

# Hazardous Times

## Greater Manchester Hazards Centre E-Newsletter

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## Introduction

*Welcome to the second edition of our Greater Manchester Hazards Centre Newsletter for 2017, we have had a busy couple of months. In the lead up to International Workers Memorial Day, we produced an exhibition at the Peoples History Museum in Manchester, a Health and Safety Quiz in the Working Class Movement Library in Salford, and a film about the importance of International Workers memorial day.*



*The General Election has been called and we will know in the next month if we have a Government which is committed to workers health, safety and welfare or one that prioritises employer's profits. Andy Burnham has been elected as the Mayor of Greater Manchester and Steve Rotherham has been elected as the Mayor of Merseyside. They have both committed to supporting workers rights and to good jobs not zero hours job and we will be pleased to work with them both to support workers health safety and welfare, whatever the outcome of the General Election.*

*What is very clear, is that whoever is elected as the new Government, unless we get ourselves organised, workers will continue to be killed, made ill and injured because of work in huge numbers. Thousands of workers do not belong to trade union organised workplaces and many thousands are working on vulnerable contracts in precarious work and earning low pay. Research shows that where there is an organised trade union then the workers are 50% safer, and also that the lower you are paid the more vulnerable you are to injury and illness because of work.*

## Action Mesothelioma Day

On Friday 7<sup>th</sup> July, events organized by the Asbestos Victims Support Groups will take place across the region in remembrance of those who have died from mesothelioma. Asbestos kills at least 5,000 each year in the UK and it is anticipated that there will be between 60,000 and



75,000 new cases between now and 2050. In Manchester there will be an event at 12.30 in Sackville gardens followed by a public meeting at the Mechanics Institute 'Mesothelioma – a problem to be solved' at 1.00pm.

## Reps Issues and Concerns:

In recent weeks we have met many trade union health and safety reps: on trade union courses, at conferences, in their workplaces, in their committee meetings and even just out and about on the streets. It is always interesting talking to reps about the issues that are of concern to them and their members. Some of the issues have been included in this newsletter in more detail, which we hope will also be of interest to other reps. At a health and safety reps meeting the issue of health and safety reps for apprentices came up. Reps wanted to ensure that their concerns were prioritized and also that they were involved in health and safety. We will feature this in a future edition by highlighting a case study.

One of the issues raised by an NHS health and safety representative, is how we progress the stress risk assessments that we talked about in a previous issue of the e-newsletter. It is important that a joint steering committee is set up to ensure that management are dealing with the risks associated with the stress that is being caused or made worse by the way your organisation manages people.

A joint steering committee's remit will be to ensure that any stress triggers are risk assessed and that control measures are put in place following the principles of the control hierarchy. Please find below some guidance that we are circulating to support reps.

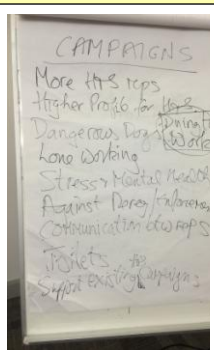
## Setting up a Stress Steering Group

Terms of Reference – Stress Steering Group

1. What is the membership and structure of the Stress Steering Group?

The principles set out with reference to health and safety committees in the SRSC Regs – Guidance paragraph 84, should be applied to how the Stress Steering Group is set up. In particular:

- They should be compact
  - Not more members of management than union representatives and this should be based on adequate representation, so there may be a good case for there to be more union representatives than management. Including ensuring all trade unions and all areas are represented.
  - Safety advisers, doctors and other h&s professionals should be ex-officio members.
  - Management representatives should be aimed at ensuring adequate authority as well as the necessary knowledge and expertise
- Best practice should ensure that:



- Meeting dates are agreed in advance and only postponed by joint agreement
- A named senior person, with executive h&s responsibility is committed to being present
- Named people are given responsibility for actions and committed to completion dates
- Minutes are issued promptly, are agreed and include information to reflect the discussion, decision, responsibility and a timetable for action
- All members of the Stress Steering Group are able to place items on the agenda

According to the HSE guidance at [www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/steering.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/steering.htm) they advise a list of typical members of a steering group. They also state that it is 'important to have a representative group to steer and drive your action forward'. Therefore we would agree that we want senior management driving the agenda. It should also ensure that all trade unions are represented, the health and safety manager and other management representatives who have responsibility to deliver on the Stress Management Standards.

