

UNITE IS CAMPAIGNING FOR A STUDY INTO CANCER RISKS IN THE SEMICONDUCTOR INDUSTRY



UNITE IS CAMPAIGNING FOR A STUDY INTO CANCER RISKS IN THE SEMICONDUCTOR INDUSTRY

Unite the union is calling for a study into cancer risks in the computer and semiconductor manufacturing industry following new evidence from the United States which found 'significantly greater' cancer deaths than expected based on the national average.

Taken with previous studies covering Scotland and the West Midlands, Unite believes there is sufficient evidence to suggest long term health risks to current and former workers in the semiconductor, chip and computer sector where there is exposure to chemicals, metals (especially arsenic, nickel and chromium), and electromagnetic fields such as ultraviolet light, radiofrequency and x-ray radiation.

WHO WANTS A STUDY

As the union representing workers in the semiconductor industry Unite is asking the main employers in the sector to fund a study. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) agree that a study in the UK is necessary and estimates that such a study would last for approximately four years and cost £400,000. If ten of the largest UK semiconductor companies agreed to fund this research it would cost them around £10,000 each for four years - barely the cost of a company car. The UK electronics industry is worth £23 billion a year, the fifth largest in the world and employs 250,000 workers. Unfortunately, the HSE has no teeth to force employers to pay for a study.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Unite's campaign for an inquiry has been supported by the government and Lord Mackenzie, the Health and Safety Minister has written to the main UK based semiconductor companies asking them to make a financial contribution to a study.

UNITE WILL PAY ITS SHARE

Unite said it will pay the same share as a participant company, provided sufficient employers do the same, and fully cooperate in any study that is initiated.

THE EMPLOYER'S RESPONSE

Semiconductor employers have said they do not agree there is a need for a study as a matter of principle and they will not pay for a study, though they say they will cooperate if someone else pays. They want to wait for the outcome of other studies, particularly in the US. **Unite believes the industry is putting costs before people's lives and health.**

OTHER CURRENT STUDIES INTO CANCER RISKS WILL NOT BE ENOUGH

There are two current studies into cancer risks in the semiconductor industry, a further US study and a study based in Scotland. Unite has serious misgivings about these studies. The US study is being conducted in non-union sites without any involvement of worker representatives. The Scottish study is based on a small number of workers and only one workplace and it will be too limited to tell us very much.

GET INVOLVED

If you work in the semiconductor industry and would like to get involved in the campaign there are many things you can do. Unite is organising a petition to try and put pressure on employers to fund the study.

CONTACT YOUR UNITE WORKPLACE REP OR:

Peter Skyte, Unite National Officer, 020 7420 8900,
peter.skyte@unitetheunion.com
Bud Hudspith Unite National Health and Safety, 07881 588917,
bud.hudspith@unitetheunion.com