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We would like to wish all our readers a happy new year and a safe, healthy and well-organised 2008

Landmark health & safety policy at Leeds University

A pioneering partnership to promote and safeguard the health and safety of staff and students has been signed by unions and Leeds University.

A declaration that health and safety is the University's highest priority is at the heart of the partnership, which is backed by a substantial annual investment of £1.4m in health and safety, together with an awareness-raising campaign and a package of improvements.

The partnership is certainly amongst the best of its kind in higher education. The agreement can be downloaded at: http://reporter.leeds.ac.uk/press_releases/current/safety.htm

It states:

'1.2. Health and safety, including the work environment, should be a major priority for any employer. **Our commitment at the University of Leeds is that they are our top priority.** The University therefore aspires to management processes which go well beyond the statutory minimum.

'1.3. There is substantial evidence that employee involvement through safety representatives can make a significant difference to the health and safety in the workplace. **The University seeks to involve the trade unions as equal partners in achieving the standards that we aspire to** and seeks to resolve health and safety issues in a way which establishes a model for dealing with industrial relations more widely.'

Ann Blair (LA President) and Roger Kline (UCU Head of Equality and Employment Rights) welcomed the launch (see www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3044) and the University Vice-Chancellor Michael Arthur said:

'I look forward to the day when our university is a flagship for health and safety, with others looking to us to see how it should be done.'

Action. We suggest university safety reps read the Leeds agreement and table it for discussion at their own institution unless your own agreement has similar provisions.

Safety rep activities, functions and facilities

Our first UCU project for 2008 is to re-emphasise safety reps functions and facilities. The first three new fact-sheets cover Paid time-off, Facilities and Assistance and Consultation. You can find all three at: www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2424

Next month we will cover **safety rep functions** and the **provision of information by the employer**.

We will also be sending you a short survey to assist UCU's work.

Gender sensitive health & safety

Everyone has an equal right to protection from harm at work but that doesn't mean treating everyone as if they were all the same. Recent research has shown that both sex (biological differences between women and men) and gender (socially determined differences) affect workers' health and safety in many ways. These differences are too often ignored or misunderstood, leading to failures in prevention.

Gender stereotyping (eg 'women's work is light work' or 'stress is for wimps') or stereotyping in relation to different categories or work (eg manual and white-collar jobs) can also lead to false assumptions about who is or is not at risk in the workplace. Important opportunities for prevention can be missed as a result.

The TUC's Gender and Occupational Safety and Health (G&OSH) Working Party have produced a checklist to help safety reps and others check whether their workplace health and safety policies and practices are gender sensitive. UCU staff in H&S and the Equality Unit contributed to the checklist. For more information about what the checklist can help you do, and to download a copy of the checklist, go to www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/tuc-14178-f0.cfm.

Contacting the HSE – 0845 345 0055

Anyone visiting the HSE website looking for the contact telephone number for their local HSE office will have noticed a significant difference since Christmas. The offices in each region are still listed, but their switchboard telephone numbers have been removed, leaving only a fax number. The site's only telephone number is for the HSE's enquiry service InfoLine. The InfoLine is not the enforcement agency, it is a contracted-out service, not even the HSE. So it is now more complicated to 'phone the police' if you think that is what you need to do.

It would be useful if some of you could phone the InfoLine and ask for your local office number. If you then e-mail John Bamford at jbamford@ucu.org.uk or john@gmhazards.org.uk with the name of the office and telephone number you are given, we will publish a document listing all the local office numbers on the website.

The HSE Regional office map is at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/maps/> and click on your region to show the list of local offices, so you know which office to ask the InfoLine for.

One UCU safety rep passed on an excellent letter from an HSE inspector sent in response to an inquiry of the sort that InfoLine will not provide.

'Your e-mail could not have been better timed. I'm proposing to come into the college shortly to see what they have done, are doing and plan to do on managing stress. I want to ensure that Trade Union Representatives are part of that process and in view of your interest in the topic perhaps you would be one of the TU Reps who could be involved.'

Comfortable at work?

This is the time of year when workplaces often fail to achieve a reasonable temperature, and staff and students complain about it being cold.

We have developed a thermal comfort factsheet and checklist that can be used by reps to identify workplace temperature problems, based on the Workplace Health, Safety & Welfare Regulations for Temperature and Ventilation and other HSE guidance.

You can download *Example of a temperature and ventilation checklist* from www.ucu.org.uk/hsfacts#issues.

International RSI day – 29 February

International RSI Day has been established on the only non-repeating day of the year. This is your last chance to order free posters for the event. E-mail the national Hazards Campaign at mail@gmhazards.org.uk with an order saying how many A3 and/or A4 posters you want and they will send them to you free of charge.

To see the poster, go to <http://www.hazards.org/strains/index.htm> where there are also copies of posters from other countries, and a huge range of resources for safety reps, including fact-sheets and checklists.

Hazards Bulletin

While you are at it ask your branch or LA to send £15 to Hazards to get the outstanding quarterly Hazards Bulletin.

Hazards provides the information and resources to make the union's health and safety job easier. Using a global network of union safety correspondents, Hazards makes sure you have the best information available anywhere.

Details at <http://www.hazards.org/>.



UCU City of Bristol Branch's activities for Ban Bullying at Work Day 2007

Richard Musgrove UCU Branch Chair has sent in the following report of excellent local work:

October 2007: Branch newsletter (paper format) distributed to all teaching staff with article on Ban Bullying at Work Day. Electronic pdf format attached.

Week prior to Ban Bullying at Work Day:

Distributed BB@WD badges to all branch committee;
Display of (Andrea Adams) posters on all College sites;
Briefing on bullying and questionnaire prepared (both attached, Word docs) and distributed to H&S Reps, together with BB@WD stickers;
Contributed to UCU National Press Release.