## 2. What are the key functions of the Stress Steering Group?

The Stress Steering Group should decide on:

- The aims of the Stress Steering group, which should include reference to oversee and facilitate the implementation of the Stress Management Standards.
- The main actions to be undertaken, which should include the organisation and conduct of risk assessment and the design and implementation of control measures.
- The timetable for actions.
- What resources are needed to complete the actions?
- What regular information will be received by the group and how it will be investigated?
- The communication strategy for the group. i.e. how the Stress Steering Group and its actions will be communicated to the workforce. It should include how the aims and activities will be transparent for the workforce and accountable back to the group.
- When periodic reviews of progress should take place, what reports should be produced and who will have this responsibility. The Terms of Reference should be endorsed by the 'board level' management.

## 3. Key Responsibilities:

The Stress Steering Group will need the following roles:

- A Stress Steering Group chair to chair the meetings and ensure that the actions are recorded accurately and progress reported to 'board level' management.
- A Stress Steering Group secretary to record the decisions of the meetings, organise the actions, organise the meetings and facilitate the meetings as per the agreed terms of reference. Ensures there is an

audit trail of decisions.

- Other specific roles by agreement with the group to ensure all members of the group are actively involved in the decisions and actions.

4. Further Information:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/pdfs/steeringgroups.pdf>

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/tacking-workplace-stress-guide.pdf>

## **John Atkin died from septicaemia after being bitten by a dog at work**

Families Against Corporate Killers (FACK) has recently worked with the family of John Atkin who was bitten by a dog at work on 23rd February and then found dead at home on 27th February 2016. A post mortem showed he died of septicaemia from the dog bite. His mother and brothers are most concerned that this should not happen to anyone else and to spread knowledge about the risk of sepsis.

Patricia Atkin, John's mother said: "Our son John was such a kind and honourable hard working man who was struck down too early by Sepsis. We take some comfort in knowing that lessons have been learnt about the need for adequate procedures to inform workers of hazards such as dogs in properties and to ensure first aiders are fully trained to identify Sepsis. We have such kind support from our family, John's friends and colleagues, Hilda at FACK, our Solicitors MW and Barrister John Schmitt who gave their service with no charge and the Police and Coroner's court staff."

FACK works to support, assist and advocate for families of those killed at work, as they go through the process of investigation, inquest and any prosecution, and to campaign to prevent future preventable work-related deaths. FACK works closely with McMillan Williams solicitors to ensure 'equality of arms' at the Coroner's Court which may involve acting for the families on a pro bono basis to provide them with legal representation at this difficult time. John's brother Alex Atkin and mother, Patricia Atkin, contacted FACK and together we began to find the answers as to why he died. We put them in touch with McMillan Williams and Justina Molloy and Simon Brown were instructed as legal representatives.

John's death was only being investigated by a Police Constable and initially it was not clear if the HSE or Local Authority were the enforcing authority and whether they were investigating his death. After some confusion about where the RIDDOR report of his death was sent we made contact with HSE inspectors in Basingstoke and arranged a meeting with the family. They were updated on the investigation since the HSE had become involved quite late, and were able to contribute their own knowledge and concerns about John's death. Issues about risk assessment over dogs in houses and the chain of responsibility between the NHS, Surrey County Council and John's employer Millbrook were thoroughly discussed.



John was employed as a driver technician, delivering equipment to those who have undergone substantial medical operations by a company called Millbrook. In February last year, John was delivering a stool to a lady who had recently had a leg amputated. John had been advised by his employers that the property would be unlocked and that he should enter and make himself known to the lady. John did as he was instructed however, unfortunately there was a dog in the property which he and his employers were not aware of and he was bitten as soon as he entered.

Following the bite, John returned to his work depot where he received first aid for a simple cut. He was asked whether he had an up to date tetanus vaccination which he confirmed he did. He remained at work and continued working until he became ill on Friday and was taken home. Sadly, on 27 February 2016, four days after being bitten, John was found unresponsive, having developed staphylococcal septicaemia, and died.

Had John been advised of the risk of septicaemia and the warning signs to watch out for, he may have sought further medical assistance. If he had received antibiotics, John may not have developed septicaemia and may still be alive today. If there had been compliance with health and safety at work law and proper risk assessment and control measures implemented, John may not have been bitten at all.

McMillan Williams represented his family at the inquest into his death, throughout which we were assisted by John Schmitt of 9 Gough Square who also acted on a pro bono basis. At the inquest it transpired that his employers had not undertaken a full risk assessment of the lady's home, believing instead that an assessment of the property would have been carried out by the NHS or Social Services who had ordered the stool on the lady's behalf.

