



## UNITE GPM SECTOR

# HEALTH & SAFETY E-BULLETIN NO 1

FEBRUARY 2008

## GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES H&S REVIEW

*Chancellor Alistair Darling has launched a 'major review' of safety laws, 'focusing on small and low risk businesses.' The Unite view is that the government should stop pandering to negligent law-shy employers, and instead put its focus on protecting vulnerable workers from illness and injury.*

The problem is that a majority of small businesses have not done even a suitable risk assessment as required in law. This is not down to the regulations being unsuitable for small businesses it is because of the lack of enforcement and the priorities that the employers have given to protecting their staff.

Chancellor Alistair Darling launched the review in a speech at the CBI conference. Thirteen years ago a review conducted by the Tories found there was no case for health and safety deregulation. An HSE study published in May 2004 reported over three quarters of businesses believed health and safety did not hamper their business and a similar proportion said it was actually beneficial. An October 2006 TUC report

noted there are fewer than half the workplace safety laws there were in 1970.

So Unite is not afraid of a review of health and safety laws, since the Union believes it will show the need for more action to improve standards. Furthermore, for the GPM Sector, the printing industry is an excellent illustration that small does not necessarily mean low risk, since small printers could be doing many of the things that larger printers do, with the risks of moving machinery, chemicals, manual handling etc.

Unite also wants better support for trade union safety reps, since it is absolutely clear that union organised workplaces are safer workplaces.

## HSE NATIONAL WRULDS CAMPAIGN TARGETS PRINT FINISHING

HSE has been running a National Campaign on Work Related Upper Limb Disorders (WRULD's). It ran from 11-29 February 2008. Printers and publishers, and in particular print finishing areas, were included as one of the target areas covered during the inspection phase of the campaign. HSE inspectors were using a new WRULD Risk Assessment of Repetitive Tasks Tool (ART) during the campaign, although this particular tool will not be available to employers at present.

HSE still has a good selection of other existing leaflets, Risk Assessment Worksheets, and Risk Factor Checklists for WRULD's that employers and safety reps can download and use for free.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg171.pdf>

[http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/pdfs/worksheet\\_s.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/pdfs/worksheet_s.pdf)

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/campaigns/uldc/hecklist.pdf>

## HSE TARGETS YORKSHIRE PRINTERS

An intensive inspection by the HSE of small firms in the printing industry in Leeds, Wakefield and York in September 2007 demonstrated some positive results. The HSE says standards in the region were generally better than average, with most employers showing a good awareness of health of safety issues. However, out of 81 inspections, HSE Inspectors still found it necessary to issue a total of nine enforcement notices at five different factories. These focused on issues like:

- guarding and regular inspection of guillotines
- guarding on a litho press and gluing machine

- risk of skin irritation and dermatitis
- manual handling of screens used in screen printing
- maintenance of local exhaust ventilation
- poorly maintained electrical equipment
- lack of health and safety monitoring.

About 6% of the printers were bad enough to require formal enforcement action from HSE, rather than just verbal warnings or stiff letters. Employers were also advised about the particular needs of agency and migrant workers who, at the start of their employment might be considered vulnerable and in need of appropriate training and supervision.

## PRINTING INDUSTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PIAC)

PIAC held an open meeting in Kendal in September 2007, which took dermatitis in printing as its main subject. Overall, the meeting was successful in raising delegates' awareness, understanding, and estimation of the potential dermatitis risks within their own workplaces. Many delegates committed themselves to taking new and additional action to reduce the risks from dermatitis on their return to their workplaces.

Information on printing and dermatitis, and other common health and safety problems in printing, can be found on the HSE Printing website at:  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/printing/index.htm>

## UK PAPER MILL DEATH

*In November 2007, Unite member, Chris Massey, was killed in an accident at the Kimberley Clark tissue mill in Barrow. Chris was a maintainer/operator and a qualified electrician, and was working on Perini 900 series winder when the accident took place.*

National Officer Peter Ellis and National H&S Officer Bud Hudspith made several visits to KC Barrow in the 2 weeks immediately after the accident. Local reps and local official Eddie Irvine were in constant contact with the company and chapel members. HSE and Kimberley Clark are still investigating the accident.

