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PFEW Health & Safety Bulletin
Issue 47
1 July – 31 July 2009

01372 352000

HSE Stress Bulletin – July edition

++ THE REAL EFFECT OF STRESS++

HSE has recently launched a series of brand new video case studies on the work-related stress website. Based on real experiences, the videos show how people cope with stress and what managers can do to improve the situation:

(Scroll down this page to access the videos)

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/dealingwith.htm?ebul=stress/jul09&cr=01>

++EMPLOYER STORIES++

Find out how big employers have dealt with stress within their organisation:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/videos/index.htm?ebul=stress/jul09&cr=02>

TUC Risks – 4 July 2009

TUC calls for cool workplaces

The TUC has called on employers to relax office dress codes and cool down their overheating offices and their sweltering employees. The plea, as temperatures soared to in excess of 32 degrees celsius, included urging managers to allow staff to loosen their ties and leave their jackets at home. The TUC is hoping most employers will adopt a more relaxed approach to office attire - if only for the hottest days of the summer - and help make work more bearable for staff. Employers who provide their staff with a cool and comfortable work environment are going to get more out of them when it's hot, the union body says. Workers who are unable to dress down into more appropriate summer clothing and who work in offices without air-conditioning, fans or a plentiful supply of cool drinking water are going to feel lethargic, and lack inspiration or creativity, it adds. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: 'Allowing employees to dress down in the current heatwave will prevent them from collapsing at their desks, and could also save companies money as they are able to turn down the air con a notch.' He added: 'Employers have got to remember that

it's no fun working in a baking office or factory and they should be doing all they can to take the temperatures down. Clearly vest tops and shorts are not suitable attire for all front line staff, but those not dealing with the public should be able to discard their tights, ties and suits and opt for more summery clothing this week.' At the request of the work and pensions secretary, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has instigated a review of workplace temperature problems and measures to address them. A workplace temperature forum will take place in London on 23 July.

- ? [TUC news release](#) and [Worksmart](#) guide. [The Telegraph](#). [Personnel Today](#).
- ? [HSE forum on workplace temperature](#), London, 23 July. For further details or to book a place, contact Helen Rowlands by [email](#) or phone 0151 951 4517.
- ? [HSE temperature at work webpage](#).

Usdaw wants work temperature ceiling

Foodworkers' union Usdaw is turning up the heat on Britain's stifling workplace temperatures. The union is campaigning for a maximum temperature to be enshrined in law, to protect thousands of Usdaw members during the summer months. It says a minimum temperature law already exists, but the absence of a legal maximum means many employees are forced to work under sweltering conditions that can be damaging to their health. Usdaw says a new Health and Safety Executive (HSE) review of the regulations on workplace temperature came as the result of the union's approaches to ministers. It is now gathering evidence from its members to feed into the consultation. Usdaw member Julie Risk was recently awarded damages after collapsing at work due to heat exhaustion. Julie said: 'Collapsing at work because of the heat was a nasty experience and put me out of action for two weeks.' She added: 'I think that making it illegal to have temperatures too high will help to make sure that companies give it a higher priority, which can only be a good thing.' Usdaw general secretary John Hannett commented: 'I am personally hopeful that a maximum workplace temperature will be put in place by the end of this year so that, next summer, workers will be able to work comfortably and in the knowledge that they are protected in law. With rising temperatures being predicted over the coming years, it is even more important that we recognise this as an issue and take action for the good of working people.'

- ? [Usdaw news release](#) and [hot work guide](#)

Restructuring is a risk to workers' health

Company restructuring can seriously harm workers' health, research backed by public sector union UNISON has found. The union helped prepare a 'Health in restructuring' report supported by the European Commission. It is calling on organisations to put a UNISON five-point action plan into place, including risk assessments to investigate possible health impacts of organisational change. The research shows that workers who take part in restructuring are 2.5 per cent more likely to get ill, with workers who lose their jobs and workplace survivors both affected. An organisation's efficiency is also likely to suffer, the research found, as workplace restructuring triggers increased absence, a rise in injury and accident rates and a wide variety of depressive disorders. Greg Thomson, UNISON's national

development manager and the report's co-author, said: 'Restructuring can also have an impact on the family and friends of those affected, as it may involve relocation as the only option to retaining the post. This can be expensive, lonely and disruptive for the family as a whole. We are urging employers to follow our five-point plan to prevent health and safety issues.' The union plan calls on employers to: be open about any proposed restructuring and to consult properly; provide access to counselling; treat workers fairly, using a transparent process and compensating properly those who lose their jobs; take into account the negative side effects of restructuring; and provide lifelong learning to help workers find other jobs more easily.

