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A UCU fringe on stress and a UCU booklet on bullying

A major survey of UCU members late last year confirmed that bullying and stress are at the top of members concerns at work.

Tackling occupational stress and bullying at work are key strands of UCU's health and safety remit.

Over the last month UCU has been undertaking a large-scale survey of members' experience of stress in further and higher education. At Congress, there will be a Friday fringe meeting on 'Stress and bullying as health and safety issues in further and higher education'.

Congress last year called for a major national investigation into the nature, causes and extent of stress in HE and FE, including its effects on those who teach, and on the overall learning environment in these sectors. The results of the survey are to include recommendations for use in local and national negotiations.

In April, a total of 60,000 UCU members in all sectors were emailed with a link to an **online questionnaire on occupational stress**, largely based on one developed by the Health and Safety Executive.

At the time of writing more than 10,000 members had responded, and the aim is to have a 1:5 usable response rate, which would be the equivalent of 1:10 members of UCU taking part. A key feature of this survey will be compilation of data on experience of stress at particular institutions, where there are sufficient responses.

Congress last year also called for a major training campaign for UCU members and representatives to fight bullying and harassment; a national conference on bullying and harassment; the development of guidelines; and collective anti-bullying action through surveys, negotiation and possibly industrial action.

To help take this work forward, UCU guidelines for branches, ***Stopping bullying and harassment at work***, will be launched at Congress next week and copies sent to all health and safety reps and to all branches and LAs. It will also be on our web page. Bullying is a key cause of stress.

Later in the year UCU will be conducting a further survey of members' experience of bullying, and will be organising a conference on the same subject in November.

Bristol acid injury sparks critical press comment...

Some UCU health and safety reps will have already seen the full page coverage given to the HSE case against City of Bristol College following the injuries to Gary Baird. If not, read TES FE Focus of April 11 www.tes.co.uk/search/story/?story_id=2605907.

A follow up letter 'No apologies - we should all be concerned about staff safety' was published 18 April from an anonymous 'senior FE college manager' urging employers to take health and safety more seriously and saying Gary 'has helped bring the importance of good health and safety practice into the spotlight.' Indeed.

...and new UCU checklists

The City of Bristol College case arose because the college did not have effective procedures for the purchase and use of hazardous materials. An individual manager appeared to have been able to purchase the acid that injured Gary Baird without any reference to a hazardous materials procedure or checks. Neither, it seems, did they have the necessary knowledge and expertise to deal with hazardous substances once purchased.

Hazardous materials are regulated by the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH). Information about the hazards of any substance supplied is covered by the Chemicals (Hazard Information and Packaging for Supply) Regulations 2002 (CHIP)

We know that there will be many hazardous materials in use in colleges and universities that have been purchased and are being used outside the control procedures COSHH sets out. Many of these will be simple materials like Tippex thinners (flammable), adhesives (aromatic solvents) and cleaning materials. Others, like the acid that exploded at City of Bristol may be much more dangerous.

Even relatively innocuous materials can pose serious hazards. Inappropriate mixing of acid-based toilet cleaner and bleach releases poisonous chlorine gas. Many cleaning materials can burn and irritate skin and damage eyes. Other materials and substances may be in use, but their potentially hazardous properties are either not known or not understood. Latex gloves can trigger an allergic reaction and worse; anaphylactic shock can cause of death within minutes. Dust released when machining hardwoods is a known nasal carcinogen and also causes asthma – machining MDF will release potentially hazardous dust and formaldehyde. We know of one case where etching acid for printing was dispensed to students in a soft drink can.

We have produced a simple checklist for safety reps to use to try to identify where potentially hazardous materials might be in use or being stored in a desk or filing cabinet drawer, and trying to identify where further action might be necessary.

We will be preparing a series of fact-sheets on various aspects of COSHH over the next few weeks. We will attach these to future copies of this newsletter. You can get more general information about the legal duties on your employer in respect of substances from www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/index.htm.

General guide to the COSHH Regulations at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg136.pdf.

Respiratory sensitisers leaflet at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg95.pdf.

