



Hard Hat

THE UCATT SAFETY BULLETIN FOR SAFETY REPS AND ACTIVISTS

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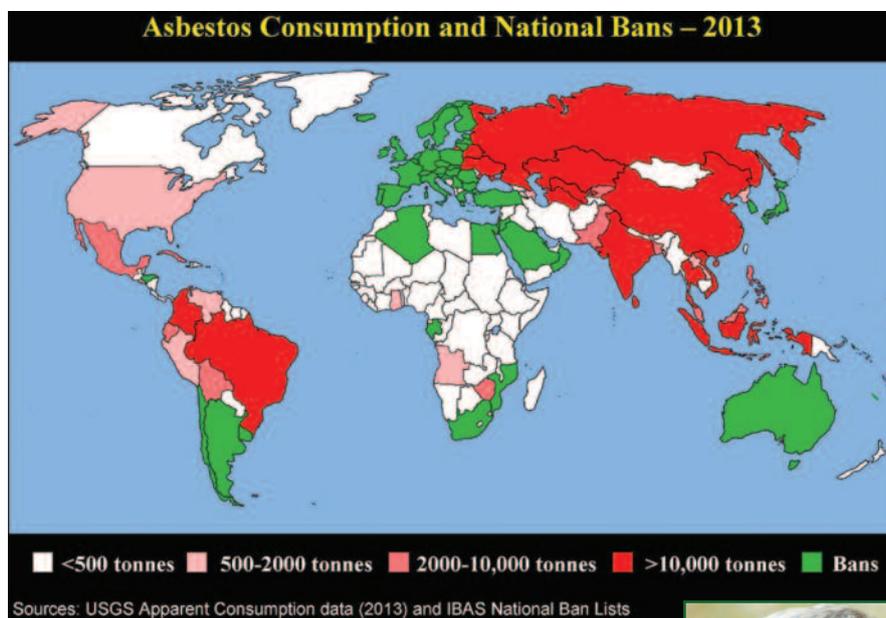
Hazardous substances theme for Workers' Memorial Day 2015

The theme of International Workers' Memorial Day 28th April 2015 will be the risk to workers through exposure to hazardous substances. Deaths from exposure to hazardous substances are not catalogued as workplace deaths in official figures because of the long period from exposure to illness; often they are unrecorded.

Hazardous substances are found in almost every workplace in the UK and many workers have no protection against the possible effects, despite the fact that tens of thousands of workers have their health destroyed by asthma, dermatitis, lung disorders and cancers because of exposure. They range from cleaning fluids used in almost every workplace, to asbestos and silica dust in construction, tobacco smoke in prisons through to blood and faeces in health and social care.

UCATT campaigns against exposure to asbestos in construction. It is often termed the Hidden Killer; this is because it can take up to 30 years before a person develops an illness through earlier exposure. It is a worldwide crisis, with the latest figures from Building and Woodworkers International suggesting that up to 100,000 people lose their lives through exposure to asbestos every year.

In the UK, carpenters and those engaged in shipbuilding have made up a significant proportion of asbestos victims. As part of Workers' Memorial Day, UCATT will be demanding the total worldwide ban of all



asbestos products and reinforcing our zero tolerance approach to asbestos and offering advice on what to do should anyone find asbestos on site.

General Secretary Steve Murphy said: "Exposure to dangerous substances should not be seen as an occupational hazard for construction workers."

UCATT will be holding Workers' Memorial Day events across all regions and anyone interested in attending should contact their Regional Office and check the website for details.

Above: Asbestos usage remains common around the world. Right: Steve Murphy welcomes this year's Workers' Memorial Day theme highlighting hazardous substances



UCATT JOINS CALL TO END EUROPE'S ASBESTOS DEROGATION

UCATT is supporting the call from the International Ban Asbestos Secretariat (IBAS) to end Europe's derogation allowing some importing of chrysolite (white) asbestos. Despite the banning of the manufacture, marketing and use of asbestos on January 1 2005 in Europe, this highly specialised derogation was brought in to allow one German and one Swedish plant to continue operating until the end of their service life or until asbestos-free substitute materials became available.

Now, under pressure from the company Dow Chemical, the EU and the European Chemicals Agency are considering another 10 year extension of this derogation allowing these products to continue to be imported until 2025. The IBAS believes that they are wrong to pursue this, and their belief that asbestos can be "fully" controlled is wrong. IBAS are calling on the EU Commission and EU Member states to immediately terminate the asbestos derogation which is a complete contradiction with the EU demand for a worldwide ban on asbestos.