? [UNISON news release.](#)

Dog laws need more teeth

Unions have welcomed a proposed law which would help protect workers from irresponsible animal owners. Public sector union UNISON and post union CWU welcomed Angela Smith MP's Ten Minute Rule Bill aimed at amending the Dangerous Dogs Act. The unions say the current law leaves thousands of district nurses, utilities, postal and other workers vulnerable to savage dog attacks. They have joined forces with organisations including the RSPCA, the Dogs Trust and the Metropolitan Police to push for a law with more teeth. Dave Prentis, general secretary of UNISON, said: 'Most dog owners are responsible but dangerous dogs need to be brought under stricter legal control. It is appalling that district nurses, utility workers home care and social workers among others, run the risk of being attacked by these animals when visiting clients at home. Dog attacks can result in serious debilitation and disfiguring injuries and can also be the cause of high levels of stress.' Commenting on the Labour MP's draft law, Billy Hayes, CWU general secretary, said: 'Angela Smith's Bill comes not a moment too soon. The dangerous dogs laws in the UK currently leave thousands of postal workers at risk from debilitating dog attacks with no legal right to pursue damages or to have action taken against dangerous dogs and their owners.' He said 70 per cent of the 6,000 dog attacks on postal workers each year occurred on private land, where the current law does not apply. 'The CWU's view is a simple one that if a person wishes to own an animal, particularly a dog, then they have a duty to ensure that it doesn't cause personal injury and damage,' he said. CWU has criticised government plans to 'water-down' another piece of legislation, the 1971 Animals Act, a move it says would make it more difficult for victims of animal attacks to secure compensation from animal keepers and the owners of dogs.

? [CWU news release.](#) [UNISON news release.](#) [RSPCA news release.](#) [Thompsons Solicitors news release.](#) [The Guardian](#)

Changes to the HSE website

The Health and Safety Executive has redesigned its website. The changes include 'rebranded' sections on musculoskeletal disorders, risk management and other issues. There's also a new guide to health and safety regulation in Great Britain. Last month HSE announced it was to provide its publications free online. The first of the previously priced

documents will appear on the website from September, with the remainder expected to be available for download by March 2010.

- ? [HSE website](#) and [musculoskeletal disorders](#) and [risk management](#) sections. [A guide to health and safety regulation in Great Britain.](#)
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HSE Bulletin – 6 July 2009

WORKING IN WARM WEATHER

++ New temperature website ++

Advice to manage hot working environments.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/index.htm?ebul=hsegen/06-jul-2009&cr=7>

++ COSHH - risk assessments ++

Examples for a wide range of workplaces.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/riskassess/index.htm?ebul=hsegen/06-jul-2009&cr=10>

NUCLEAR HEALTH AND SAFETY

++ HSE Nuclear Directorate restructure ++

Improving the framework for delivery of nuclear regulation in the UK.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/nuclear/ndchanges.htm?ebul=hsegen/06-jul-2009&cr=11>

FIRE AND EXPLOSION

++ Petrol fire and explosion risk "Red Guide" ++

Moves to the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA) website.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/lau/lacs/65-58.htm?ebul=hsegen/06-jul-2009&cr=12>

BUSINESSES

++ Businesses - Health and safety leading from the top ++

Plan, deliver, monitor and review health and safety in your organisation.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/business/leadership.htm?ebul=hsegen/06-jul-2009&cr=15>

TUC Risks – 11 July 2009

HSE says advisers need accreditation

Health and safety advisers need accreditation to ensure they meet appropriate standards of professional competence, the chair of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has said. Judith Hackitt told guests at an International Institute of Risk and Safety Management (IIRSM) reception that although HSE did not intend to run such a scheme, it did believe one was necessary. She said: 'We do believe that there is a need for an accreditation system within

the competency framework for health and safety professionals. We have no interest in HSE directly controlling or regulating such a scheme, but we are very keen to ensure that all professional bodies who establish an accreditation scheme do so in a way that measures competence in practice, not just acquired knowledge.' She added: 'Accreditation must include continuing professional development as a requirement as well as a means of sanction, with real teeth, for anyone who acts unethically in their professional activities - including providing inappropriate advice or guidance.' Safety professionals' organisation IOSH has long sought a formal accreditation scheme for safety advisers.