More information about the Chemicals (Hazard Information and Packaging for Supply) Regulations 2002 (CHIP) at www.hse.gov.uk/chip/information.htm#free
CHIP requires the manufacturer or supplier to label containers and issue comprehensive datasheets when supplying a substance.

New UCU factsheet: Accreditation of UCU safety reps and confirmation of UCU recognition for health and safety consultation

A new UCU factsheet contains a suggested letter to be sent to the employer when UCU accredits a safety representative(s) and to confirm that UCU is the representative organisation for consultation on behalf of all academic staff in the institution for the purposes of consultation on health, safety and welfare matters.

The Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations booklet which summarises these rights is available for download at www.tuc.org.uk/extras/brownbook.pdf if you haven't already got one.

TUC safety reps survey – please respond

The 2008 safety reps survey has just been published. This survey provides invaluable information about the role that safety representatives play and the hazards they deal with.

All unions have been asked to publicise it as widely as possible amongst safety representatives.

UCU health and safety reps are strongly encouraged to complete the survey which can be completed on-line at www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/tuc-14486-f0.cfm.

Work makes you sick? Organising makes you better!

Hazards Conference 18-20 July 2008



The 19th Hazards Conference, the UK's biggest event educational and campaigning event for trade union safety representatives and activists. As always, a mixture of activities are on offer, including plenary sessions with speakers, meetings and debates, and a programme of workshops on a wide range of topical issues and plenty of opportunity to network and socialise. **Not to be missed!**

UCU is sponsoring a four-person delegation this year. A number of UCU members are already involved as speakers and workshop facilitators. If you want to be considered as one of the UCU delegation, first make sure you have the support of your branch or local association, and then ask the secretary to send an email to Sharon Russell confirming your interest, and that you have local support as a delegate. We will pick four from the hat. Contact Sharon at srussell@ucu.org.uk.

Local associations and branches can sponsor delegates independently of the union delegation. The booking form is available at www.hazardscampaign.org.uk/hazardsconference/haz2008bookingform.pdf.

For more information, contact John Bamford at UCU Health & Safety Advice on 0161 636 7558, or john@gmhazards.org.uk.

Hazards 2008 and the UCU dispute at Keele

The Hazards Campaign was originally invited by UCU activists in the Centre for Industrial Relations, School of Economic and Management Studies (SEMS) which teaches courses for trade unionists, to hold the 2008 Hazards Conference at Keele. After it was agreed and contracts signed, the management then behaved appallingly by proposing staff cuts and redundancies to this Centre in an attack on the UCU and its local organisation.

Hazards Campaign have checked with the local association have assured them that they wanted the conference to go ahead as an action of Labour movement solidarity with them. The Hazards Campaign has carried on with the conference organization, while at the same time supporting Keele UCU, circulating information and writing letters as requested by the UCU/SEMS Action Committee.

LA president Mike Ironside has confirmed the conference should go ahead as planned. As a result of the University's appalling decision to close the school, there will be a mass demonstration by all Hazards 2008 delegates on the Saturday, with a special banner supporting Keele colleagues and their work, and the Hazards Campaign will seek local and national press coverage.

www.hazardscampaign.org.uk/hazardsconference/haz2008bookingform.pdf

New UCU safety reps pack on its way

The first ever UCU safety reps pack is almost ready and will be sent to all UCU safety reps in the next few weeks. More details just before UCU congress at the end of May in Manchester at which there will be a health and safety fringe meeting.

Work and Pensions Committee confirms HSE staffing pressures

The Work and Pensions Committee's Third Report of Session 2007-08 entitled *The role of the Health and Safety Commission and the Health and Safety Executive in regulating workplace health and safety*, was published on Monday 21 April 2008.

The report criticised both the HSE and DWP for a lack of clarity about a £12 millions shortfall in HSE's 2007-08 funding, and said it had not been possible to get a true picture of HSE's

financial situation in the current three-year spending round to 2010-11. The committee's overall view was that the HSE is inadequately funded, and that this lack of funding is undermining its ability to carry out its work effectively.