The jury returned a unanimous verdict of accidental death and the Coroner indicated her intention that a Prevention of Future Death Report be sent to John's employers requiring them to make improvements to their systems to ensure that there are no similar deaths in the future.

FACK cautions families from the outset that they will not get the justice they need and deserve but that we will fight with them to get as much justice as possible. We will try to get the answers as to how and why their loved one died by ensuring that investigations are as thorough as possible and follow the Joint Protocol on Work-Related Deaths; the CPS and police can fully consider all the evidence for Corporate Manslaughter and Gross Negligence Manslaughter before passing the case to the health and safety enforcing authorities, the HSE and Local Authorities( L.A.). Usually an inquest is held at that stage before the HSE or L.A. decide whether to bring any health and safety charges.

This case clearly highlights the dangers of dog bites to workers and the need not just for first aid but for clear advice to ensure that anyone with a wound that punctures the skin is advised to get medical advice as soon as possible as the latest NHS guidance states, before they feel

ill.

This applies to dog human and other bites and any injury where the skin is punctured which may drive bacteria that may cause sepsis into the blood stream where they multiply rapidly and can kill within days or hours. See: NHS advice on bites: <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Bites-human-and-animal/Pages/Introduction.aspx> and on Sepsis: <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Blood-poisoning/Pages/introduction.aspx>

No worker should be reassured by having an up to date tetanus shot as this protects against a specific bacterium, Clostridium, not against the bacteria that causes blood poisoning/sepsis. Not all bites will lead to sepsis but it is vital to get advice and treatment before feeling ill as by that stage it may be too late to be effective.

This case also makes clear it is essential there is a good risk assessment for workers going into people's homes. A risk assessment should find out if a dog is present, and insist on control measures being put in place, such as calling the home owner before delivery so that a dog can be isolated and secured, or that the dog is removed from the house on the date and time of the delivery/work to be carried out to prevent the risk of a bite. In this case the outsourcing of the delivery of the disability aids created a chain of involvement and responsibility of the NHS hospital which ordered the equipment, the County Council which placed the order, and John's employer, the company that delivered it. Suitable and sufficient risk assessment does not appear to have been carried out by any of the links in this chain, assumptions may have been made, and information not properly passed to John, the worker at risk.

The Police decided not to take any prosecutions against the home owner or the companies involved but the HSE is still pursuing lines of enquiry and follow up with John's employer to ensure proper risk assessments are carried out.

FACK advice for union safety reps and workers at risk of dog bites is:

- Review First Aid procedures on bites (HSE First Aid <http://www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid/legislation.htm>) and that NHS advice to seek medical advice for puncture wounds is given to all workers at risk of dog or other bites and puncture wounds.

More on Sepsis :NICE Guidance  
<http://www.bmj.com/content/354/bmj.i4030>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-39219765?SThisFB>]

- All dogs may bite an unfamiliar person, they do not need to be 'dangerous dogs', a specific breed or have a known history of biting, all dogs must be treated as a potential bite risk to workers entering a house and must be isolated or removed;
- To review relevant risk assessments that have been done, or ensure that suitable and sufficient new risk assessments are carried out for every job in people's homes, parks, wherever dogs may be

encountered during work. All dogs may bite an unfamiliar person, they do not need to be 'dangerous dogs' or have a known history of biting, all dogs must be treated as a potential bite risk to workers entering a house and must be isolated or removed;

- Ensure that the risk of dog bite is eliminated as far as possible - by isolation within a house, or removal while work is carried out - and only where this is not possible such as work in streets, gardens and parks, provide suitable PPE and training.

Reminder for all employers of those working in domestic property:

- Under the Health and Safety at work etc Act, employers are under a legal duty to provide a workplace free from risk to the health, safety and welfare of their employees, and others who may be affected by the work activity, so far as is reasonably practicable.
- When a worker visits a person's home to do a job, that home becomes their place of work and the worker's employer is under a legal duty to protect their health, safety and welfare and to carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment, under Regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations.
- This must include assessment of all the potential significant the risks to their workers' health, safety and welfare. Then the employer must take steps to eliminate or control all those identified risks to their workers.

FACK will be pursuing this case with the HSE and also asking some questions about the way in which the investigation was carried out, errors made and time lost.

If you would like to support the work of FACK please donate to us, and/or buy some Workers Memorial Day Forget-me-Knots Ribbons, contact [mail@gmhazards.org.uk](mailto:mail@gmhazards.org.uk)

### **Safety Reps Actions:**

Following a report of the case to the North West TUC Safety Reps Network, the health and safety rep from Unite at British Gas took the details of this case back to his management.

