



## Unite H&S Update – June 2015

Recent Unite publications include:

- Updated Working Alone guidance
- Diesel exhaust fumes
- Asbestos
- Looking for Trouble poster and leaflet
- Welding posters (leaflet currently in production)
- Provision of toilets guidance (in production)

See Unite H&S website for more details.

<http://www.unitetheunion.org/unite-at-work/informationresources/healthsafetyresources/>

We send out a regular email bulletin to about 4,000 safety reps. The latest edition includes:

### **Safety Representatives and Safety Committees - the Brown Book - New 3rd Edition issued March 2015**

A new edition of the Brown Book was published in March 2015 by the TUC. As in previous TUC editions the book includes the official Approved Code of Practice and Guidance to the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 (as amended) reproduced exactly from the HSE publication L146 Consulting workers on health and safety.

The 2015 edition includes several important changes which are:

- A new introduction from the TUC which emphasises the vital role that trade unions play in ensuring that people go home safe and well from their work. It emphasises the Section 2(6) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 which obliges employers to make and maintain arrangements that will enable employer and employees “to co-operate effectively in promoting and developing measures to ensure the health and safety at work of the employees”. The introduction also includes a table which is a summary of what good and bad worker involvement looks like.
- An amendment to Regulation 6 (see pages 24-25 for Reg.6 and supporting guidance) which now allows inspections by safety representatives following over-three-day injuries, in addition to notifiable accidents, dangerous occurrences and diseases. From 6 April 2012 the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) changed. The over-three-day reporting requirement for people at work changed to more than seven days. This means that injuries that lead to a worker being incapacitated for more than seven days must be reported. A record must still be kept if a worker is incapacitated for more than 3 days, and this can be done by keep a record of

the accident in the accident book. This was carried over to the new RIDDOR 2013. For more information about RIDDOR 2013, go to [www.hse.gov.uk/riddor](http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor)

- Para 38-40 (pages 16-17) now headed Consulting health and safety representatives on risk assessments has been updated to reflect the withdrawal of the Approved Code of Practice to the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations and incorporates the text on consultation on risk assessment into the guidance supporting Reg 4A.
- Minor amendments to clarify the text throughout and to update references to HSE publications.

### **Appendices 1-3**

The Brown Book continues to include useful appendices which list other health and safety regulations which have:

1. Requirements for information for employees
2. Requirements for instruction and training for employees
3. Requirements to consult health and safety representatives and/or employees

The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007 are referred to in these appendices. These have been replaced since 6 April 2015 by the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015. These differ in several important respects from the 2007 regulations.

The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006, which are also referred to, have been replaced by the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012.

The new Brown Book is posted on the Unite website here:

<http://www.unitetheunion.org/uploaded/documents/0000041-TUC%2025788BrownBook11-3517.pdf>

### **HSE targeting health issues in the workplace**

During 2015-16 HSE inspectors in the manufacturing industries have been told to focus on things that can cause asthma and cancer. The focus will be on:

- Flour dust and flour enzymes (asthma)
- Plastic fume (asthma and cancer)
- Welding fume (asthma and cancer)
- Wood dust (asthma and cancer)
- Metal manufacture (asthma and cancer)
- Welding, painting and coating in shipbuilding and boat building (asthma and cancer)
- Surface engineering (cancer)

Inspectors should be looking at control management, risk assessment, extraction and respiratory protection, training, maintenance of controls, health surveillance and air monitoring.

When considering enforcement relating to asthmagens and carcinogens Inspectors should consider:

### **Risk**

It is credible that exposures to asthmagens and carcinogens could result in a health effect that could;

- cause a permanent, progressive or irreversible condition, or
- cause permanent disabling, leading to a lifelong restriction of work capability or a major reduction in quality of life.

### **Immediacy of risk**

Failure to adopt appropriate control measures can result in exposures to asthmagens and carcinogens with the possible risk of a serious health effect

### **Benchmark standards**

The benchmark set is a nil or negligible risk of a serious health effect. This benchmark can be achieved by applying the COSHH principles of good control practice and using a variety of engineering control measures, provision and use of suitable RPE, plus the provision of suitable instruction, information, training and health surveillance

### **Risk gap**

Non-compliance with the benchmark standards will produce at least a 'substantial risk gap' with standards established or defined.

Full details of the HSE Workplan can be found at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/foi/internalops/og/og-00067.htm>

### **Welding fume hazards**

There is currently a huge amount of work being done to highlight the considerable risks of been exposed to welding fume. This work involves Unite, the HSE, the welding industry and a number of major employers.

From the Unite database we have identified 2,642 members who have listed themselves as welders through their job code. Unfortunately most members do not fill in this field. Of those 2642, 1199 have provided email addresses.

We have a section of the Unite website that covers welding (<http://www.unitetheunion.org/unite-at-work/informationresources/healthsafetyresources/occupationaldiseasesillhealth/>). Links include the HSE, the main industry welding site, and Unite information on welding.

During 2015-16, HSE Inspectors in manufacturing are targeting welding fume (for full details see <http://www.hse.gov.uk/foi/internalops/og/og-00067-appendix-4.pdf>)

### **Unite - international action on asbestos**

Chrysotile: lobby and demonstration at the 7th Meeting of the Rotterdam Convention, United Nations, Geneva in May 2015

Unite launched a new asbestos campaign in January 2015. The campaign pack aims to raise awareness of asbestos for members and safety representatives and to provide information for

members about asbestos related diseases and the Unite asbestos register for members who believe they have been exposed to asbestos at work.

