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Work Your
PROPER Hours
Day
FEB 25th

Contact us

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Health and safety cuts cost lives

Organise around health and safety

It's not an easy time for workplace health, safety and welfare. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) just lost 35% of its funding. Just about everyone's more interested in keeping their jobs than keeping the workplace healthy. And the 'Elf and Safety Gone Mad!' myth is widely accepted as gospel – and only worsened by the Government's review on health and safety legislation.

The HSE's huge budget cut means a reduction of about £80 million every year until 2014/2015. In real terms this means there's no way the HSE can continue its current level of workplace protection, and it's likely they will lose up to 750 jobs. Even if all front-line inspection jobs were kept, due to increased administrative duties this would still mean a lot less time spent inspecting and campaigning.

This is why we need to organise for health and safety now more than ever. It's all too tempting to put the big health and safety concerns to

one side while the cuts storm rages around us, but we can't afford to sit back quietly.

Many of you can expect your employers to try to cut costs by forgoing maintenance, reducing standards or limiting necessary training. Similarly some of your co-workers may not speak up for fear of losing their job.

Health and safety has always been one of the strongest issues to organise around. People care because it affects them personally. Safety reps are absolutely critical at times like these to ensure that employers comply with health, safety and welfare legislation. And don't forget the importance of showing support to our members in these dark times – make yourself visible by staying actively involved so that members will always know UNISON is there to support them.

The UNISON Health and Safety team will be producing a new tool-kit for organising

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UNISON members speaking out for public services.

Continued from page 1

around health and safety. It will have a list of activities that your branch can do – everything from mapping your workplace to getting set up with safety committees and using union inspection notices. The new toolkit will be launched at the health and safety seminar March 24th in Birmingham. Details can be found on the website.

Go through the two lists in the box below to see how your workplace ranks. Which areas need improvement?

UNISON
the public service union

**I'm
marching
26 March**

On 26 March 2011, thousands of people will join the TUC march in London, to tell the government that savage spending cuts are unnecessary and unfair. We don't believe the coalition when they say we are all in this together – their public service cuts will hit the most vulnerable the hardest.

**Join UNISON on the march,
and have your say on line.**

**For more information, go to:
www.unison.org.uk/million**

Is your workplace facing redundancies?

Consider the following

- Is a change management process in place?
- Do workers understand this process? Has anyone been consulted?
- Has management fully explored the impact of the changes to staffing levels?
- What about service delivery levels?
- What services/procedures are available to staff facing redundancy? (counselling, training, etc)
- Does your employer have a mental health at work policy?
- Are there regular surveys on staff welfare?
- Do these cover stress, bullying at work, occupational health?
- Does UNISON contribute to the surveys' creation? Do we have input on how the findings are disseminated?
- Do safety reps have regular contact with someone on senior management?

Work toward the following goals in your workplace:

- Ensure health and safety is a standing item for all meetings which cover proposals to make change
- Use the opportunity to campaign to raise the profile of the importance of health and safety issues (could be on stress, working hours, bullying, occupational health)
- Organise a risk assessment with other UNISON and/or trade union reps before and after the change
- Remind management of their health and safety at work duties
- Remind management of guidance issued specific to the risks faced in your sector or area
- Make sure there is a UNISON rep on the safety committee
- Recruit more safety reps

And keep an eye out for the new organising toolkit!

International Workers Memorial Day 2011

Take part in a minutes silence on International Workers Memorial Day, **Thursday 28 April 2011**. Join the many others across the UK and internationally who will be remembering the dead and fighting for the living.

Remember the Dead, Fight for the Living is the slogan for 2011's International Workers Memorial Day (IWMD). The purpose of the day is two-fold. It's about remembering those who have been needlessly killed, injured, or made ill by their work. It's also about using these tragedies to strengthen the campaign for safe and healthy work.

The demand for safe and healthy work will be all the more important as employers implement spending cuts. Staff who remain in post will be expected to do more work, increasing the risk of various hazards including: work-place bullying, lone working, manual handling, repetitive strain injuries (RSI) and stress. Other work just won't get done, which at first may not be noticed, but will lead to greater risks including: worse and increasingly dangerous or unhealthy workplaces, including exposures risks to asbestos as building maintenance is neglected.

