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TUC Risks – 11 April 2009

HSE faces haemorrhage of expert staff

Workers are being put at risk because the Health and Safety Executive is haemorrhaging experienced staff, unions have warned. HSE staff unions Prospect and PCS have warned repeatedly that inadequate wages are causing more experienced staff to leave the safety watchdog. HSE acknowledges high staff turnover is a significant problem, with some sectors including its offshore and nuclear inspectorates particularly badly affected ([Risks 392](#)). In recent months, large numbers of staff have moved into industry or have switched from HSE to government departments, including health, justice and environment. Chris Hurley, chair of the PCS branch at the HSE's Rose Court offices in London, says this problem is being compounded by the organisation's decision to relocate the HSE head office to Bootle on Merseyside. She told Environmental Health News (EHN) that hundreds of experienced members of staff had left the organisation because they did not want to move to the new HQ. 'Lots of the people leaving have worked for the HSE for 30 years or more. It will take a long time to replace their expertise and knowledge,' she said. 'There will not be enough experienced members of staff to develop the vital guidance that helps identify and manage risks and dangers in the workplace.' So far only four HSE employees based in London out of a potential 320 have moved to Bootle. Ms Hurley said morale among the HSE staff left at the organisation's former head office in London had 'hit rock-bottom.' She added: 'The mood is very poor. Staff feel demoralised and undervalued. Management wants everybody out the door as quickly as possible.'

- [Environmental Health News](#).

Government defends excessive working time

The TUC has criticised the government for its role in frustrating discussions in Europe to end the UK's opt-out from the 48-hour working week ceiling. A conciliation meeting last week between MEPs and employment ministers ended without agreement. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: 'We are disappointed the UK is part of a minority of EU governments that continue to block progress towards ending our damaging long hours culture. The health hazards and lack of productivity caused by excessive working time are well proven. And with

people being made redundant or reducing their hours, the business lobby's insistence that they still need long hours looks even more out of date.' The TUC leader added: 'The working time directive will be under the spotlight again at a third meeting of MEPs and employment ministers later this month. The TUC urges the government to change its position and put an end to dangerous long hours working.' Last week's meeting was the second of three formal conciliation meetings between the European Parliament and the Social Affairs Council. The third meeting must take place before Thursday 7 May. Commenting after the latest discussions broke down, employment relations minister Pat McFadden said: 'We have said consistently that we would not give up the opt-out and that continues to be the case.' He added: 'In the current downturn it is more important than ever that people keep the right to put more money in their pockets by working longer hours if they wish. We refused to be pushed into a bad deal for Britain.'

- [TUC news release](#). [BERR news release](#).

Workplace illness 'to get worse'

An ageing workforce and higher rates of illness and disease among employees will pose a serious threat to British business by 2030, a report has warned. Private healthcare company Bupa estimates the number of workers with chronic conditions will rise by at least 7 per cent to more than four million. Rates of mental illness and serious diseases, such as heart problems, will also soar. Bupa warns the problem will damage all companies' long-term productivity. Its report concludes employers should take a wider view of workplace health interventions, and this 'requires employers to embed workplace health more closely in organisational culture. It also requires them to align investment in workplace health more closely with other aspects of human resources, such as skills and training, job design and working practices. By investing to improve the quality of work, employers can help to promote the positive relationship between good work and good health.' The report, published in partnership with The Work Foundation, The Oxford Health Alliance and RAND Europe, brings together more than 200 pieces of research to provide an insight into how the health of British workers will change over the next 20 years. The study estimates that the average age of the workforce will reach 43, while 68 will become the average age of retirement by 2050. The increasing age of the workforce will be one factor fuelling rates of ill health. Musculoskeletal disease will rise by 8 per cent to affect more than seven million people, while heart disease will rise by 11 per cent to affect more than a million. Rates of chronic diseases, such as diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD) and asthma are all likely to increase sharply. And rates of mental illness will rise by 5 per cent to 4.2 million.

- [Bupa news release](#). [The Work Foundation publication note](#) and full report: Healthy Work: Challenges and Opportunities to 2030 [[pdf](#)]. [BBC News Online](#).

Work stress conference, 21-22 November 2009

The UK National Work-Stress Network conference, which will run on 21-22 November, is a residential weekend event. It 'is open to health and safety representatives, shop stewards and union officers as well as those who have occupational health and safety at the core of

their work.' The conference has a full programme of speakers covering the causes, effects, symptoms and costs of stress-related illness, management competencies and EU law. There will also be examples of successful legal and workplace challenges to workplace stress and bullying.

- Stress - the 21st century epidemic?, [UK National Work-Stress Network](#) conference, 21-22 November 2009, Hillscourt Conference Centre, Rednal, near Birmingham. Further details and booking form [[pdf](#)].

