

HAZARDS CAMPAIGN

Report of the 35th National Hazards Conference

The Climate Crisis and Workers' Health and Safety – A deadly combination

Held hybrid, online and in-person at Keele University

on 30th August - 1 September, 2024



Hazards Conference has always been one of the biggest grassroots health and safety conferences for trade union safety reps and activists. I would like to record our enormous gratitude to all those who gave up their time readily, to share their expertise by speaking or delivering sessions, without who we would not be able to run the conference. I would also like to thank all the attendees who came to Keele and shared their knowledge and experience to make the conference welcoming and interesting for everyone.

This year we held it as a hybrid conference with over 230 people involved, with ten workshops, four of which were hybrid three hybrid fringe meetings and a hybrid long-covid meeting. Nearly half of the attendees were brand new to the conference, and about 45% were women and 35% from black or ethnic backgrounds.

The workshops included:

	Workshop Title	Facilitators	Link to Presentation
1	Safety Reps functions	Julie Weekes/Darryl Thelwell	https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/BrownBook2015.pdf
2	Work related stress and mental health	Nigel Williams	https://gmhazards.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Workshop-2-mental-health-workshop-hazards-2024.pdf
3	Organising and Campaigning	Andrea Oates	https://gmhazards.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Campaigning-and-the-media.pdf
4	Work related violence	Tony Whelen	https://gmhazards.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Haz2023-Work-related-Violence-Resources.pdf
5	Extreme temperatures	Fred Behardian	https://gmhazards.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Workshop-5-Working-in-Extreme-Weather-conditions-controlling-the-risks.pdf
6	Lurking beneath surface	Mike Hines	https://gmhazards.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Hazards-Conference-2024-Building-Safety-Final.pdf
7	Reproductive justice	Helen Lynn/Cath Roberts	https://gmhazards.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Workshop-7-The-climate-crisis-is-a-matter-of-Reproductive-justice-what-do-safety-reps-need-to-know.pdf
8	Circular economy	Kathy Jenkins/Ian Tasker	https://gmhazards.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Workshop-8-Circular-Economy.pdf

9	Climate policies	Graham Petersen	https://gmhazards.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Workshop-9-Climate-Policies.ppt https://greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/tucan-resources/
10	Future is young	Barry Faulkner	https://gmhazards.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Workshop-10-hazards24-young-worker-slides-1.pdf https://gmhazards.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Workshop-10-hazards24-young-worker-slides-2.pdf

The Fringe meetings were:

1/2	Asbestos / Silica	Chair: Dan Shears GMB Speakers: Harminder Baines Leigh Day Satinder Baines Irwin Mitchel Dave Smith Blacklisted Workers	Harminder – https://youtu.be/ZpwYqQUppiQ https://youtu.be/bYONuVB2XVk Satinder – https://gmhazards.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Silicosis-Hazards-Satinder-Bains.pdf
3	Bus and electrical fires	Chair: Ian Tasker Scottish Hazards Speakers: Barry West RMT Riccardo La Torres FBU Luke Collins UNITE	https://gmhazards.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Fringe-meeting-Luke-Collins-Bus-and-EV-Fire-Risks-Hazards-Conference-2024-LC.pdf
4	Sexual Harassment	Chair: Julie Weeks TU Ed Speakers: Vicky Bassett BFAWU Fliss Premru #meTU Joan McNulty Unison	

There were four plenary sessions:

- *HASWA @50 - What is the future?* Chaired by Doug Russell GMHC, speakers include Shelly Asquith National Health, Safety and Wellbeing Officer TUC, Rob Miguel National Health and Safety Officer UNITE, Phil Liptrott Head of Personal Injury at Thompsons Solicitors
 - <https://gmhazards.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Hazards-2024-rob-miguel.pdf>
 - <https://gmhazards.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Hazards-plenary-presentation-HSWA-30-August-2024-002-phil-liptrott.pdf>

Shelly explained that the Health and Safety at Work Act was the first act of a new Labour government in 1974. Compared to today, with fewer inspections, fewer prosecutions and the picture is far worse with a surge of occupational ill health and work-related stress. There is a need to support each other and not rely on the regulator.

Rob said he started work in 1970 and that the workplace had changed by 1978. Now a days we are falling behind the EU on chemicals, there is difficulty controlling the risks of electrical fires and workers are facing extreme weather conditions. We need to campaign for reps to stop the job, serve improvement notices and a properly funded HSE.

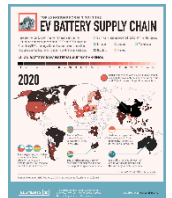
Phil emphasised the power of inspections and spoke about the disastrous consequences for workers when employers fail to control the risks.

