



Hazardous Times

Greater Manchester Hazards Centre E-Newsletter

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Welcome!

Welcome to our e-newsletter. This is an opportunity for safety reps to share information, inform other reps on good practice in their workplaces and discuss the challenges that they are facing in their industrial sectors and workplaces.

If anyone would like to contribute to the newsletter, raise issues, ask for help, tell us your successes, then please contact us at mail@gmhzards.org.uk.

These have been an interesting few weeks for all of us. With the decision of the British people to vote to leave the EU, we are likely to see some challenging times ahead. We have to be alert to attempts by employers to undermine our working conditions and the Governments continued attack on regulations that ensure our health, safety and welfare at work.

John's News and Views

Electromagnetic fields (EMF's)

The long-awaited Control of Electromagnetic Fields at Work Regulations 2016 came into force on 1st July. Rooted in the original EU Physical Agents Directive that included noise, vibration, and artificial optical radiation (like lasers), EMF's were probably the most difficult to tackle, particularly as argument raged as to their, especially long term, effects on human beings. It has also been suggested that EMF's might be the 'new asbestos'. Organisations like PowerWatch (www.powerwatch.org.uk) continue to raise questions about the effect of EMF's, and they have some good advice on safer cell-phone use.

There has long been concern about the possible effects of microwaves and other EMF's from cell-phone masts and base stations on buildings, underneath high-voltage power lines and the potential for large-scale wi-fi networks to cause harm.

Regulations at

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2016/588/pdfs/uksi_20160588_en.pdf.

They require employers to limit exposure, undertake suitable and sufficient risk assessments for risks, make an action plan to protect staff; and then reduce or eliminate the risks identified. They must also train and inform staff, provide health surveillance and medical examinations when the exposure limits have been exceeded, and keep records.

HSE guidance to the Regulations here

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg281.pdf>

NICE guidance on workplace health

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has recently revised its 2015 guidance on Workplace Health, to include advice to employers in respect of older workers.

When the original NICE guidance was published last year, GMHC advice was for local union organisations to raise this guidance with their employer and ask how they intended to respond to it. This gives us another opportunity to do that.

Download the updated guidance at <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng13>

New TUC publications

Fatigue: The TUC has produced new guidance on fatigue, as a result of discussion on the TUC's Health and Safety Specialist's group. HSE has web pages on this, but it was felt they focused too closely on things like shift work; workers needed something a little more general and particularly workload/long hours related, a major concern in many workplaces. Download a copy from the TUC website.

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Fatigue%20July%202016%20pdf.docx.pdf#overlay-context>

Asbestos: The TUC has now added a useful document to the growing campaign to remove asbestos from all workplaces, and dispose of it safely. The TUC says that it is highly unlikely asbestos is never going to be disturbed if left in place and despite repeated improvements to the Control of Asbestos Regulations, they are simply not being complied with in many workplaces. HSE prosecutes a number of employers for failures every year, but many offences go undiscovered and unpunished. Includes a simple and useful checklist for safety representatives to use in the workplace.

"Asbestos - Time to get rid of it" – a TUC guide for union workplace representatives.

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace-issues/health-and-safety/asbestos/asbestos-eradication-campaign/asbestos-%E2%80%93-time-get-rid-it>



https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Guide%20for%20reps%20May%202016%20pdf_0.pdf

Report of the 27th National Hazards Conference, held at Keele University 29-31st July 2016

The Hazards conference is the largest conference in Europe for Trade Union Health and Safety reps. This year's theme was 'Building Resistance to Support Safety Reps'. It was a packed weekend with fantastic speakers, worthwhile workshops and inspiring meetings.

The Friday evening started with a plenary session where we listened to Hugh Robertson from the TUC, Professor Steve Tombs (Open University), Aida Ponce Del Castillo from the ETUI and Dr. Anne Raynal an ex-HSE senior medical Inspector. Anne Raynal talked about the lack of reporting from employers on workplace illness and alarmingly the subsequent lack of prosecutions and enforcement. 'On average there are only 1600 disease notifications under RIDDOR per annum for the 516000 new cases of work-related ill health that HSE estimate occurs every year (0.03%)' Steve Tombs talked about the privatisation of enforcement, 'dismantling a system of regulation – social protection – which was put into place from the 1830s onwards'. He also detailed the reduction in the number of HSE inspections (fell by 69%), prosecutions (fell by 35%), and spoke about the concerns of the Primary Authority Scheme which enables businesses across different Local Authorities to select one to regulate all of its sites across the country.