MINUTE'S SILENCE

At 12 midday on Thursday 28 April, UNISON members and many others across the UK will take part in a minutes' silence. During that minute we will remember those members and workers injured, made ill or killed by their work.

What do you have planned for IWMD? Are you or your branch organising an event, or are you taking part in a joint event? If not, start planning now!

Whether you plan something else or not, join in the minutes' silence at 12 midday - make this IWMD even more "remembered" than the last. Speak to your employer about asking all staff to take part in a minutes' silence whilst at work.

BACKGROUND TO IWMD

Each year on 28 April, IWMD is marked around the world to remember the dead and fight for the living. We remember those killed, made ill, or injured by their own or someone else's work. Their pain and suffering and that of their families deserves not to be forgotten. We also renew our commitment to, and demand once more, safe and healthy work for all.

Far too many workers and their families suffer each and every year. The figures from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) which make the headlines never tell the full story.

So what is the full story? It is estimated that work incidents cause up to 1,600 deaths each year, including deaths to members of the public, work-related suicide,

and road traffic accidents whilst driving to work. On top of this, it is estimated that there are up to 50,000 deaths from work-related illnesses, including cancers, respiratory illnesses, and heart disease. Have a look at *The Whole Story* in the Health and Safety Practitioner here: <http://www.shponline.co.uk/features-content/full/the-whole-story>

WHAT IS UNISON CALLING FOR?

Society no-longer finds domestic violence or drink-driving acceptable. It's time for work-related ill-health, injury, and death to also become unacceptable rather than a tragic but accepted part of the world of work. The HSE has in the past stated that about 70% of workplace "accidents" are due to the poor management of health and safety. However, spending cuts risk increasing exposure to poor workplace health and safety. It is therefore important to fight for the living by ensuring that IWMD 2011 is used to campaign, organise, and recruit on health and safety at branch level. Unions make work safer, and make it most safe when there is a large, active, and involved membership. *Continued on page 4*



International Workers Memorial Day 2011

HOW TO TAKE PART?

What do you have planned for the 2011 IWMD? Are you joining UNISON's minute's silence? Let us know! See our contact details on the first page.

If your UNISON branch wants to plan something, a local event could include:

- ◆ An event with presentations and speeches.
- ◆ Displaying UNISON's IWMD poster (see below for details on placing your order).
- ◆ Wearing, ordering, and distributing the IWMD purple
- ◆ Wearing, ordering, and distributing the IWMD purple ribbons and car stickers to members (see below for details on placing your order).
- ◆ Making sure you have plenty of UNISON's recruitment materials to put on your stall, have at your event, or to distribute to non-members. UNISON has a selection of general recruitment materials plus some specific to health and safety including: a member recruitment leaflet, and a safety rep recruitment leaflet and poster. To download or order these, go to UNISON's Online Catalogue here: <http://www.unison.org.uk/resources/onlinecatalogue.asp>
- ◆ Writing a letter to the local press about any of the campaign issues or local events.
- ◆ Organising a safety reps inspection or carrying out a body mapping exercise. For more information on these, see "More Info" below.
- ◆ Remembering any workers who have been killed at the workplace or in the community by arranging an event such as planting a memorial tree in a public place, putting up a plaque, or dedicating a sculpture.
- ◆ Asking religious centres to mark IWMD.
- ◆ Negotiating with your employer to hold one minutes' silence at 12 noon.
- ◆ Requesting for official flags on public buildings to be flown at half-mast. Many employers agree to this each year as a mark of respect and remembrance.

The Health and Safety website has examples of the many UNISON events from the past. Have a look at [\[link\]](#) to get some ideas.

MORE INFO AND RESOURCES

Campaigning, Recruiting, and Communicating

For advice on running a campaign, recruiting, and communicating with members and potential members, see UNISON's campaigning page, here <http://www.unison.org.uk/communicating/index.asp>. See also page two, issue 60 of Health & Safety Organiser.

UNISON IWMD Materials

UNISON's IWMD Poster – currently under revision, but check the website closer to IWMD.