Though the UK is one of 50 countries in the world which has banned the use of asbestos (since 1999) asbestos is not gone. It is still present in many workplaces including schools, hospitals, public buildings, factories and railway premises and must be managed safely under health and safety legislation. And exposure to all forms of asbestos can cause cancer.

Unite, together with Australian manufacturing and construction unions the AMWU and CFMEU joined forces with victims' groups and the global unions the BWI and IndustriALL on 12 May 2015 in an international asbestos protest outside the United Nations building.

The demo took place as government representatives from over 160 countries were participating in the Rotterdam Convention conference to decide whether to list chrysotile as a dangerous substance under the Convention (Annex III). Other forms of asbestos are already listed, as are a number of dangerous pesticides and other chemicals.

Because the decisions of the Convention have to be made by consensus, it is all too easy for countries which have vested interests in the mining and manufacture of asbestos to exercise a veto. On this occasion (the 5th time that chrysotile was up for discussion) the listing was again blocked - by the Russian Federation, Kyrgyzstan and Zimbabwe. The matter will now be deferred (again) to the 8th meeting of the Convention in 2017.

The action by unions and asbestos victims did not go unnoticed. The Earth Negotiations Bulletin reported that the president of the conference noted a level of activity he had not experienced in 15 years. This included a plea for listing of chrysotile from an Indian worker who, after working with chrysotile asbestos for 40 years, suffers from asbestosis.

For more information see <http://www.iisd.ca/download/pdf/enb15228e.pdf>

IndustriALL has coverage, photos and a video of a speech given at the demonstration by their Health, Safety and Environment Director, Brian Kohler.

<http://www.industrialunion.org/global-union-action-against-asbestos>

Unite's asbestos pack is here:

<http://www.unitetheunion.org/unite-at-work/informationresources/healthsafetyresources/asbestos/>

## **Women's health and work**

Sharing knowledge and experiences to enhance women's working conditions and gender equality. An international conference in Brussels – European Trade Union Institute

Unite attended this conference on women's health and work, organised by the ETUI from 4 to 6 March in Brussels. The wide range of international contributions from researchers and campaigners – including Karen Messing from Quebec - showed that a situation of equal rights for men and women in the workplace is very far from having been achieved.

A serious obstacle on the road to such equality is the invisibility of the specific risks to which working women are exposed and that stem frequently from work organisation methods. The deeply entrenched nature of sexual segregation on the labour market and of sexist stereotypes serves to reinforce the status quo.

There were workshops on a number of aspects of women's health and work including the ageing workforce, chemicals, personal protective equipment and work-life issues.

The report of the conference is here together with the presentations for all the plenary sessions and workshops, and short video interviews with some of the speakers. This site is well worth visiting for both women and men to gain insight into the issues discussed at the conference.

<http://www.etui.org/Events/Women-s-health-and-work.-Sharing-knowledge-and-experiences-to-enhance-women-s-working-conditions-and-gender-equality>

### **Unite needs more women safety reps!**

There are many health and safety issues that particularly affect women in the work place, whether it is having personal protective equipment that fits, work stations that are designed in a way women can work safely or pregnancy related health and safety, women have a lot to say about what makes our working environment a healthy and safe place to work.

Unite is reaching out to women members to encourage them to get more involved in the union at work. The union provides training and support and being a union health and safety rep is a really rewarding experience. Potential women safety reps are being asked to contact Siobhan Endean (Siobhan.endean@unitetheunion.org) in order to receive more information about becoming a health and safety rep. They will also get the Unite Guide to Women's Wellbeing in the Workplace, which provides many ideas about how to make the work place a healthier and safer place for women.

All Unite activists and representatives need to take this message on board to ensure we have more women safety reps.

### **Conference Links**

#### **26th Hazards Conference, 4th-6th Sept 2015, Keele University**

Unite strongly supports this conference, which is targeted specifically at trade union safety reps. Unite will have a health and safety stand at the conference and all Unite Regions are encouraged to support and finance at least one representative to attend the conference. If the Region decides to send someone they need to complete the attached form and enclose a cheque!

Hazards Conference is the UK's biggest and best educational and organising event for trade union safety reps and activists. Conference activities are a mixture of plenary sessions, debates, meetings and a comprehensive workshop programme. Conference provides delegates with the opportunity to exchange experience and information with, and learn from, experts and delegates from other unions, sectors and jobs across the UK.

<http://www.hazardscampaign.org.uk/hazardsconference/2015bookingform.pdf>

## **Stress Network Annual Conference 2015**

The 2015 Stress Network Conference will be held on Saturday November 28th to Sunday November 29th 2015 at the Hillscourt Conference, Centre, Rednal, Birmingham B45 8RS

The financial costs of stress in the workplace have been revealed by recent research as almost £700 million a year in 'wasted' wages. Stress Awareness Day (4th November) highlights the costs to individuals, to workplaces and the economy. Almost a quarter of all workers report stress as the main cause of sickness absence. Regularly every year the Labour Force Survey in UK shows that over 500,000 workers are affected by stress in their workplace. Across the continent the problem continues to develop and the EU Labour Force Survey shows some 55.6 million workers confirmed that their mental well-being was affected by exposure to psycho-social risks. Too little time and too much work remain the most commonly quoted risk factors (23%). The most common effects of this stress is increased levels of depression and anxiety, and associated mental health problems as well as physical injury brought about by inability to concentrate effectively.

This is a key occupational health issue for Unite and its members and Regions should strongly consider nominating, and financing, someone to attend this conference.

<http://www.workstress.net/Con15/Booking%2015a.pdf>