The Saturday was filled with workshops and campaign meetings one with speaker Sarah Wiktorski from the Better than Zero campaign, led by young people challenging and campaigning against zero hours contracts and working practices, which include having to pay multi millionaire restaurant owner, a percentage of their earnings for working there.

On the Sunday we had a plenary with Sanjiv Pandita, ex Director AMRC working with the Hazards Campaign to establish a Global Occupational Safety and Health network: Sanjiv talked about the huge manufacturing companies employing 50-80 thousand workers in enormous hangars who make our phones and trainers. He showed pictures of the slums they are forced to live in because of poverty wages, reminiscent of the Victorian slums during the industrial revolution. We were reminded that imported goods from Asia, come at a cost of very bad health and safety conditions for the workers. Royston Bentham from the Blacklisting campaign

Greater Manchester Hazards Centre act as the secretariat to the Hazards Campaign and organise the Annual Conference.



and David Hardman a lecturer at London Met who has been made redundant, for his Health and Safety reps work.

We were urged to send a postcard to Theresa May to put pressure on the new Prime Minister to support and not erode health and safety legislation.
<http://www.hazardscampaign.org.uk/postcard>

There were many highlights from the conference, plenty of networking and sharing of information including: the reps that talked about the lack of welfare-toilet facilities available to them because they were drivers or weren't being released to take toilet breaks; the terrible slum conditions for people in Asia who make our phones and trainers; the lack of protection and enforcement for workers everywhere and finally the inspirational speech by John McDonnell who offered the support of the Labour Party to Health and Safety reps and the Hazards Campaign.

Report of the conference can be found at www.hazardscampaign.org.uk

October – Breast Cancer Month

In October 2015 GMHC contributed to an open letter was sent to breast cancer charities calling on them to remove their pink ribbon blindfolds and asking them why, despite all the money raised, increasing numbers of us are getting this disease.

According to *From Pink to Prevention* (www.frompinktoprevention.org) breast cancer is the most common cause of death among women with over 500,000 deaths each year. Lots of research has ignored the occupational and environmental cause of breast cancer but *from pink to prevention* reports on the higher incidents of breast cancer among women in working in agriculture, automotive plastics, the food canning industries and also women working night shifts more than twice a week. In the UK the HSE say about 2,000 women a year develop breast cancer from night shift.

'From Pink to Prevention' also state that there are almost 1000 chemicals known or suspected of interfering with our hormones, ie endocrine disrupting chemicals (ECDs), 216 chemicals in regular usage have been found to be linked to breast cancer (73 present in consumer products or as contaminants in food, 35 are air pollutants, and 25 associated with occupational exposures.

This October '*the Alliance for Cancer Prevention*' continues to put pressure on those people and organisations responsible for environmental and occupational causes of breast cancer to stop exposing people by these toxins. They are calling on trade Unions to share information about campaigns and actions in their workplaces and industries about what they are doing on occupational and environmental cancers. (www.allianceforcancerprevention.org) Greater Manchester Hazards has produced a leaflet and poster for reps to use in their workplaces.

FAK – Families against Corporate Killing

FAK is a national group which campaigns to stop workers and others being killed in preventable workplace incidents, provides information, advice, support and advocacy for bereaved families. FACK works with solicitors to ensure experienced legal representation at inquests and for compensation (www.fack.org.uk) Hilda Palmer continues to work with and support a number of bereaved families seeking justice and answers as to why their family members have been killed and injured by work.