UNISON flyer for distribution prior to or at an IWMD event, here: <http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/19059.pdf>

EMPTY SHOES

*No more footsteps on the path as you
come home
I just sit here with my grief - so all
alone
No key is turned by you in our front
door
No sound of walking to me across our
floor
I've cried so much my eyes are red and
sore
Empty shoes, no more you - just empty
shoes.*

*When the kids cry out "I want my Dad"
We cuddle up for comfort when we're
sad
And we whisper that we miss you
Want to hear your voice, be with you
We want and need to kiss you
Left with memories - and empty shoes.*

*The boss sent you alone, to mend the
roof
No harness, no mate - you fell with a
"whoosh."*

*No safety there to guard your health
Your life forfeit to bring others wealth
Now I'm without your dearest self
My empty arms - your empty shoes.
Your broken body lay in the dirt
Your lifeblood drained amidst your
hurt*

*To honour your great sacrifice
I hope your workmates unionise
And do it soon before another dies
In remembrance of you - no more
empty shoes.*

Poem by Wendy Lawrence

This poem by health and safety campaigner Wendy Lawrence, was penned after she'd read about yet another avoidable death caused by work. It reflects upon the tragic and needless waste of someone's life and the effect on those they leave behind.



Deplorable Employers

Dangerous door goes unchecked

A children's nursery office, Beverly Hampshire, was crushed under a falling metal door and was awarded a substantial sum in compensation by Sheffield City Council's First Start Children's Centre. The 47-year old was fetching play equipment from an outdoor shed when the heavy metal door fell off its hinges, collapsing on her and trapping her against a fence. Sheffield City Council was found to be liable because it failed to provide Mrs Hampshire with a safe working environment.

Asbestos PCT

Northamptonshire NHS Primary Care Trust (PCT), NUTEC Security Systems and company director Paul Beeby pleaded guilty to bad asbestos management in court on January 19, 2011. The PCT employed NUTEC to upgrade security in Isebrook Hospital in Wellingborough, which meant running cables through the public areas of the building.

The company workers just assumed there wasn't any asbestos present, the company director never made sure a sufficient asbestos survey was in place (it wasn't), and the PCT never informed NUTEC that asbestos was present. If any one of these three parties had done their job this wouldn't have happened! As it was, asbestos fibres were released into the air while the building was kept open to the public and staff alike.

As it was, the lot of them were fined almost £15,000 – not nearly enough!

Should have heeded health and safety warnings...

Peter Streek, 66, from Tadworth in Surrey, worked for South West London elective Orthopaedic Centre (SWLEOC) as a porter at Epsom General Hospital. He injured his foot pushing an unwieldy clinical waste bin down a steep, uneven path to the hospital compactor.

Mr Streek's workmates and UNISON had warned management about the dangers of pulling heavy bins up and down an uneven slope. Despite these warnings hospital managers did nothing until after Mr Streek's accident.

Grandmother injured by faulty frame

Julie Belcher, a grandmother from Stourport on Severn, was working as a teaching assistant at Hartlebury Church of England Primary School when a faulty frame fell off the wall in the sports hall. The 49 year old grabbed the bar to protect the six pupils standing nearby, but the bar landed on her thighs. A claim was settled against Speller Metcalfe Ltd, the firm that failed to secure the climbing frame to the wall.

Success Stories

Nottingham

The safety reps at my branch have always been very involved and really vigilant about keeping our workplace to high standards. As a result we have a really good safety record (few accidents, less time off sick, etc) and have even improved upon what it was like 10 years ago. Management however has tried to take credit for our hard work. In response we made it known exactly what we had accomplished. We put up posters all around the branch buildings, wrote about it in our branch emails, and included it in our newsletter. And while we never got a proper 'thank you' from management, they did start publicly mentioning UNISON safety reps as contributing to our outstanding safety record.

Dundee

For my job you need to do a certain amount of lifting. Some of it is heavy, some of it is not. Management was trying to be 'compassionate' when they made an unwritten rule that the male employees do the heavy lifting and the female employees lift the lighter boxes. But when many of us female workers started having muscle pain, we got together and did a body mapping exercise. It turns out that even though we're lifting the light items, we do it consistently through the entire day whereas the men do their lifting in small bursts. Our safety rep did some research and we presented a case to our employer on why their 'compassionate' plan actually did more physical harm to the female employees. After some negotiation the risks of consistent light lifting are now recognised in a comprehensive risk assessment, the amount one person lifts or carries in a shift has been reduced, and one member received paid time off for a pulled muscle in her back.

Bristol

My safety rep just fought a big fight to get on the stage three health and safety training course – and won! He's on it now.