The rep said that 'after hearing this and reviewing our policy on animal bites it was clear that this fatality could have happened to our members. After consulting with h&s management I'm pleased to let you know that our policy has been amended in line with NHS guidance on animal bites and engineers who sustain an injury are now advised to seek immediate medical assistance.'

This change covered 6,000 engineers and is a significant policy change. It shows how reps make a difference in making work safer.

We would like to record our congratulations to the reps involved, it is excellent work!

## International Workers Memorial Day



Tracey Seward speaking in Manchester about the death of her husband Mark who was killed at work on the 27<sup>th</sup> May, 2015.

On April 28<sup>th</sup> and on other days near to the actual International Workers Memorial Day (IWMD), there were many International workers Memorial Day events held across the region. On the Saturday before IWMD, Salford TUC held their annual remembrance event at Agecroft Colliery at which Hilda Palmer spoke. On the Friday, Blackburn, Manchester and Liverpool held events with many speakers. On Friday evening Chorley held an event in Astley Park, on Saturday Preston held theirs and on Sunday, Bolton held a march and had speakers in the town centre. Each event is different, each trying to ensure that there is a respectful remembrance of those who have been killed by work, but also an opportunity to discuss the priorities and campaigning issues faced by workers under the aim of 'Fight for the Living!'

In Manchester an exhibition was displayed in the peoples History Museum, over the weekend of the International Workers Memorial day. The exhibition consisted of 6 panels describing how inequality and discrimination impact on workers health, safety and welfare. It also included a showing of the new film on the importance of international workers memorial day, which was projected on to the museum walls near where the wreaths were placed.



<http://www.hazardscampaign.org.uk/blog/new-28-april-graphic-resources-from-the-hazards-campaign>

In the working class movement library in Salford, we developed a health and safety quiz for groups of members to go and complete. If any branches or groups of trade union members are interested in taking part in the health and safety quiz then contact us and we will send you more details.

In Chorley, Unite reps handed out packets of forgetmenot seeds to remember those who have been killed at work.



A display of teardrops featured at many of the events over the weekend. Each one telling the real story behind the death of someone killed at work, like Ben Edge who fell from a roof and his employers tried to cover up their failings to provide safety equipment and that they had no risk assessment in place.





International Workers Memorial Day is held under the aims of Remember the Dead and Fight for the Living. Events take place all around the world and many of them are reported at:

<http://28april.org/>

Pictures and posters can be found at:

Facebook page: International Workers Memorial Day in Manchester#IWMD17

[www.gmhazards.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/WMD-Poster-Order-Form-2017.doc](http://www.gmhazards.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/WMD-Poster-Order-Form-2017.doc)

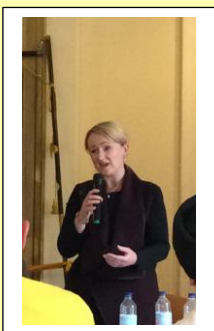
## Blackpool deserves Better!

On Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> May, we attended this fantastic Blackpool TUC event, which explored a number of different issues around low pay and precarious employment. The first session was about 'the crisis we live in'. Afterwards, the Hazards Campaign, Janet Newsham, was invited to speak in the 'How do we fight back?' session, along side Julie Sherry of the fast food rights campaign, and others. Julie talked about the campaign in McDonalds where 90% of workers work on zero hours contracts but the day after a global day of action McDonalds announced that they would end zero hours. The day of action had workers dressed as evil Ronald Mcdonalds with their picnic of an Unhappy Meal deal. This contained zero hours pay and when they were asked to leave, they all dramatically

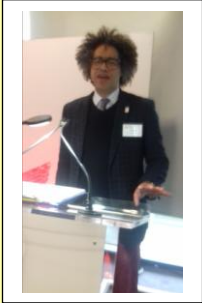
started crying. Then they had the Happy Meal which contained guaranteed contracts and pay and they all played and did the can-can.

After lunch the discussion developed around 'what next for our communities? Building a fairer society for all'. Tina from the anti frackers spoke and Rebecca Long Bailey Labour shadow minister spoke about the priorities in the Labour Party manifesto. And Ian Hodson President of BFAWU championed the cause for £10 an hour living wage.

The aim of the conference was to launch a proactive campaign for a pay rise for all workers in Blackpool and an increase in trade union membership and activism and to bring much needed long term employment.