There have been a number of multiple fatalities in less than a year in England. The Bosley Wood Flour Mill explosion of 17th July 2015, which killed 4 workers, Derek Moore, Dorothy Bailey, Derek Barks and Jason Shingler. On 23rd February 2016, the collapse of a boiler house while being prepared for demolition at Didcot Power Station killed 4 workers, Michael Collings, Christopher Huxtable, Ken Cresswell, and



John Shaw. At a Recycling plant, Hawkeswood Metals in Birmingham, a wall collapsed on top of 5 workers, killing Ousmane kaba Diaby, Almano Kinteh jammeh, Bangally Tunkara Dukaray, Saib Sumbundu Sillah and Mahamadou Jagana , migrant workers, Spanish Nationals from Africa. See below for more information about the Recycling Sector.

HSE - Statistics

In the last three years, the long term downward trend in UK work fatalities has plateaued and is now rising. HSE's latest fatality statistics released show a provisional total of 144 workers killed in work-related incidents which is slightly higher than last year's final total of 142 year and 136 the year before. (<http://press.hse.gov.uk/2016/annual-workplace-fatality-statistics-published/>)

However, these numbers are only a fraction of the people killed by work. They represent the numbers reported through RIDDOR to the HSE. They do not include those killed at sea, in air crashes or on the roads while working and they do not include the large number of workers killed because of ill health caused by work.

According to the Hazards Campaign each year around 1,400 are killed in work-related incidents and up to 50,000 by work related illnesses. Approximately 2 million suffer ill health and there are over 600,000 injuries per year.

At a time when we need the HSE to be strengthening their work on health and safety, their enforcement actions are being undermined by a reduction in inspections and funding and all but one worker representative on the tripartite governing board have been removed. See below for more information about HSE Board.

WELLBEING AND RESILIENCE?

With increasing workloads and unacceptable pressure from draconian working practices, workers are suffering short and long term ill health effects of stress and mental ill health. Many employers have introduced wellbeing sessions and resilience training; however this fails to address the underlying causes. Employers should use the management standards and carry out stress risk assessments. They should put in place control measures to stop these unacceptable working conditions. Links: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm> - HSE standards
<http://www.hazards.org/stress/distressingfailure.htm> - Hazards magazine
<http://www.hazards.org/stress/resilience.htm> - Hazards magazine

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY IN MANCHESTER

This year on Workers Memorial Day the event in Manchester was successfully held in Albert Square. In addition, an exhibition was displayed in the Peoples History Museum in Manchester. There were a number of different events across the North West in Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside supported by GM Hazards through information, leaflets, posters, banners, car stickers, ribbons and speakers. A short film was produced in 2016 by the Midlands TUC about IWMD:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aE_Q6YDM-Pw&feature=youtu.be

GREATER MANCHESTER ASBESTOS VICTIMS SUPPORT GROUP

The asbestos victims support group, provides free advice and support to sufferers of asbestos related diseases and their families. www.asbestos-victims-support.org. There was a successful Manchester Action Mesothelioma Day on the 1st July in Manchester with several MP's speaking followed by an afternoon conference.

RECYCLING SECTOR – Precarious contracts and dangerous work?

Recycling is an extremely dangerous industry with one of the highest rates of worker deaths- more than twice as high as in construction. It is also a notorious low paying sector and employs a high proportion of migrant labour on zero hours contracts,





long hours and health and safety is often non-existent. Fires and other incidents at waste and recycling sites across the UK run at about 1 per day and put workers, fire services and local people at risk. In theory the HSE is still allowed to carry out proactive inspections in waste and recycling sector as it is a high risk category, and the Hawkeswood Metals in Birmingham, due to past incidents, should have been flagged up within that. FACK is investigating this, and holding the government accountable for the decline in the regulation and enforcement of health and safety that puts all workers and especially the most vulnerable including migrant workers at risk. <http://www.hazardscampaign.org.uk/?p=714>

DRIVER ONLY TRAINS – Profit before Safety?

The disputes and concerns over driver only trains, are fundamentally a health and safety issue. Driver Only Operation means the driver will be the only guaranteed member of staff on the train. The driver will be expected to drive the train and be responsible for passenger safety.

Currently, both the driver and the guard protect the safety of the train. Guards must be fully trained in operational safety and route knowledge, including being able to secure the doors safely, protecting the train and acting in emergencies such as derailments or fires. Independent inquiries after train crashes and fatalities have consistently said that we need on-board staff trained in protection and evacuation procedure.