London

One of my co-workers was in an accident (outside of work) that limited his mobility and made getting in to work on public transportation during rush hour very difficult. His manager at first tried to convince him that finding a different job would be in his best interest, but fortunately our very skilled health and safety rep stepped in and negotiated an agreement that included both working from home some days and altered hours on other days. We're now working toward getting my co-worker some assistive equipment too.

Ever had a bad day at work follow you home?

How work stress affects parenting

Work-related stress is one of the biggest health issues facing workers today. But did you know that stress caused by work has a negative impact on parenting? A new study by the thinktank Demos has demonstrated just that. Parents can bring home the stress caused by unfair demands, too heavy a workload or little flexibility at work, having a big impact on how they relate to their children.

Parents may feel guilty for working long hours or needing time to unwind after work, contributing to a lack of confidence in their parenting and emotional withdrawal from their children.

The worst jobs are the ones high in stress and/or offer little creativity or flexibility. Income and job level didn't matter though: high paid senior executives were just as likely to experience a negative impact as people in low paid, low skilled jobs. It all came down to what demands were put on the worker and their level of stress.

Confidence

Guilt caused by long working hours was demonstrated to hurt a parent's confidence in their parenting ability. Most parents seemed to think their parenting ability was worse than what the research showed, indicating how badly their confidence was affected. Informal, community support networks were found to improve parents' confidence.

Other Findings

Working Fathers

Fathers actually tend to work longer hours than childless men. 1 in 3 fathers works more than a 48 hour week compared to only 1 in 4 childless men. 12% of fathers work over 60 hours per week, and many fathers increase their working hours once their youngest is more than 6 years old. Fewer men than women use their right to request flexible hours, with only 1 in 3 fathers working with flexitime or from home.

Working Mothers

The number of mothers who work has more than tripled since 1951 and now 2 out of 3 mothers are working. Mothers with a partner are more likely to work part-time, whereas lone mothers are equally likely to work full or part time. 6% of mothers work a 48 hour week while 3% work more than 60 hours.

Paternity Leave

41% of fathers and 31% of mothers were in favour of introducing new 'use it or lose it' paternity leave. Overall 66% of parents were positive or neutral on the issue, suggesting that this might be the next step to negotiate more flexible working.

Recommendations

- ◆ Increase the availability of flexible hours. Your employer should be encouraged to support employees who request flexible work.
- ◆ Make parental leave available to both parents. This can help ease uneven burdens for families. Don't let traditional gender biases get in the way of fathers requesting parenting leave.
- ◆ Engage fathers in parenting services as well as mothers. Make sure fathers aren't excluded from discussions about what services and support are available to expectant and new parents.
- ◆ Make sure your employer understands the negative effects of work stress and how it can damage a person's life outside of work.
- ◆ Make sure your employer adopts the best practice guidelines, including a full risk assessment for every expectant mother. You can get more information from the HSE website at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/mothers/index.htm>
- ◆ **UNISON Stress Guide:** <http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/18596.pdf>

Jen Lexmond who wrote the report added, "Work has a profound effect on parenting across all incomes. The right kind of work that is flexible and stimulating can improve parenting. But these kinds of jobs often come hand in hand with high levels of stress and emotional exhaustion which can be a toxic mix for parental confidence... What's clear is that our jobs make it difficult to share parenting responsibilities - the result too often being a double shift for mothers and a lack of engagement from fathers. We have to recognise that our current system of parental leave and current approach to flexible working is supporting these gendered trends and the result isn't good for anyone - mothers, fathers or children."

Find the full study here:

http://www.demos.co.uk/press_releases/stressguiltandexhaustiontoxicmixformiddleclassparents



**A few places left until
28 February!**

Contact j.davis@unison.co.uk for details

**National
Health & Safety
Seminar - 2011**

Recruit, Organise, and Protect; there is Safety in Numbers will be UNISON's third health and safety seminar. It will take place at the International Conference Centre in Birmingham on 24 March 2011. A number of presentations and workshops will cover: recruitment and organising, negotiating and bargaining with management, older workers, gender and health and safety, and the Hazards Campaign: *We Didn't Vote to Die*.

Interested in going? Check the Health and Safety page on UNISON's website for more info.

Initially, each region are able to nominate 20 safety reps to attend, although any places not utilised will be offered to other regions. The cost per delegate is £80.00, including lunch and refreshments. Branches will be responsible for all expenses incurred by members attending the seminar including travel and if required, accommodation.