- *Climate and workers' health and safety - the challenges of extreme weather events and the impact of work activity on the climate* Chaired by Graham Petersen Greener Jobs Alliance/TUCAN and Kathy Jenkins Scottish Hazards, speakers include Sanjiv Pandita Senior advisor Asia Solidarity Centre US, Prof.Dave Whyte Director of the Centre for Climate Crime and Climate Justice QMUL , Riccardo LaTorres FBU National Health and Safety Officer

Graham Petersen from Greener Jobs Alliance introduced the session and announced launch of a new clean air briefing paper - <https://greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/TUCAN-Briefing-Paper-Press-Release-QRCode.pdf>

Dave Whyte said that trade union were not doing enough on climate justice. He said it wasn't enough to have cosy agreements or bacon butty climate bargaining. He said workers bodies were always in the frontline of environmental struggles and that we need to end precarious casualised work which don't equate to a sustainable economy and that campaigns and bargaining models should embed employment security as a key climate and sustainability demand. Trade unions need to put climate bargaining at the centre of everything they do, and work cooperatively across sectors and supply chains.

Sanjiv showed the disastrous consequences for both workers and the land of so called green solutions. He has been working in Indonesia where nickel mining on the islands had led to deforestation, scarred land and left workers with poverty, ill health and prison like conditions with no infrastructure to support the workers and their families or provide any health care.



Finally, Riccardo read the names of firefighters who had died in wildfires. He spoke about the extreme weather conditions firefighters are dealing with in their jobs and at the same their terms and conditions are being attacked and numbers cut leaving them more at risk and in a perfect storm.

- *Making the case for mentally healthy work - workers are being exposed to increasing workloads, health impacting work related stress, violence and bullying and we need to resist not be more resilient* Chair Dan Shears Director of Health, Safety and Environment GMB, speakers include: Sarah Lyons Lead officer for Health, Safety and Environment at NEU, Prof. Sarah Waters Suicide and its Prevention Leeds University, Alex Lancaster in personal capacity
 - https://gmhazards.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Hazards-Presentation-2024_Sarah-Lyons.pdf
 - <https://gmhazards.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Sarah-Waters-Hazards-2024-slides.pdf>

Alex spoke about the root causes of stress and employers are not prioritising work related stress and don't want to deal with it through a safety lens. She emphasised the need for organisation risk assessments using the hierarchy of control approach. Although the HSE has put work related stress as a major priority over the next 10 years there is still minimal enforcement and not enough safety reps to challenge employers.

Sarah Lyons spoke about the challenges NEU member and teaching union staff face with Ofsted. Following the outcry after the death of Ruth Perry a head teacher who died by suicide, with no history of mental illness, the NEU had developed an Ofsted RA.

Sarah Waters spoke about the work she had done with Rory O'Neill and Hilda Palmer on work related suicides. She said that about 7,000 die in suicides each year and many are preventable and many employed at the time of their death. Employers still don't have to report, investigate or recommend or put in place preventative measures. They are dealt with outside the health and

safety framework and we need to put pressure on the HSE to insist that they are recorded and investigated.

- *Bad work injures and kills – collective pressure and safety reps save lives – but the majority of workers are not in trade unionised workplaces, how can we fight for these workers?* Chair Janet Newsham Hazards Campaign, speakers include Dave Smith secretary of the Blacklist Support Group, Vicky Bassett National Health and Safety Representative BFAWU, Graser McGuire Chair UNITE Young Workers Committee and Jawad Qasrawi Sub Editor Hazards Magazine

Jawad emphasised the importance of continuing to support the magazine. He explained the importance of sharing the information, the magazine speaks truth to power. Subscribe to Hazards Magazine www.hazards.org/subscribe

Vicky agreed that every workplace should have at least one copy of the magazine. She spoke about the importance of organising non unionised workers and seeking to achieve high safety standards. She said training had to be more accessible.

Fraser said that young workers were five times more likely to be in precarious work and many had less than 48 hours notice of their shifts. He explained about the power imbalance for young workers where if your face doesn't fit, you aren't necessarily let go just not given any hours of work. He appealed for safety reps to help support and organise young workers

Dave Smith explained that laws don't make safe workplaces but people/workers make work safe and that safety reps were the heroes of the union world. He said that there had been corporate capture of the HSE and that employers want to save money but unions want to save lives. Dave inspired the safety reps to make work safer.

On Sunday morning we were witness to a special presentation from the Construction Safety Group to the Police Spies Out of Lives campaign.

