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Piper Alpha Memorial

This Sunday, 6th July is the 20th anniversary of the Piper Alpha gas platform explosion, in which 167 workers died.

Despite an enquiry conducted by Lord Cullen which found serious failings in the management of safety on the rig, and made 106 recommendations for improvement, the Scottish Lord Advocate decided that Occidental Oil, the platforms owners and operators would not be prosecuted as it would not be 'in the public interest'. No reasons why this was the case was ever given.

A memorial to those who died is in Hazelhead Park, Aberdeen. Visit the following link: <http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/10032>

Hot-desking gets cool reception

UCU members in FE are facing a growing number of proposals to introduce "hot-desking". These proposals eliminate individual or small shared staff rooms and replace them with larger shared rooms in which all or some of the following are introduced:

- No permanent base of any kind
- No desk top PCs but laptops provided to staff or desk top PCs but no regular work station
- No individual phone line but a voice mail system
- No space at work to quietly prepare lessons, mark, meet colleagues or students
- Limited shelving without any security
- Shopping trolleys to carry you work and belongings around with you

We have not yet come across a single one of these proposals which has been properly risk assessed, had an equality impact assessment never mind an 'education impact assessment'. All are driven by cost cutting, often linked to a 'space utilisation strategy' quite inappropriate to education but driven by the sector funding bodies.

We have now produced a major briefing on these issues which can be downloaded at www.ucu.org.uk/hsfacts#issues.

We would like to hear of further examples. If your institution has been affected by such schemes please email Linda Ball at lball@ucu.org.uk with details.

Stopping bullying and harassment at work – *the booklet and the web page*

A toolkit is available for UCU branch and LA officers - including health and safety representatives and equality officers.

Bullying and harassment are a major hazard for UCU members. If you are affected by bullying or want to do something about it you may find the following materials useful:

Our new UCU handbook **Stop bullying and harassment at work** - a handbook for UCU reps and members on essential steps to take to prevent bullying and harassment was launched at UCU Congress.

One copy of the handbook has just been sent to all branches and LA and to all health and safety reps in the new safety reps pack. If you want more copies, the entire booklet can be downloaded at www.ucu.org.uk/eqres along with a whole web page of other information including a model survey, a poster, a model letter and leaflets.

We're keen to hear of groups of members who have used the booklet and to have feedback so please let us know.

**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 but you'll need to phone John Bamford to make your booking.

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

Alcohol dependency

We have had a couple of inquiries about how to respond to employers seeking to sack staff with alcohol problems. In accordance with useful guidance from ACAS we believe that the basic principle underlying effective policies is that people with alcohol dependency problems should be treated as having an illness, and the procedures for dealing with this designed appropriately.

We have started a new series of shorter UCU Health and Safety Factsheets (10 point briefings) and the first one is on this topic. Please click on the following link for details: www.ucu.org.uk/hsfacts#issues.

Time off for safety reps training

Employers have a duty imposed on them by Regulation 4(2) of the Safety Representatives & Safety Committees Regulations to permit safety representatives to take "such time off with pay during working hours as shall be necessary" for them to undergo training related to their functions. Despite this unambiguous requirement we continue to. Get inquiries about how to respond to employers who ignore it.

The second of our new 10 point Health and Safety Factsheets summarises some of the issues and it is available at www.ucu.org.uk/hsfacts.

Working on external employers' premises

We have had inquiries about UCU members working on employers' premises notably in respect of FE assessors but also for members who supervise work placements. We are preparing guidance and would be interested in hearing of any examples of concerns branches and LAs have had. Information to Linda ball at lball@ucu.org.uk

Occupational health

A number of UCU reps have asked for electronic copies of the new TUC occupational health workbook written by UCU member and rep Graham Peterson. Graham's book is highly recommended and is now available at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/extrasUL/Education/OccupationalHealth.pdf

Environmental news



A growing number of UCU health and safety reps have joined the mailing list for UCU's Environmental News which gives details of the growing activity in both FE and HE on environmental issues.

If you'd like to join please contact Sharon Russell at srussell@ucu.org.uk

Heard it on the helpline

As well as the detailed work with reps in individual employers, training, producing written guidance and factsheets for reps John Bamford our health and safety adviser deals with a growing number of individual inquiries from reps and UCU officials as this table shows. We thought you might like to see what these are about.

Summary of enquiries to H&S for two years May – April 2006/07 & 2007/08

Numbers of email enquiries:

Year	Further Ed; AE & Community	Universities	Total from Reps.	Officials	Total
May 2006 – April 2007	75	46	121	21	142
May 2007 – April 2008	134	83	217	37	254

The issues raised this year have included:

- A large number of enquiries relating to trade union organisation:
- Safety reps functions
- Employers failing in one or more of their statutory duties to assist safety reps
- Time-off
- Conducting workplace inspections
- Training and information
- Safety committees – structure, membership, frequency of meetings
- Contact with the HSE Inspector
- Employer's failure to consult on wide range of issues
- Management proposals – draft policies, agreements, procedures; reorganisation
- Dealing with specific incidents
- Risk assessments – failure to undertake; instructing staff to do them without training or information; inadequate standards; failure to give reps information
- Stress – in all its aspects, esp. inclusion in risk assessment process and dealing with factors causing stress; bullying; aggressive management; advice and support to victims
- First aid provision
- Building changes, refurbishments and construction issues on site
- Asbestos and other hazardous substances

- Vehicle & other craft workshops – variety of questions
- Temperature & ventilation
- Fire safety – esp. training for staff; evacuation of mobility-impaired people
- Office space – open plan – stress – noise
- Display screen equipment – workstation standards
- Classroom/workshop numbers

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/index.cfm?articleid=2132

National Training - Health and Safety Stage 1 course

The UCU Health and Safety Stage 1 programme 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 skills needed to perform the job of a health & 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 lball@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

We are trying to develop our health and safety web page to make our support even more effective. If you have any ideas for the web page please send to John Bamford at jbamford@ucu.org.uk or Roger Kline at rkline@ucu.org.uk