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UCEA guidance to VCs on health and safety

UCEA, the higher education employers' body have issued a guide to VCs and governing bodies on their health and safety responsibilities. This comes from the Guidance recently issued by the Institute of Directors when the Corporate Manslaughter Act was passed earlier this year

The guide aims "to set the agenda for effective leadership of Health and Safety in Higher Education; in particular it outlines the responsibilities placed upon senior management, such as Vice-Chancellors, Principals, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Pro Vice-Chancellors and Registrars and the governing bodies such as University Council, Court, Board of Governors or Senate." It can be found at: www.ucea.ac.uk/en/Publications/index.cfm?1=1&obj_id=FF2FBBC7-52E8-4F89-BB18A4B437F9C63E

UCU safety reps in HE should look at this and check what their own institutions ought to be doing according to UCEA and the HSE.

In particular you might wish to start by checking:

- Whether your health and safety policy follows the principles set out in the Leeds University agreement reached with UCU and other unions.
- Whether your health and safety reps have adequate time off to undertake their duties and that these are not constrained by the words "reasonable" or by any confusion with the time off agreement for ordinary local representatives

Hazards conference 2008



A number of UCU delegates attended the Hazards 2008 conference along with over 500 other trade union delegates. A whole range of fascinating and sometimes moving presentations and workshops were held. One was on the risk of asbestos in schools and colleges. The facts are startling:

- Asbestos is the single greatest cause of work-related death in the UK
- There were 4000 asbestos-related deaths in the UK in 2005
- 79 teachers who died from mesothelioma between 1991 and 2000
- 13,000 schools in Britain may have been built using asbestos materials
- It can take up to 40+ years after exposure to fibres for an asbestos-related disease to manifest itself

UCU has issued detailed guidance on asbestos which can be found at:

www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm

Coincidentally, you may wish to read a detailed expose of the role of the asbestos industry in covering up the risks of asbestos which was in the New Statesman recently at

www.newstatesman.com/health/2008/08/asbestos-victims-company

Don't forget, we strongly encourage UCU branches and LAs to subscribe to the excellent Hazards magazine – more details on the Hazards web site www.hazards.org

Health & Safety Executive and Work-related Stress

We continue to get inquiries about the HSE stress management project in FE and HE so we have produced a short history of this project and a checklist which health and safety reps may find helpful. Go to www.ucu.org.uk/media/docs/c/e/stressmanagement.doc

The HSE has been running projects of one kind or another for at least 4 years now, so there are lots of others. We would now like to develop some kind of national UCU group looking at what's happening and sharing news, advice, and information regularly, so the union has a much more proactive approach.

If you want to/need to discuss anything related to this project, contact John Bamford, UCU Health & Safety Adviser at jbamford@ucu.org.uk or on **0161 636 7558**. It would be good to hear of some positive developments.

WorkStress Network Conference

UCU is supporting the excellent work of the UK WorkStress Network whose conference on **Eradicating Workplace Bullying, including Cyber-Bullying - The Case for Dignity at Work** takes place on Saturday 15 November and the morning of Sunday 16 November. See the advert at the end of this newsletter. Places and a full application form are available direct from www.workstress.net where you can also find other helpful materials. We are

sponsoring four places. If you would like one of those please contact Linda Ball at lball@ucu.org.uk



Laptops factsheet

A new UCU factsheet on the health and safety issues that the growing use of laptops raise is now available at www.ucu.org.uk/media/docs/a/f/laptops.doc

Occupational health

UCU is taking part in a working group with the Equality Challenge Unit and others looking at equality aspects of occupational health schemes. The intention is to share good practice and look at how best OH schemes can address a range of equality issues that can be raised. If you think you have a good occupational health agreement please send us a copy

Cyberbullying

We are producing guidance on cyberbullying. If you have a good local agreement on this please let Sharon Russell know at srussell@ucu.org.uk

Ban Bullying at Work Day 2008 – 7 November 2008

This year's Ban Bullying at Work Day is promoted by the Andrea Adams Trust and with support by many trade unions, including UCU. You can see more about the campaign at www.banbullyingatwork.com and see what resources the campaign is producing and see who is sponsoring the day. We will give more details of what UCU is recommending Branches and LAs do in our next newsletter.



Getting mobility impaired staff and students out in emergencies

The Department for Communities guidance on fire precautions for educational premises has a section on means of escape for mobility impaired people. Follow the link below, and go to Page 66 of the document for the recommended guidance. Conventional wisdom is that lifts should not be used in case of fire; but they can be if a risk assessment deems them to be safe for this purpose. Fire protected lift wells can easily be constructed in new buildings. Your employer should consult with you before going ahead with any new building plans and this should be an issue you raise (or they think about). Employers should consult on such matters – it's a duty under SRSC Regulation 4A(1)(a). It is also possible to make modifications to enable existing lifts to be used. To view the whole document visit www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/144812.pdf

Radiation issues at Manchester University

The UCU LA at Manchester University is pressing the university to take swift action to address concerns raised by staff about the potential health impact of radiation in the world famous Rutherford Laboratory.