After requests from Unite, Kimberley Clark issued the following statement:

**“On Thursday 8th November, Chris Massey a Maintainer/Operator at Kimberly-Clark’s tissue mill in Barrow-in-Furness, was involved in a fatal accident while working on a Perini 900 series winder. The accident is still under investigation by the Health and Safety Executive, and by Kimberly Clark in order to identify the root cause of this tragic event.”**

It is good industry practise for all companies to ensure risk assessments of their winder operations take place after an accident like this and in particular, that you once again establish that:

- All parts of machines are properly guarded
- Any manual interventions are strictly governed by agreed Standard Operating Procedures
- All personnel are competent

All companies should pay particular attention to the PABIAC guidance “Rewinding paper safely: Safe use of reeling and slitting machines”, available free on the HSE website at - [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/web07.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/web07.pdf)

Unite has investigated this accident further and believes that more information should be made available in the short term to encourage preventive action elsewhere, without attributing blame in any way in relation to this accident.

This information was put to the company but their lawyers refused to include it within their statement.

The circumstances of the accident are believed to be as follows. The machine involved takes tissue reels from pre-loaded carriages. This machine had been modified by the manufacturers to take two ply reels. Chris Massey was trapped by a cross bar connecting two guards, fitted as part of the modification, when the carriage was moving into position as part of a reel change.

Unite has put this information forward so that other companies can use this information and the statement from the company to ensure that any similar equipment is fully guarded and only operated under safe procedures.

Chapels have been asked to raise this advice with their employers, and ensure that:

- a similar incident cannot occur in their workplace
- full account is taken of the PABIAC guidance on reelers and slitters
- safety reps are fully involved in investigations and risk assessments, etc.

## ... AND MORE DEATHS IN THE UNITED STATES

On the same day an employee of the Georgia-Pacific Savannah River paper mill died from injuries she suffered 6 days earlier in an accident at the plant. She had worked there for nine years. She was taken to hospital, but never regained consciousness. Libby Waddell, 56, was working at a napkin machine at the plant on Fort Howard Road when she became stuck in the machine.

A 47-year-old paperworker at Temple-Inland’s Spotswood, N.J., mill was struck in December by a clamp truck that was carrying a 6,000-lb roll of paper. He was taken to hospital and placed in intensive care with severe head trauma. He died four days later.

In another tragedy a 26-year-old man was crushed to death when a 5,000lb roll of industrial grade paper came loose from a machine and fell on a the worker at the Brownville Specialty Paper Products Inc. paper mill in Brownville, N.Y.

## ... AND A CHILD DEATH IN INDIA

India's Limra Paper Mills has been ordered to shut immediately after an investigation found that it violated child labour laws. Investigators found 14 underage workers, aged between 11 and 14, doing hazardous work in sweatshop conditions at the facility. The plant, located in Medchal town, in the Rangareddi district of Andhra Pradesh state, some 40 km north of Hyderabad, produces an unspecified amount of specialty paper.

The firm exposed the young workers to dangerous machinery, which resulted in the death of 13-year-old Mohammad Shakeel, on January 4, after the boy was accidentally hit by a conveyor belt when made to pass through it. A file has been opened on Limra's owner, Mohammad Hameeduddin, who is in hiding. Two individuals, Kamalesh Kumar and Chandrasekhar Jha, have been arrested for trafficking the 14 children to the plant some four months ago.

## SCA OAKENHOLT – SERIOUS ACCIDENT

*Last October Unite issued advice on a very serious paper mill accident at SCA tissue mill, Oakenholt, North Wales, which had taken place in July. The reason for the long gap between the accident and the alert was the reluctance of SCA Oakenholt to issue any useful information about the nature and causes of the accident. In fact, the company never issued any effective advice, and it was left to Unite to provide the industry with details of the accident, as set out below.*

In July 2007, a Unite member was very seriously injured in an accident at SCA Oakenholt tissue mill. The accident has been reported to HSE and is currently under investigation.

HSE issued the following statement:

**“Christopher Shaw, an Assistant Winderman, received major injuries to his spine in an accident at the mill. Mr Shaw was involved in an incident while he and a colleague were unloading reels of paper from a reeling machine. One of the reels, rolled across the ramped floor striking Mr Shaw on the head.**

**HSE are not in a position to issue any more detailed statement about the circumstances of the accident at this stage. The investigation is in progress. If any lessons about preventive measures that others might take emerge from the investigation they will be reported at the appropriate time.”**

Unite has investigated this accident further and believes that more information should be made available in the short term to encourage preventive action elsewhere, without attributing

blame in any way in relation to this accident.