? [HSE news release](#)

HSE e-Bulletin – 13 July 2009

SWINE FLU

++ HSE Swine flu guidance for employers - updated ++

Additional information on use of face masks in certain healthcare settings.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/news/2009/swineflu.htm?ebul=hsegen/13-jul-2009&cr=7>

PUBLICATIONS

++ HSE warns businesses not to be misled over new law poster ++

Don't be duped into buying unnecessary and overpriced copies of the health and safety law poster.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/press/2009/e09052.htm?ebul=hsegen/13-jul-2009&cr=8>

SPEECHES

++ Speech to international risk and safety institute ++

HSE Chair speech at International Institute of Risk and Safety Management (IIRSM) event.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/speeches/transcripts/hackitt300609.htm?ebul=hsegen/13-jul-2009&cr=13>

NUCLEAR HEALTH AND SAFETY

++ HSE Board paper - Nuclear Programme briefing ++

Information released following a Freedom of Information request.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/foi/releases/nd060709.htm?ebul=hsegen/13-jul-2009&cr=15>

TUC Risks – 18 July 2009

Union warning on transport swine flu risk

Transport union RMT has warned of severe pressure on staffing levels and serious safety risks across the transport system if the number of cases of swine flu increases dramatically. The union alert came as experts advised that up to 40 per cent of the population could become ill with the condition over the coming weeks. RMT said transport workers are known to be at greater risk of infection as they tend to work in close contact with the public and colleagues, and often in confined spaces like trains, buses, the Underground, ferries and offices. A Whitehall meeting last week of emergency services and business chiefs was told that more than a third of Britain's businesses have no response plans at all for dealing with the pandemic, while specific fears have been raised about the ability of the country's broadband network and the London Underground to operate effectively. RMT general secretary Bob Crow said: 'We are demanding to see the contingency transport plans that have been drawn up in Whitehall and to be involved in future discussions on dealing with the flu pandemic. RMT members are seriously concerned about the safety implications of so many staff being off sick at the same time.' The union leader added: 'If the predicted development of the swine flu is accurate it will have a devastating impact on transport services and will expose both the shortage of staff and the inadequate planning across our fragmented system. London is expected to be hardest hit and it would be a dangerous gamble to try and run services without adequate staffing levels.'

- ? [RMT news release](#). [Personnel Today](#). [The Observer](#).
- ? [TUC pandemic flu guidance](#).

MPs back directors' duties and big fines

Dangerous companies should face more prosecutions and tougher penalties, a top parliamentary committee has concluded. The latest report from the Work and Pensions Select Committee also calls on the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to explain the dramatic drop off in prosecutions for safety offences, down by 40 per cent in four years, from 1,720 offences prosecuted in 2003/04 to 1,028 in 2007/08. The report also criticised a lack of commitment from company directors. A committee statement on the 12 July release of the report said 'it appears that board level commitment to prioritising health and safety is still too low weak.' It added: 'The Committee has endorsed the recommendation for positive duties on directors in Rita Donaghy's recent report into the underlying causes of fatalities in construction [[Risks 414](#)]. We maintain that, if voluntary guidance is not working, the government should legislate to ensure company directors take ownership for their employees' safety.' Other recommendations included support for an increase in worker involvement. Committee chair, Terry Rooney MP, said: 'Employers need to understand their duties and where they breach them, they must be held to account. Employees also need to be aware of their role in creating a safe work environment and they should be involved through worker engagement schemes, not prevented through fear of blacklisting.'

- ? [Work and Pensions Select Committee news release](#). [Workplace health and safety: follow-up report](#), (HC 635-I), Work and Pensions Committee, 12 July 2009.

HSE e-bulletin 20 July 2009

PUBLICATIONS

++ Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act - Employees guide ++

Revised edition of DWP/HSE leaflet brought in line with the revised employers guide (HSE40).