TUC Risks – 18 April 2009

HSE to publish some deaths information

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) will now report work-related deaths on a monthly basis. The move, which will see HSE list work deaths once the related inquest has commenced, follows a Centre for Corporate Accountability (CCA) complaint to the Information Commissioner, who ruled last year that HSE must make this information available ([Risks 366](#)). The referral to the Commissioner came after CCA had exhausted the HSE Freedom of Information appeals process, following the refusal by HSE of an original February 2005 information request. The information will now be included in HSE chief executive Geoffrey Podger's monthly report to the HSE Board. The information will be posted on HSE's Freedom of Information webpages. Guidance on the information to be made available has been agreed for England and Wales and is under preparation in Scotland. HSE is however placing limitations on information about the related workplace. Its guidance says: 'Details of the victim's employer and/or who had control of the site at the time of death should be provided only when the relevant area inspector has confirmed that this information does not form part of the investigation.' Campaigners have already told HSE they think this restriction is unacceptable. Like the victim's name, the person's employer will already be in the public domain once the inquest has started. Another contentious area is investigations into workplace deaths led by the police, which will not be included in the HSE list and which will include workplace manslaughter cases.

- [HSE operational note](#). [HSE Freedom of Information webpages](#).

Promotion 'bad for mental health'

Getting promoted at work may be bad for a person's mental health, a study suggests. Warwick University researchers used evidence from 1,000 workers who had been promoted into supervisory or management roles in the past five years. Researchers Chris Boyce and Professor Andrew Oswald questioned why people with higher job status seem to have better health. They drew upon the British Household Panel Survey and found no evidence of improved physical health after promotion - nor that self-assessed feelings of health declined. What they did find, however, was significantly greater mental strain. After a job

promotion, there was on average a 10 per cent decrease in people's mental health. Those promoted at work also reported on average a 20 per cent fall in their visits to a GP following their promotion. University of Warwick researcher Chris Boyce said: 'Getting a promotion at work is not as great as many people think. Our research finds that the mental health of managers typically deteriorates after a job promotion, and in a way that goes beyond merely a short-term change. There are no indications of any health improvements for promoted people other than reduced attendance at GP surgeries, which may itself be something to worry about rather than celebrate.' The research will be presented at the Royal Economic Society's conference later this month.

- [Warwick University news release](#). Do people become healthier after being promoted? [[pdf](#)].
- [National Business Review](#). [BBC News Online](#). [The Independent](#). [Scotsman](#).

Work deaths harm whole families

Do you remember who died at work? Worldwide, two million are killed by their jobs every year. Work-related diseases and injuries kill more than wars, more than road traffic accidents. And when somebody dies at work, they are never the only victim. This is the message of a new resource published by the trade union safety journal Hazards. It says work deaths harm whole families, whole communities. The magazine is working with global trade union organisations to promote the annual, 28 April, event ([Risks 400](#)). A new online report forms part of a package of new resources, and includes 10 case studies highlights the impact on those left behind after a worker is killed. Anthea Dennis, who lost her 17-year-old son Daniel in a workplace fall on his first week at work, says: 'I never appreciated how much pain you could be in. And it doesn't go away, you just learn to live with it.' Linzi Herbertson's husband, Andy, was killed aged 29 when he fell from an unsafe scaffold. 'I had to turn off his life support machine on our son's 8th birthday,' she says. 'The company were fined less than £10,000 and I was on my own with two young children.' Gordon Field, 58, was crushed to death by unsafe lifting gear - at a firm that made safe lifting equipment. His daughter, Sharon Norman, said his employer 'pleaded guilty but never said they were sorry. I feel someone must pay for this crime. I would have been satisfied if someone had just said sorry to me but nobody did.' Hazards has also launched a 28 April Facebook page featuring resources and messages from around the world.

- [Work deaths harm whole families, Hazards](#) online report, April 2009. [TUC briefing](#) and [TUC Workers' Memorial Day webpage](#).
- [Workers' Memorial Day * 28 April, Facebook page](#).
- [International events and resources](#). More resources for reps. The Hazards Campaign can provide Workers' Memorial Day posters (free), forget-me-knot ribbons (£25/100) and bumper stickers (£1 each). Contact: [Hazards Campaign](#), c/o GMHC, Windrush Millennium Centre, 70 Alexandra Road, Manchester, M16 7WD. Tel: 0161 636 7557. Email: mail@gmhazards.org.uk

National Hazards conference, 10-12 July 2009

The National Hazards Conference, on the theme 'Making a better world of work possible', will take place in Manchester on 10-12 July 2009. The largest gathering of trade union safety reps in Europe, the conference will include the usual mix of top class speakers, workshops and socialising. Speakers this year including top US union safety official Nancy Lessin, who will look the green jobs agenda and how to make sure it is also a good, safe jobs agenda. Charley Richardson, who has worked with unions in North America and Europe, will look the impact on safety of the economic downturn and company restructuring, and how unions can respond.