Unite understands the operator was moving 1 of 2 reels ready to be wrapped from the winder lowering table to the reel wrapper. His foot slipped on one of the reel stop kickers. As he fell to the floor one of the reels rolled onto him. His head was pushed into his chest and the operator sustained severe spinal injuries.

It is not yet known the full root cause of the incident and until further information is available it is very important that all operations ensure risk assessment of their reel handling systems to establish that:

1. Safe Systems of Work are in place;
2. Any manual interventions are strictly governed by agreed Standard Operating Procedures;
3. All personnel are fully competent in the task;
4. Any slip or trips hazards are addressed.

The failure of companies to disclose any details of accidents is an increasing problem in the paper, corrugating and



printing sector, despite the existence of agreements within both PABIAC and PIAC for such statements to be issued to advise other companies on action they might take, without attributing blame in any way.

Furthermore, the HSE are also displaying an increasing reluctance to issue any statement which they feel may prejudice any subsequent enforcement action.



## PABIAC

PABIAC has been consulting on its strategy for 2008-2010, which covers the paper, corrugating and recovered paper sectors. The consultation includes a proposal that all company CEOs should formally sign a pledge to support and implement the PABIAC objectives.

## CORPORATE MANSLAUGHTER ACT

The Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007 will come into force on 6 April 2008, across the UK. The Act sets out a new offence for convicting an organisation where a gross failure in the way activities were managed or organised results in a person's death. In England and Wales and Northern Ireland, the new offence will be called corporate manslaughter. It will be called corporate homicide in Scotland.

Under a new approach, courts will look at management systems and practices across the organisation, providing a more effective means for prosecuting the worst corporate failures to manage health and safety properly. From next April, the 2007 Act will mean that those who disregard the safety of others at work, with fatal consequences, are more vulnerable to very serious criminal charges.

## CONSULTATION ON SENTENCING GUIDELINES

Unite is currently being consulted on sentencing guidelines. Unite will be emphasising the need for higher fines, publicity orders and a range of other remedial orders such as corporate probation.

Although the new law does not create any individual duties, in direct opposition to Unite policy, the Union will be once again stressing the need for penalties against individual directors and senior managers, to make this law effective.

## DIRECTORS DUTIES GUIDANCE

Company directors have published their own voluntary guidelines to good boardroom safety practice. The Institute of Directors says the new guidance will remind directors it is their responsibility to lead on health and safety and establish policies and practices that make it an integral part of their culture and values.

## UNITE HEALTH & SAFETY ESSENTIALS

Download the new edition of **Unite Health & Safety Essentials**, a comprehensive guide to health and safety advice. Printed copies will be available on all Unite safety training courses, so make sure you enrol on one soon. Contact your Regional Office for details of H&S training courses.

The details are on the Unite website, visit <http://www.amicustheunion.org/default.aspx?page=7901>



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## UNIONS WANT MORE THAN GUIDANCE

Tony Woodley, Unite Joint General Secretary, said: **"Government is right to say there is an obligation on employers but instead of that being moral and ethical, in other words voluntary, it should be compulsory and enshrined in law. The frustration is ministers had a chance to tackle this but failed to act and now the HSE itself is facing possible budget cuts, which, if implemented, will mean the situation won't improve. Meanwhile, workers have continued to pay the price by being killed at work in increasing numbers."**

Unite Health and Safety Officer, Bud Hudspith, who represented TUC on the panel drafting the Institute of

Directors guidance, said: **"We want guilty directors in prison, and we want other individual penalties when directors and senior managers fail to meet their health and safety duties. Until health and safety duties on directors become a reality, Unite welcomes the approach identified by HSC chair Judith Hackitt. She has said HSE inspectors will be trained in the new guidance, will discuss it with duty holders and will use the guidance to assess the health and safety role of board members during any investigations."**

Unite is continuing to press for clear H&S duties on directors to be included in the Health and Safety at Work Act.

Members who wish to register to receive a copy of the e-bulletin, please send an email to [bud.hudspith@unitetheunion.com](mailto:bud.hudspith@unitetheunion.com)