We also awarded 11 organisations certificates of excellence to celebrate their activity and campaigning work on health, safety and climate work. These included:

- GMB reps at Asda for health and safety campaigning
- Barry West from RMT for his work on bus fires
- Hazards Magazine for their work on work-related suicides
- GKN factory collective <https://youtu.be/ZmruNCfDecq>
- BFAWU for their campaigning work on sexual harassment reporting
- Heatstrike for their campaigning work on maximum temperatures at work
- Matthew Sutton from ASLEF on his health and safety driver engagement campaign
- NEU for their Ofsted risk assessment work
- RCM for their Entonox campaign
- UNISON Barnet Council safe staff numbers campaign
- UNITE in schools on health and safety and trade union organising in schools



We gave a special certificate for a lifetime commitment to the Hazards Movement to Phillip Lewis UNISON

And the Bad Boss award went to Barnet Council (runners up were Asda and Amazon)

During the lunch break on the Saturday, there were discussions on Climate education and Heat Strike and in the evening as well as networking events there was the Saturday Quiz with special prizes from Irwin Mitchell Solicitors and Wales Adult Education.



GMHC coordinator William Starritt shares his thoughts of his first Hazards conference:

My first impression of the Hazards Conference at Keele University in late August 2024 was a packed agenda and the artistic imagery of workers being affected by climate change. The ambitious programme

over three days certainly packed a punch with keynote speakers from union officials, tutors, legal experts, writers and of course the health and safety reps working on the front line.

In the many workshops, conference organisers didn't shy away from the topics of the day including; climate change, hazards with unregulated new technologies, workplace stress, mining in Indonesia, asbestos, Long Covid, RAAC, mental health, and sexual harassment. Many delegates at the conference repeatedly said, the hardest thing was choosing which workshop to attend as they all resonate with the workers they represent.

The four plenary sessions were no less significant; the well-packed Westminster Theatre hosted speakers from the FBU, Greener Jobs Alliance, Asia Solidarity Centre, TUC, UNITE Young Workers and the Hazards Magazine to name a few. A complex set-up of technology, cameras and microphones allowed participants to contribute from Leeds University to India as well as the many delegates attending through Zoom.

Contributions from the speakers and delegates provided ideas of how to engage with employers, young workers and those who are hard to reach. Inspiring and reinvigorating the reps and the Hazards Movement was probably the most significant take-away from the conference. Panel experts assessed the aging 1974 Health & Safety Act and how it can be best used today. It was clear that it needed to reflect the needs of today's workers especially in light a severely weakened Health & Safety Executive (HSE) and the curtailment of union rights and the right to protest.

On the whole, the camaraderie, information and knowledge shared amongst speakers and delegates at the 35th Hazards Conference made this a weekend to remember. New and old friendships were forged and like me, many attended for the first time. Between now and the 2025 conference I'm sure much knowledge from this year's event will be imparted from the tireless enthusiasm of the reps, the same people who ensure safety is a priority in their workplaces.

The conference hall this year was draped in posters from health and safety and trade union campaigns.

Finally, we paid a special tribute to all our comrades in the Hazards movement who had died and special mention was made of Mavis Nye who died on 21.11.23 and was a tireless campaigner around asbestos awareness. Willie Strang an RMT activist and Hazards Campaigner and Hazards Magazine supporter. And our very dear friend Claire Mooney from the Musicians Union who wrote songs and played at most of the health and safety and labour movement events around Manchester. She ran a workshop at the Hazards Conference a few years ago on writing songs to spread our message. All are a huge loss for our movement.

In the health and safety movement we say, health and safety is all about love – making sure our loved ones are safe and not harmed by work. We don't want to hear 'lessons learnt', we will continue to remember our dead but vow to continue to fight like hell for the living! We hope to see many of you return to next years conference and make sure if you were at #Haz2024 tell us what you liked and what you would like to see next year <https://forms.office.com/r/7DGzsWGfJA>

#Haz2025 will be 5th-7th September.

Finally, I will end the report with words from some of the delegates:

'What a brilliant weekend.'

'And just to thank you for another great Hazards Conference. Not only is it useful, informative and of great benefit to our members but everyone is always so helpful and friendly.'

'Thanks so much for a fantastic conference last weekend, It was really interesting and as always very well put together. Met some lovely people and had a good laugh at the Sat night quiz. Congratulations and please pass on my grateful thanks to Caroline and Jawad and all the other members of the Hazards team who worked so hard for the conference.'

'I'll promote the event and will report back to PCS, my experience. Each power packed session was intentional and your team delivered. You handpicked Speakers that are well seasoned. Quite thoughtful! Thanks so much. Keep up the great work!'

'Thank you for yet another great conference really enjoyed it lot to take in.'

'Got home nice and easy back at grind this morning revitalised full fire ready to fight shoddy management.'

'Thank you and this is what being in a union is all about the love and support we show each other. Keep fighting the good fight. Hopefully see some of you at other events'



<https://forms.office.com/r/7DGzsWGfJA>



The 35th Hazards Conference 2024

HAZARDS CAMPAIGN

Thank you to all those trade unions, branches, regional and national organisations, to trades union councils, individuals and solicitors who kindly sponsor the conference every year. This important financial contribution helps us keep the prices of the conference as low as possible for everyone.



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