We look forward to seeing you there!

**Birmingham ICC
24 March 2011**

Why isn't the fit note working?

You might have already come across a situation with the new Fit Note. Since the Fit Note was introduced last April, problems have been cropping up across the country.

The Fit Note replaced the traditional sick note in April 2010. The biggest change is that with the Fit Note a GP can suggest that an employee return to work with amended duties – such as reduced hours or different responsibilities – until they are fully well.

Right now one problem that workers are facing is that GPs are getting the Fit Note wrong. Some GPs make impossible suggestions, others just don't understand their patient's job, and still others use the Fit Note exactly the same as they did sick notes – which is to say they don't bother recommending anything.

Since we can't make all the GPs in the country suddenly wise up... make sure your members know the benefits of a Fit Note and know what to ask their GP for. If a member wants to return to work, make sure they know how to talk to their GP about it.

In the Fit Note a GP can suggest four things and elaborate on them as much as necessary:

- ◆ a phased return to work
- ◆ altered hours
- ◆ amended duties
- ◆ workplace adaptations (like new equipment)

Make sure your members are educated about their choices. Why not put up a notice, send an email, or say something at the next meeting about the Fit Note?

And if your employer unfairly fails to implement the GP's suggestions, make sure this issue is raised with your UNISON full time officer.

To get more information on the Fit Note and see a copy of the Department of Work and Pension's booklet, contact healthand-safety@unison.co.uk or check out <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/fitnote/>



How to get your UNISON Health and Safety materials

Most general health and safety materials are available at: www.unison.org.uk/safety. Some job or sector specific materials are produced by and available from the relevant national department. Items with a stock no. can be ordered from the online catalogue at: www.unison.org.uk/resources/index.asp.

Alternatively, for items with a stock no. email: stockorders@unison.co.uk or call: 020 7551 1455. In either case, you'll need to state: the document title and stock no, the no. required, your name, your branch name and no, tel. no, and full postal address. For all other general materials contact the Health and Safety Unit, see our details on page 1.

WORK YOUR PROPER HOURS DAY 25 FEB

Ever find yourself working more than your contractual hours? Many UNISON members end up working well beyond the hours they're paid to do.

If so, February 25th is the first day you'll start earning money this year!

When the average person adds up all their unpaid hours, they will see they've been working unpaid since January 1st. That's £27.4 billion in unpaid labour for employers every year.

Do your proper hours on February 25: don't turn up early, make sure you have a proper lunch break, and leave on time. Celebrate! You're finally getting paid!

Health and Safety Calendar

28 Feb	International RSI (Repetitive Strain Injury) Day
9 March	National No Smoking Day
24 March	UNISON's National Health and Safety Seminar
24 March	World TB Day
26 March	March Against the Cuts
28 April	International Workers Memorial Day

**Hazards
campaign**

**22nd National Hazards Conference
Hazards 2011**
will be held at
Keele University, Stoke-on-Trent
from **2nd – 4th September 2011**

Hazards 2011 Sponsorship Appeal

July 2010 saw another successful National Hazards Conference with 43% of those there (168 reps) from UNISON. Delegates attended a number of plenaries, campaign and information meetings, and workshops. The Conference focused on the challenges facing safety reps following the general election and the emergence of the ConDem coalition government.

Hazards Conference is the UK's best and largest safety reps conference. This year on the 2 - 4 September, it goes back to the University of Keele, Stoke-on-Trent. The overarching focus will be on improving workplace health and safety via the Hazards Charter. Further details about the 2011 Conference will be sent out in due course - but put the date in your diary now!

UNISON's National Health and Safety Committee supports the Conference: organising an informal meeting for UNISON delegates, with UNISON staff and lay members facilitating workshops, and providing resources and staff for a UNISON exhibition stall.

For more information on the Hazards Campaign and Charter go to: www.hazardscampaign.org.uk.

In the meantime we need to ensure the future of Hazards as a forum for education and campaigning, and an opportunity for reps to meet and share experiences. Branch sponsorship is urgently required to keep delegates fees to a reasonable level. The Conference is organised on a not-for-profit basis and is very good value for money. Your branch can support the Conference by completing the sponsorship form which UNISON branch safety officers will shortly receive. It is also available on the web at: www.unison.org.uk/file/5334.pdf.