Join UCATT

If you or your colleagues are not members of UCATT then call 0207 622 2442 or join online at www.ucatt.org.uk. Subscription rates are no more than £2.89 a week.

HSE asbestos campaign backed by Forest legend Pearce

In October 2014, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) launched a new campaign to warn construction workers about the dangers of asbestos exposure. Recently, ex-Nottingham Forest manager and former England international footballer Stuart Pearce, nicknamed "Psycho" has backed the campaign. Pearce worked for four years as an electrician before becoming a footballer, and does not recall much being said, if anything, about the danger of workers being exposed to asbestos.

Pearce said: "We were briefed on safety hats and boots but I don't recall asbestos mentioned once. It's chilling to think of the risks we were exposed to. Sending workers into a building without warning of the dangers was asking for trouble."

A recent survey commissioned by HSE identified that tradespeople could come

into contact with asbestos on average more than 100 times a year. A worrying number did not know when they may actually face the danger, as only 15 per cent of those surveyed knew asbestos could still be found in buildings built up to the year 2000. On average 20 tradespersons die every week due to asbestos-related diseases.

The HSE has launched a new free app to help workers identify where they could come into contact with asbestos during day to day work in construction. It will take them through some questions and depending on their answers guide workers on what to do next. The app is available for download at www.beware-asbestos.info

As part of the Beware Asbestos campaign, HSE have launched a social media initiative. If you follow HSE on



The HSE has recently launched their Beware Asbestos campaign.

Twitter, you may have seen the HSE tweets already. UCATT encourages members that use Twitter or Facebook to show support for the campaign by wearing the scarf. This icon called a "twibbon" that appears in the corner of your profile picture. You can get the icon by clicking on the following link: twb.ly/39A6Q2DW.

YOUR CONCERNS ARE IMPORTANT

Do you have specific health and safety problem on your site or at your workplace?
Or do you need further information about issues contained in this bulletin?
Contact your UCATT Regional Office or ring 020 7622 2442.

Fit for Work pilot begins

From January 2015, a phased roll out of referrals to a Fit for Work service began in the UK. Once an employee has reached or is expected to reach four weeks off sick, they can be referred via their GP for a Fit For Work assessment by an occupational health professional. In addition after four weeks the employer will be able to make a referral if the GP does not. It is important to note that this is voluntary and the employee must give consent, so there is no legal requirement on them to have a referral. This referral will usually lead to a return to work plan that could support getting back to work earlier.

Fit for Work will be provided in England and Wales by a company called HML (Health Management Limited) and by the Scottish Government through the NHS. A person must be employed; self-employed workers will not qualify.

UCATT is cautious about Fit for Work. Granted, anything that helps people recover from an illness is to be welcomed and early intervention of supported occupational health is often helpful in making people better and in turn allowing them to return to work. We have some concerns; Fit for Work is about getting people back to work, not to help people get well. It should not be used to make workers feel pressured into returning to work before they are ready. It also must be remembered by members and UCATT reps that this service is optional, and they should guard against employers trying to force people into referrals.

UCATT representatives should be aware of this scheme and inform members about it, making sure that they know the union will be there to advise them on the procedures of Fit for Work. For further information on the service visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fit-for-work-guidance>

TUC LAUNCH SUBSTANCE SURVEY

The TUC is conducting a short survey of workers about their exposure to hazardous substances. UCATT strongly supports the survey which will be online until the end of March. The results will be used to publicise Workers Memorial Day on 28th April. We encourage all UCATT members to take part in the survey.

The survey can be accessed by visiting: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/tuc-survey-on-hazardous-substances>

OBESITY RISK LINKED TO SHIFT WORKING

Research has found that working night shifts could increase the risk of developing obesity as sleeping during the day burns off fewer calories than at night, according to a new study.

The study found that night shift patterns disrupt the metabolism of workers, leading them to use less energy than they would normally over the course of a day. The effect was greatest when workers were attempting to sleep during the day, as they burned between 12-16 % less calories than when sleeping at night.

NEW UCATT DRUG AND ALCOHOL BRIEFING

As more and more employers have introduced Drug and Alcohol testing on construction sites and workplaces, UCATT and OH Parsons have jointly produced a short briefing guide for members and reps.

Steve Murphy, UCATT General Secretary said: "It is important that members are aware of the risks posed by excessive use of drugs and alcohol, and the impact that this can have on their jobs.

The briefing is available at: <http://www.ucatt.org.uk/drugs-and-alcohol>



Stay in touch

For all the latest information about UCATT, the construction industry or health and safety go to our website www.ucatt.org.uk

Remember!!!

Remember to distribute Hard Hat around your place of work.