- Making a better world of work possible, [National Hazards conference](#), 10-12 July 2009, University of Manchester. Hazards 2009 conference application form [[pdf](#)]. The deadline for application is Friday 19 June. Sponsor the conference [[pdf](#)].
- Further details: Hazards Campaign, c/o Greater Manchester Hazards Centre, Windrush Millennium Centre, 70 Alexandra Road, Manchester, M16 7WD. Tel: 0161 636 7558.

UNITE H&S NEWS – 21 April 2009

HSE to publish some deaths information

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) will now report work-related deaths on a monthly basis. The move, which will see HSE list work deaths once the related inquest has commenced, follows a Centre for Corporate Accountability (CCA) complaint to the Information Commissioner, who ruled last year that HSE must make this information available. The referral to the Commissioner came after CCA had exhausted the HSE Freedom of Information appeals process, following the refusal by HSE of an original February 2005 information request. The information will now be included in HSE chief executive Geoffrey Podger's monthly report to the HSE Board. The information will be posted on HSE's Freedom of Information webpages. Guidance on the information to be made available has been agreed for England and Wales and is under preparation in Scotland. HSE is however placing limitations on information about the related workplace. Its guidance says: 'Details of the victim's employer and/or who had control of the site at the time of death should be provided only when the relevant area inspector has confirmed that this information does not form part of the investigation.' Campaigners have already told HSE they think this restriction is unacceptable. Like the victim's name, the person's employer will already be in the public domain once the inquest has started. Another contentious area is investigations into workplace deaths led by the police, which will not be included in the HSE list and which will include workplace manslaughter cases.

Following recommendations from the Information Commissioner, the HSE will now include the names of the deceased and additional details on these fatal incidents at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/foi/index.htm>

Unite promotes Prostate Cancer awareness

31 March 2009

Unite is running an on going campaign to promote prostate cancer awareness. While we all know about the more common forms of cancer and the screening programmes particularly for cervical and breast cancer, screening for male cancers such as testicular and prostate cancer have tended to receive less publicity.

Unite health and safety advisor, Rob Miguel, says: 'Prostate cancer is the most common male cancer in the UK, with over 27,000 men diagnosed each year and 10,000 deaths. Despite these statistics thousands of men over 45 do not know enough about it, and are not going to their doctors and clinics for regular examination which can save and extend lives'.

Unite regularly runs seminars on prostate cancer awareness, in high profile work places, such as BNFL, Bombardier and Rolls Royce, and has promoted the issue at Unite conferences.

A recent survey, conducted by Tickbox.net, found that only half the men questioned would visit the doctor if they suffered symptoms affecting an intimate part of their body. More than one in 10 said they would "sit tight" and hope the problem would go away and thirteen per cent of men admitted they would only visit a doctor after being persuaded to by partners, friends or relatives.

Rob went on to say 'Unite intends to lobby the government to secure regular consultation with GPs for men over 50 and for increased investment for research. This affects both men and women, including families as they have to bear the emotional and financial burden of loss.'

If you have any health concerns contact your doctor sooner rather than later.

For more information email: Rob.Miguel@unitetheunion.com

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NEWS ANNOUNCEMENTS

++ BBC Panorama health and safety episode ++

HSE issues statement following the BBC Panorama "may contain nuts" episode 20 April.
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/news/2009/panorama.htm?ebul=hsegen/27-apr-2009&cr=2>

++ BBC Panorama - media coverage ++

The Times article on the BBC Panorama episode "may contain nuts" episode 20 April.
http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/article6135369.ece?ebul=hsegen/27-apr-2009&cr=3

PUTTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

++"R.I.P, Old-Fashioned Common Sense" ++

HSE Deputy Chief Executive; Kevin Myers responds to article in the Daily Mail.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/press/record/dm200409.htm?ebul=hsegen/27-apr-2009&cr=4>

RIDDOR

++ HSE RIDDOR website re-launched ++

New structure and style - easier navigation, report online, by email, out of hours...

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/index.htm?ebul=hsegen/27-apr-2009&cr=7>

LEGISLATION

++ Health and safety law poster ++

New version modern, accessible, eye-catching and easy to read.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/lawposter.htm?ebul=hsegen/27-apr-2009&cr=10>

Disclaimer:

This document is for general guidance, information and research purposes only, and does not purport to give professional advice.

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