Some of the issues were raised in a lengthy article in The Guardian two weeks ago. The article can be downloaded from:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/sep/09/universityofmanchester.radiactivity>

Aberdeen conference on cancer at work

John Murphy, UCU safety rep and NEC member working at Blackburn College attended a major international trade union and academic conference on occupational cancer in the summer. John has written an extensive report and extracts include:

"140 delegates from 14 countries attended this impressive conference, one of whose organisers was UCU member Prof Andy Watterson from Stirling University.

"Delegates heard how one of the side effects of the curbing of smoking is that it will help to reveal the proportion of cancers caused by occupational and environmental exposure – likely to expose a concealment cover up on the scale of the tobacco and tobacco cover-ups. For nearly 30 years the UK Government and the HSE have been in a state of denial when it comes to work based cancers. They have claimed that only 1 in 20 cancers are caused by workplace or environmental exposure and have refused to conduct rigorous research or take serious action to reduce them.

"The conference heard how these figures compare with the estimates of the International agency for research on cancer which lists 417 known or suspected carcinogens and estimates that between 8% and 16% of cancers are caused occupationally (12-24,000 deaths a year in the UK). Moreover the work-related proportion is likely to grow now that shift working has been listed as a probably carcinogen by IARC. The conference discussed a comprehensive strategy to prevent cancer including:

- Systematic identification and analysis of cancer occurrence patterns
- registration of exposure and systematic epidemiological research into causation
- adoption of the precautionary principle with regards to occupational cancer

"More rigorous control and timed phasing out of known or suspected carcinogens and other toxic substances

"Thorough research into the health and safety implications of new "nano" and other technologies"

UCU hopes to be devoting more space to cancer issues in a future newsletter.

HSE reneges on promise of free access to publications

18 months ago the HSE made a promise to put their priced publication on-line, so as to make these essential sources of information easily available to safety reps. This reversal is a clear betrayal of that promise. They seem to have forgotten that employers, too, would have benefited – but for once, the HSE and Government appear to have missed an opportunity to provide this particular subsidy to employers.

UCU has already made a formal complaint to the TUC, and through the TUC will raise this with the employee representatives on the HSE board as a matter of urgency.

Safety Representatives Regulations

A revised version of the **Guidance to the Safety Reps and Safety Committees Regulations** will be published shortly by the HSE. We will circulate more information when it happens. The TUC will continue to produce its on-line version of the Brown Book.

It will be important for all UCU safety reps to make sure they get a copy of the revised guidance, and we will circulate the link to the TUC version when it is in place.

The 'Safety Reps Charter'

We have had a number of enquiries from branches and LA's about this document recently, particularly where local management has relied on it for authority in discussions with UCU Branches and LAs. The 'Charter' was originally produced by the HSE's Advisory Committee for Further & Higher Education (HIFEAC) which was disbanded some 4 years ago. It was never approved by the TUC (who nominates employee-side representatives to HSE advisory committees), and was a feeble attempt to persuade employers of their duty to cooperate with trade union safety reps, and outline some safety reps "rights".

Generally, it encourages minimum compliance rather than promoting best practice and observation of statutory duties; but most importantly it introduces the qualification "reasonable" into what are absolute duties imposed on employers. In particular, it says that safety reps are entitled to reasonable time off to perform their functions, and reasonable facilities from the employer. The Regulations contain no such qualification – the duties imposed on the employer are to permit safety reps to take such time-off "as shall be necessary" to undertake their functions or undergo training; and to provide safety reps with "such facilities and assistance as they reasonably require" – "reasonably" here qualifies the reps needs, **NOT** what the employer must provide.

UCU, with the support of the TUC and other unions in the sector, intends to remove this 'Charter' from the HSE website. Its demise is an agenda item for the next meetings of HESH and FESH the HE and FE sector health and safety bodies.

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

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

Eradicating Workplace Bullying including, Cyber-Bullying -

The Case for Dignity at Work

Hillscourt Conference Centre, Rednal Near Birmingham

Courtesy of NASUWT

Saturday 15 November 9.30 - 5.00

closing at

12.30pm Sunday 16 November 2008

This conference is aimed at Trades Union Shop Stewards, Health & Safety Representatives, Health & Safety and Human Resources Specialists, Stress Management Consultants.

The Conference will provide an opportunity to hear from and discuss issues with speakers, attend a range of workshops and participate in an additional session of Masterclass discussions on the handling of stress at work and related cases.

Programme outline

Saturday morning – panel of speakers with Q&A session to follow

- Prof. Charlotte Rayner, Portsmouth University - researcher for 'Working Together to Tackle Bullying and Harassment at Work' project
- Goldsmiths University HSE/CIPD Managing Stress Research project (TBC)
- An Employer's success in implementing Policy (TBC)
- Speaker from UNITE (AMICUS) - the trades union response (TBC)
- A speaker from one of the Bullying advice organisations (TBC)

Saturday afternoon

Workshops followed by discussion forum – details to be confirmed in due course

- Bullying in the Workplace Policy
- Dignity at Work Campaign
- Management Style, Bullying/Relationships and HSE Stress Management Standards

Sunday morning

Masterclass/discussion/interactive sessions aimed at guiding Representatives in organising members, gathering evidence of Bullying, dealing with casework, looking at grievances with a follow-up closing plenary session and lunch – details to be finalised. With an overnight stay in pleasant, comfortable rural surroundings to the SW of Birmingham, it is hoped that this weekend event will provide a wide range of networking opportunities for delegates.