Nov 7, BB@WD:

E-mail to all members announcing BB@WD, attaching questionnaire, briefing and advice from UCU national website;
UCU National Press Release distributed to branch committee.

Subsequent to BB@WD:

Analysis of returned questionnaires, which has (in a couple of cases) led to individual casework;
Preparation of Checklist for Reps (attached Word document) which has now been distributed to all branch committee (including H&S reps) together with Branch Casework form.

General points:

BB@WD has raised the awareness of bullying issues within the Branch;
Branch reps now better prepared to deal with casework;
Members now more confident to raise issue with their reps;
An additional small number of members' cases raised with reps.
Andrea Adams resources very good, especially the excellently designed posters, but generally too expensive;

UCU Select Committee and other consultation responses

UCU has contributed to the consultation on Work & Health, conducted by Dame Carol Black, the occupational health supremo. We have also sent a memorandum of evidence supporting the TUC's contribution, to the DWP Select Committee looking the work of the Health & Safety Commission and Executive. The TUC evidence to the Black Review can be accessed at

www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/tuc-14004-f0.cfm

and to the DWP Select Committee at

www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/tuc-14176-f0.cfm

UCU's own evidence is on the UCU web site at www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3044

Free workshop on whiteboards and projectors

We have received details of a free workshop organised by UK Displays & Lighting KTN which is a government funded not for profit company and one of the Technology Strategy Boards (previously DTI) Knowledge Transfer Networks.

The workshop is in Reading on 7 February. To register email: info@ukdisplaylighting.net More information on this topic at:

www.ukdisplay.net/images/stories/UKDL_newsletter/ukdl%20newsletter%20-202.pdf

Corporate killing – do the courts take it seriously?

A West Yorkshire company director has been prosecuted after a worker was crushed to death.

Norman Barry Ellis, director of Q Homes (Yorkshire) Ltd, pleaded guilty in Dewsbury Magistrates' Court of failing to ensure the health and safety of company employee Andrew Michael Bridges who was fatally crushed beneath a falling concrete roof. Bridges and Ellis were working to demolish a 2.5 tonne reinforced concrete roof at the back of an old electrical store in Batley. When embarking on any project which involves structural alteration and demolition work, it is a basic requirement for work to be carefully planned and risks assessed

HSE Inspector Sarah Hague, who investigated the case, said: 'This was a tragic incident, made worse by the fact that it could have easily been prevented had the work been properly planned.'

The court was of the opinion that, in this case, a fine would not have reflected the seriousness of the offence. The way in which the work was carried out, which resulted in Mr Bridges' death, represented very serious failings on the part of Mr Ellis who had planned and was also carrying out the work. So what penalty did they impose?

The court ordered Mr Ellis to **undertake 100 hours community service and to pay £6000 costs.**

No comment! For details go to:

www.building.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=284&storycode=3103120&c=1.

Cellphone research –again!

Using a cellphone for more than 10 years increases the risk of brain cancer, according to recently published research. The authors say that the current international standards to protect users from radiation emissions need updating as a result.



Long-term users were found to be twice as likely to develop a malignant tumour on the side of the brain where the handset was habitually held. Given that an increasing number of workers are required to use cell-phones as part of their work, this is a potentially worrying bit of research.

The Health Protection Agency has, predictably, adopted a fairly cautious response to this report, saying it may be indicative of an increased risk, but adds that such analyses cannot be conclusive. We'll be keeping a close eye on this as more research is done.

Lennart Hardell & others: 'Long-term use of cellular phones and brain tumours'. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*; Vol. 64, 2007. Pages 626 – 632

Training

UCU National Training - Health and Safety Stage 1 course

The UCU Health and Safety Stage 1 course consists of 5 two day modules. All new UCU health and safety reps should undertake training as soon as possible after they take up post. Existing health and safety reps and potential reps are encouraged to attend the Stage 1 course to develop and maintain the skills needed to perform the job of a health and safety rep.

It is vitally important that your branch/LA be up to date with changes in health and safety law and that each branch/LA has a trained health and safety rep on site. A trained health and safety rep with an understanding of their role and their rights will be able to play a vital role in representing members effectively. The following national course are being **held in London**.

February 14 & 15	Module 1 - Health and Safety Induction
March 17 & 18	Module 2 - Understanding Health and Safety Law
April 8 & 9	Module 3 - Using your rights as a Health and Safety Rep
May 13 & 14	Module 4 - Dealing with Accidents and Tackling Hazards
June 19 & 20	Module 5 - Trade Union Action to Tackle Stress

For further information please visit the UCU website at www.ucu.org.uk/training then click on national or contact Linda Ball at lball@ucu.org.uk

Scotland training

One day workshop on stress and improving UCU's workplace organisation is Wednesday 7 May 2008. For further details please contact Lesley Little at little@ucu.org.uk

Climate change conference 9 February

1) Trade Union Climate Change Conference Saturday 9 February, at the University of London Union, Malet Street, London.

Climate change has become a major, mainstream issue for trade unions. UCU is supporting the national Trade Union Climate Change conference in London and branches and LAs are strongly encouraged to draw members' attention to it and are invited to send delegates to the conference. Individual members can also attend. UCU president Linda Newman will be among speakers. Conference details: www.campaigncc.org/CCAC%20Trade%20Union%20Conference.pdf CCC details are available at www.campaigncc.org/.

Environmental newsletter – sign up now!

The January UCU Environmental newsletter is out. If you don't already get this and would like to please email Sharon Russell at srussell@ucu.org.uk.

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 three 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

Don't forget to visit the UCU health and safety web page at:
www.ucu.org.uk/healthandsafety.