industries. The rate of death in agriculture and the waste industry were also high, highlighting concerns that migrant workers, who are often found in these sectors, are more at risk. As UCU pointed out earlier this year ESOL provision is not a luxury – it can be a matter of life and death.

The rise comes after years of falling enforcement activity by both the HSE and local authorities, and although this has now been reversed, this year has seen a further fall in inspector numbers, which is likely to be repeated for the next three years unless extra money is made available to the HSE.

The increase in fatalities is only part of the picture as it only records deaths from immediate injury in workplaces, and ignores work-related road deaths estimated at 1,000 annually; 2000 mesothelioma deaths caused by asbestos exposure, and an unquantifiable number of deaths caused by diseases such as cancers which are variously estimated to be anything between 8,000 and 24,000.

Though fatalities are less in post 16 education there are many other sectors stress related illness and some other aspect of works related ill health and injury are very high.

The cuts in the inspectorate and the changes in the inspectorate culture will adversely affect all employees directly affecting ucu members. John McDonnell MP has posted EDM 1320, which reads:

**EDM 1320
HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE JOB CUTS**

**20.04.2007
McDonnell, John**

That this House condemns the lack of resources being made available for maintaining the health and safety of UK workers; notes with concern that the number of staff in the Health and Safety Executive had fallen from 4,282 in April 2004 to 3,225 by March 2007, and that over the last financial year there has been no improvement in the number of fatal accidents and major injuries, with the construction sector having suffered a 14 per cent. increase in the number of work-related deaths; believes further job cuts and office closures, such as the one recently announced in Stoneleigh, will have a harmful impact on workplace safety as enforcement of regulations and the provision of advice to employers will be reduced; and therefore calls upon the Government to recognise that to maintain current safety levels, let alone achieve reductions in the number of workplace deaths and injuries, it is essential that further funding be made available to the Health and Safety Executive.

Has your MP signed the EDM?

The John McDonnell EDM is EDM 1320, posted 20.04.07 and can be found at <http://edmi.parliament.uk/edmi/edmdetails.aspx?edmid=33095&session=885> where you can see which MP has signed the EDM. To find out how to get in touch with your local MP, visit www.theyworkforyou.com

Prospect, the health and safety inspectors' union are currently running a campaign on this issue. Visit their website for campaign documents on HSE jobs at www.prospect.org.uk/healthandsafety/documents/cut_risks_not_safety_workers/index/index

3. Corporate killing – new Act but long way to go

The Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Bill finally made it onto the statute book in July when a compromise was reached between the Government and House of Lords over the issue of deaths in custody.

This is the culmination of a campaign that the trade union movement has run for over 10 years to get legislation on Corporate Killing. However whilst the new Act is a welcome tool it is pretty weak.

- It only applies to corporations, not individual directors. The main penalty available to the courts is a fine or a remedial order. No-one will go to prison under this legislation, however appalling their actions. Nor can it be used against those employers who put the safety of workers or the public at risk but do not actually kill someone.
- There is no duty upon directors to take steps to ensure that their company complies with the law. Section 37 of the Health and Safety at Work Act sets out the circumstances when a director of a company can be prosecuted - which is where an offence by the company is the result of consent, connivance or neglect on the part of the director. The HSC plans to publish new guidance for Directors later this year, but the current guidance for Directors has had little effect. The Act will come into force on 6 April 2008.

4. European Health and Safety Week Lighten the Load – 22nd – 26th October 2007

This year's European Week campaign 'Lighten the Load' is dedicated to musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs).

The aim of the campaign is to support employers, workers, safety representatives and other stakeholders in improving MSD prevention.

These webpages contain helpful information on MSDs and European-wide initiatives. European Week itself will run from 22nd – 26th October 2007. For more information visit

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/campaigns/euroweek/index.htm>

UCU members can be at risk from a number of factors, including moving heavy boxes of paper, books or documents; reaching up or down to shelves; handling and moving materials in workshops; using display screen equipment; unsuitable furniture in staffrooms, or even just carrying a heavy briefcase or bag all day.

For a copy of the HSE Action Pack Go to

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/campaigns/euroweek/activities.htm>

Visit the Resources pages at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/campaigns/euroweek/resources.htm>

5. National Work-Stress Network Conference

The network will be holding a Stress Network Conference on *'enforcing the HSE Stress Management Standards'* on Saturday 10 November at the NASUWT Education Centre, Rednall, Birmingham. For further information about this event and to download a copy of the UK WorkStress Network newsletter visit www.workstress.net

You can also download earlier newsletters from <http://www.workstress.net/newsletter.htm>

6. Stress – still a big problem

UCU and many of its members supports the College and University Support Network (CUSN) which provides excellent advice to individual members on this and other issues at work. Of course primary intervention to prevent stress is essential which is why UCU is placing so much emphasis on a collective response to stress at work

You can get further details from <http://www.cusn.info/>.

7. Hazards conference

A very successful conference attended by a number of UCU delegates and a key note paper from Professor Andy Watterson. There will be a full report next month.

8. Health and Safety Law 2007



LRD's latest H&S publication. Contains information about all the legal changes since the 2006 version. If your branch subscribes to LRD you should have it already; if not, it is £10.50 including postage from LRD.

You can access the LRD Booklets catalogue at www.lrd.org.uk/coll.php?pagid=5 to order a copy. It is a resource you reasonably require as a safety rep, because it helps you meet the requirement of Paragraph 5(a)(i) of the Code of Practice on Safety Reps, attached to the Safety Reps & Safety Committees Regulations 1977 we suggest you ask your employer to purchase copies.

9. UCU training days

The details of planned regional training days will be in the next issue of health and safety news. For further details and registration on national UCU health and safety courses for this autumn please contact Linda Ball at lball@ucu.org.uk

10. Sustainable designed buildings yield economic benefits

UCU has already given summary advice to reps on one aspect of building design – open plan offices. A 2000 paper by US consultant Judith Heerwagen entitled *Green Buildings, Organizational Success and Occupant Productivity* (www.wbdg.org/pdfs/grn_bldgs_org_success.pdf) reviewed literature on the benefits of sustainable buildings and linked it with literature on organizational effectiveness to show evidence for a connection between sustainable buildings and improved occupant and organizational performance.

It is not well understood what the most important benefits and features of sustainable buildings are and how they relate to occupant and organizational performance, to

- give occupants personal control over temperature, ventilation, and lighting to enhance their comfort and productivity
- supply occupants access to daylight, windows, and contact with nature to provide significant physical and psychological benefits and improve job satisfaction
- ensure that designs do not create noise problems (eg from people or phones).

She found:

- Designs that improved indoor air quality, controlled moisture in the building infrastructure, reduced exposure to indoor pollutants, and increased energy efficiency were identified as typical of sustainable buildings.
- The effects of sustainable buildings were categorized into two areas: how indoor environmental quality affected occupants' performance and well-being and how sustainable buildings affected an organization's strategic performance.
- The quality of the indoor environment was found to affect work performance. Temperature, humidity, ventilation, air quality, and lighting, as well as personal control over them were identified as key components of the indoor environment affecting work performance.
- Sustainable buildings have aided the strategic performance of companies in retaining employees, reducing absenteeism, promoting the organization's image, improving organizational productivity, and reducing building operating costs.
- Few studies were found that objectively measured changes in productivity due to changes in the indoor environment. Most relied instead on self-assessments by occupants.

11. 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 at **healthandsafety@ucu.org.uk**

Postal address is **UCU Health and Safety Advice Line, Greater Manchester Hazards Centre, Unit 2.5 Windrush Millennium Centre, 70 Alexandra Road, Manchester M16 7WD**