If there is an accident, antisocial behavior, or even a terrorist attack, the guard can call for assistance and inform and reassure passengers. So what is at the heart of the decision to remove guards from trains? It's about profit instead of safety!

TTIP, CETA and other Trade Deals

Post Brexit, there are many discussions about the effect our departure from the EU will have on health and safety. This includes what sort of trade deal we will have with Europe and other countries. The TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) has run into problems with some of the European countries. One the fundamental concern is the sweeping powers it gives to corporations, the lack of transparency and state accountability and the ability of corporations to challenge state authority. As the UK is withdrawing from the EU, we will not be bound by TTIP. However following closely behind is CETA (**Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement**),

which is the EU/Canada treaty and is going to be just as disastrous and undemocratic. CETA has been signed and is due to be ratified by the European Parliament and then Parliaments in member states. It will act as a back door for US companies to sue UK under ISDS (**investor-state dispute settlement**) procedures.



Theresa May has said that when we eventually exit the EU we will be negotiating Trade deals with Australia (not a progressive Government) and with India (again not likely to be a progressive deal). We will have to be continually vigilant in identifying, campaigning and challenging any and all trade deals to ensure that they do not undermine worker's rights and health and safety and that the terms are transparent and accountable to our UK courts and democratic process. Our Brexit red-line is no reduction in workers' health and safety. Contact us for more information.

HSE – BOARD

SCANDAL!! Prime Minister May's DWP Minister, Damian Green, has appointed an employer to a workers' representative seat on the HSE Board. Theresa May promised workers' reps on company boards didn't she? Well not on the HSE Board which is supposed to be tripartite and have THREE workers representatives nominated by the TUC. The HSE Board now has an employer (Susan Johnson) occupying one workers' seat and a non TUC nominated person (Jonathan Baume) also not representing workers taking the other. As of 1st October 2016 there will be only one workers' representative on the HSE Board, Kevin Rowan head of organising at TUC. Hazards Magazine reveals all, Rotten Board Sick
www.hazards.org/deadlybusiness/hseboard.htm

This is an utter scandal. It shows that Theresa May's government is not serious about workers' rights and is contemptuous of workers lives and health in denying us representation on the HSE Board which is about our very lives our health which are at far more risk when employers rule the roost. We are protesting and will keep you posted. At least send Theresa May an epostcard to tell her 'Stop it you're killing us'
<http://www.hazardscampaign.org.uk/>

HAZARDS MAGAZINE

The Hazards Magazine is an important resource for Health and Safety representatives. In most editions there are posters that you can put up on noticeboards in your workplaces. It is the only independent, union-friendly magazine to win major international awards. The magazine provides information and resources to support Union representatives. It looks behind the company safety hype, and gives union answers to workplace problems. Encourage your workplace and branch organization to subscribe to this excellent publication by emailing sub@hazards.org .

SPEAKING AT EVENTS, MEETINGS AND TRAINING

Over recent weeks the team members have been attending and speaking at various Trade Union Education and Union Reps Training in the North West. Also they have attended various Trades Council and other organisations to ensure that health and safety is on every agenda. If you would like a speaker at a branch, workplace or other event please email mail@gmhzards.org.uk

MEET OUR TEAM:

Hilda Palmer – Co-ordinator of GM Hazards Centre, acting chair of Hazards Campaign, Facilitator of FACK and main organizer of Hazards Conference
John Bamford – GM Hazards Organiser
Janet Newsham – joint Co-ordinator of GM Hazards Centre
Graham Dring, Jeff Eaman, Rob Rayner– GM Asbestos Victims Support Group
Eileen Bamford – Clerical and Campaign Work
Management Committee – Chair, Sarah Clarke; Secretary, Doug Russell; Treasurer, Caroline Bedale and Stirling Smith

AFFILIATION:

The service at Greater Manchester Hazards Centre is free to ALL workers, the families of workers killed at work, and community groups facing hazards. We campaign for better workplace health and safety. To Affiliate please email: mail@gmhzards.org.uk for an affiliation form.

www.hazards.org



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Our website is being
revamped! –
www.gmhzards.org.uk

Other Links:

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

Twitter: @hazardscampaign;
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