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/hse39.pdf?ebul=hsegen/20-jul-2009&cr=13> [PDF 75KB]

++ HSE Cheltenham office ++

A new regional Nuclear Directorate satellite office opened on 13 July 2009.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/maps/midlands.htm?ebul=hsegen/20-jul-2009&cr=11>

++ HSE Board framework document ++

Sets out the arrangements within which HSE/ DWP operate.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/howwework/management/index.htm?ebul=hsegen/20-jul-2009&cr=12>

CARRIAGE OF DANGEROUS GOODS

++ - Prohibition notices - March 2009++

Prohibition notices issued by Police or VOSA.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/enforce/reports.htm?ebul=hsegen/20-jul-2009&cr=17>

HSE e-bulletin 27 July 2009

CONTROL OF MAJOR ACCIDENT HAZARDS

++ Principles of process safety leadership ++

Eight principles in dealing with significant risks to people and the environment.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/comah/buncefield/pslprinciples.htm?ebul=hsegen/27-jul-2009&cr=5>

CHEMICALS AT WORK

++ Working with substances hazardous to health ++

Leaflet on how to control hazardous substances at work so that they do not cause ill health.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/index.htm?ebul=hsegen/27-jul-2009&cr=6>

++ Annual corporate health and safety plan ++

These plans set out the key activities we want to do and the targets we have set ourselves.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/strategiesandplans/corporateplan/plan0910.pdf?ebul=hsegen/27-jul-2009&cr=8> [PDF 58KB]

NUCLEAR

++ Nuclear Division conference ++

Transcript of speech given by the HSE Chair, London, 17 July 2009.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/speeches/transcripts/hackitt170709.htm?ebul=hsegen/27-jul-2009&cr=17>

++ Recent releases ++

"Equality Impact Assessments", "Design management"

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/foi/publishedinformation.htm?ebul=hsegen/27-jul-2009&cr=18>

Workplace Law Bulletin – 30 July 2009

Renewed call for director duties

A legal firm is renewing calls for the Government to legally force company directors to take responsibility for accidents at work. Currently directors are governed by voluntary guidance which can make it difficult to prosecute.

In a recent report – One Death Too Many - the Work and Pensions Select Committee said board level commitment to prioritising health and safety was weak and recommended binding health and safety duties for senior managers and company directors.

Tom Jones director of Policy and Public Affairs at Thompsons Solicitors said: "We welcome this timely report from the Select Committee and urge the Government to act on it quickly.

"Directors are not legally obliged to take responsibility for accidents in their workplace and until they are there will continue to be an unacceptable number of avoidable workplace accidents and deaths.

"Just this week there was a director jailed for three years for the death of a 15-year-old on a construction site but that is very much the exception. Most of the time directors get away scot free when employees are maimed or killed.

"It is clear the current voluntary code is not working. Directors must be forced to take accountability - not just pay lip service to the importance of health and safety with their fingers and toes crossed hoping no injuries will occur. The HSE will continue to fail to secure a conviction against those responsible until Boards are made to treat the most fundamental of issues - the health and safety of those they employ - with as much importance as profit margins.

"We are one of the only countries in the world who do not hold named directors or managers responsible for the health and safety of their own employees. It is time the Government listened to its own MPs by taking action to resolve this."

More than 817,000 were injured at work during 2007/08 and an estimated 150 people died in avoidable workplace accidents in the last year.

A survey by the HSE found that only 33% of companies surveyed knew that a voluntary code existed despite an estimate that management failure contributes to the death of a worker in 70% of construction fatalities.

Campaign to stamp out tired driving launched

The Fleet Safety Forum, an initiative coordinated by Brake, the road safety charity, is urging companies to tackle the silent killer of driver tiredness in a campaign launched this week.

The Wake Up! Campaign is calling on employers to do more to manage drivers' schedules and health to prevent driver tiredness, particularly during the recession when employees might be under pressure to get more work done.

The charity has produced a free information pack for fleet managers and their drivers giving straightforward guidance to help them recognise the signs of tiredness on the road and prevent tired driving in the first place. Workshops are also being held.

Research by Brake on driver tiredness among fleet drivers has found that one in ten at-work drivers admit to having fallen asleep at the wheel, compared with one in 20 drivers who don't drive for work. Half of at-work drivers admit to getting behind the wheel after less than five hours' sleep, compared to 35% of drivers who don't drive for work.

Roz Cumming, Fleet Safety Forum manager at Brake, said: "Driver tiredness is a deadly and major killer that can creep up on a company with no warning, particularly during times when business is tough, unless commonsense risk management practices are applied.

"I urge fleet managers to support the Wake Up! Campaign and help Brake to save lives".

Disclaimer:

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