## HSE engagement event at the AJ Bell Stadium in Salford held on 19<sup>th</sup> April



GMHC attended one of 5 HSE 'stakeholder engagement' events on 19 April in Salford as part of the 'Help GB Work Well' strategy consultation. The HSE wanted feedback on their three Health and Work Strategy priorities - occupational stress, musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) and lung disease- and their 19 sector guidance plans. There were only a handful of safety reps amongst mainly managers from different industries.

HSE officers explained that the Health and Work Strategy was launched in December and 3 priorities chosen because of these are the most serious issues facing workers. 18,000 workers developed lung disease last year, 11 million working days were lost because of stress and 11 million days lost because of musculoskeletal disorders. However, they did point out that there were human stories and human loss behind the statistics.

The discussions were fairly tightly controlled to provide desired outcomes and get us to sign up to the statements HSE provided. But it was an opportunity to ensure the role and value of trade union safety reps was kept firmly on the agenda and to try to influence the discussions in favour of workers, pointing out the need for enforcement as this is missing from the Occupational Stress plan though included in the lung disease and MSD plans.

A very positive contribution at the event was the presentation given by the National Health and Safety officer for USDAW, Doug Russell, giving an overview of Trade Union involvement in health and safety, and the massive impact health and safety reps make in improving health and safety. We were filmed giving a short interview but not before having to cover up the 'Stop it you're killing us' T-shirt! And so far this has not appeared on the #helpgbworkwell twitter feed. We made a number of points in our table discussion on Stress, and MSDs and on the Manufacturing and Agriculture sector plans which we feel need a lot more work.

The final Health and Work Strategy will be launched in London on 29 June

## Trade Union Education

Trade Union Health and Safety courses continue to be run at Stockport, Warrington, Liverpool, Blackburn, Burnley, Preston and Manchester by local Trade Union Education Units at various colleges. A full list of the courses available for each term can be found at:

<https://www.tuceducation.org.uk/findacourse/>

It is also worth noting that if any workplace or trade union would like a



bespoke course developing then the trade union education units are able to deliver courses on all sorts of issues and also they are now not tied to a particular number of days or hours (only more than 2 or 3).



## The 28<sup>th</sup> National Hazards Conference

The booking forms are now out for the Hazards 2017 conference 'Organising health, safety and welfare in an insecure world'. It is being held at Keele University, 28<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> July, 2017.

The conference is the biggest educational and organising event for trade union safety reps and activists. It is an opportunity for health and safety reps from all different unions, workplaces and sectors to network, share information and learn new skills. There are 18 workshops to choose from and 3 meetings. One on Challenging the individual therapy view vs collective action, to prevent work causing mental ill-health. A second one entitled 'Towards zero work-related cancer' and meeting 3 is on using new methods of organising on health and safety. Every year we invite leading national trade unionists, campaigners and academics to address the conference and this year we have invited Jessica Martinez from Hazards Campaign sister organisation, US National COSH who will be talking about the joint threats we face and how we can work together to fight them. For more information see [www.hazardscampaign.org.uk](http://www.hazardscampaign.org.uk)



## Greater Manchester Hazards Centre and other links:

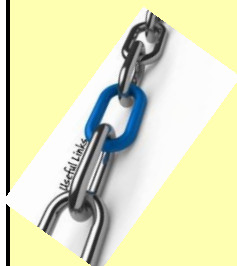
### **Address:**

**Windrush Millennium Centre,  
70 Alexandra Rd, Manchester M16 7WD  
Tel:0161 636 7557 / Fax:0161 636 7556  
EMail: [mail@gmhazards.org.uk](mailto:mail@gmhazards.org.uk)**

***Our website needs to be revamped! – [www.gmhazards.org.uk](http://www.gmhazards.org.uk) – if you have the skills or want to get involved in supporting us please contact us.***

### **Other Links:**

**Facebook: *We didn't Vote to Die at Work; Families Against Corporate Killers; Hazards Magazine***



**Twitter: @hazardscampaign; @HildaPalmer; @hazardsmagazine;  
@hazardseitor**

**HSE: [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)**

**TUC Risks: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace-issues/health-and-safety/risks-newsletter>**

**Breast Cancer campaigning organization for primary prevention:  
<http://www.frompinktoprevention.org/>**

**Cancer campaigning organization for prevention of environmental and  
occupational risk factors: <http://allianceforcancerprevention.org.uk/>**

**Greater Manchester Asbestos Victims Support Group: [www.asbestos-victims-support.org](http://www.asbestos-victims-support.org)**

**Hazards Magazine: [www.hazards.org](http://www.hazards.org)**