The government's spending review has given the HSE a 3.6 per cent nominal increase over the next three years. Government ministers have said that this is a good result, given that the DWP as a whole has to cut real-terms spending by 5% in each of the next three years. The majority of HSE funding is provided by the DWP although it also charges for advice and some services. It was unclear how much income would be generated by these charges.

The number of inspectors employed by the HSE has fallen by more than 15 per cent since 2003. The report highlights the need for more front line inspectors and more frequent workplace visits, although because of the lack of clarity regarding finances, it isn't clear if the HSE can do this within its current budget.

Evidence presented to the committee said that employers were likely to receive an HSE inspection every 14.5 years compared with an average of every seven years in 2001-02. Research has also suggested a link between the fall in the inspection rate and increases in fatal injuries. HSE's chief executive Geoffrey Podger had told the committee that this fall in the number of inspectors and the fall in prosecutions was due to previous budget constraints.

Where employers are in breach of their statutory duties, the committee calls for the HSE to get tougher and initiate more prosecutions. Despite a recent rise, prosecutions had fallen almost continuously since 1999-2000.

The committee also expressed concern that the current levels of fines for health and safety offences are too low and do not provide a sufficient deterrent. They called for the courts to impose larger fines.

The full report is at www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmworpen.htm.

UCU's evidence to the committee is at:
www.ucu.org.uk/media/docs/a/e/workpens_evid.doc.

The new Health and Safety Executive

The long-awaited merger between the Health and Safety Commission and the HSE finally took place on 1 April. The key change will be that the old Health & Safety Commissioners have become non-executive directors of the HSE; and the old HSE board has become the HSE Senior Management Team. Read the HSE's own account at www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/index.htm.

Regulators' compliance code

Since 6 April, the HSE as a regulatory authority has had to comply with the **Regulators' Compliance Code**. 'This is a statutory code of practice intended to encourage regulators to achieve their objectives in a way that minimises the burdens on business. The purpose of the code is to embed a risk-based, proportionate, targeted and flexible approach to regulatory inspection and enforcement among the regulators to which it applies. This approach will ensure that regulators are efficient and effective in their work, without imposing unnecessary burdens on those they regulate.' – they say!

The government says this is part of 'Better Regulation': cynics might say that it's a back door to less regulation, which is what the select committee report says has been happening. Make up your own mind - read what the HSE says at www.hse.gov.uk/regulation/compliancecode/index.htm.

National Work-Stress Network's annual conference

The UK National Work-Stress Network's annual conference is to be held at NASUWT Hills court Centre, near Birmingham on November 15 & 16 2008.

The Network does an excellent job and this conference will be of particular interest to UCU safety representatives in the Midlands.

The information can also be found at our own website at www.workstress.net/downloads/Conference%202008%20booking.doc.

The Network is part of the UK Hazards Campaign and has a very successful information, campaigning and advice service at www.workstress.net.

National Training - Health and Safety Stage 1 course

The UCU Health and Safety Stage 1 programme consists of five 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 courses are being **held in London**

Module 1	Health & Safety Induction	7 & 8 Oct 2008
Module 2	Understanding H&S Law	5 & 6 Nov 2008
Module 3	Using your rights as H&S rep	9 & 10 Dec 2008
Module 4	Dealing with Accidents/Hazards	11 & 12 Feb 2009
Module 5	TU Action to Tackle Stress	17 & 18 Mar 2009
Module 1	Health & Safety Induction	6 & 7 April 2009
Module 2	Understanding H&S Law	12 & 13 May 2009
Module 3	Using your rights as H&S rep	10 & 11 June 2009

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

The following courses are being **held in Birmingham**

Module 1	Health & Safety Induction	25 & 26 Sept 2008
Module 2	Understanding H&S Law	6 & 7 Nov 2008
Module 3	Using your rights as H&S rep	20 & 21 May 2009
Module 4	Dealing with Accidents & Hazards	Dates TBA
Module 5	TU Action to Tackle Stress	Dates TBA

For further information regarding courses in Birmingham, please either visit the UCU website at www.ucu.org.uk/training or contact Lesley Foley at lfoley@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.