

## Unions step up campaign to keep people well at work

The TUC has today (Monday) called on UK employers to give better occupational health assistance to the two million employees who every year believe they have become ill as a result of their jobs.

To coincide with Workers' Memorial Day – which this year focuses on good occupational health for all workers – the TUC and unionlearn, its learning and skills organisation, are publishing a new guide to occupational health for union safety reps.

Over the next year, the TUC hopes that around 15,000 workplace safety reps can be trained using the new educational workbook, *Occupational Health: Dealing with the Issues*. The reps will be able to use the guide to assess the extent of ill health in their workplaces and work with their employers to find the best ways of making the business a healthier place to work.

The TUC workbook says that apart from the huge personal cost to individuals when they become ill as a result of their work, 175 million working days were lost as a result of sickness absence in 2006, costing firms £650 per poorly employee.

TUC General Secretary **Brendan Barber** said: “Workplaces where there are union safety reps tend to be both safer and healthier places. But the UK is currently facing an epidemic of occupational ill health. Many people are ill and in pain as a result of lifting injuries, slips and trips, stress and noise-induced hearing loss suffered either at, or caused by, their work.

“Using this workbook, union reps can learn about all the aspects of occupational health. Then they can use it to encourage their employers to do much more to make employees feel they are getting a decent level of support from work when they are ill and again when they are on the road towards a full recovery.”

### NOTES TO EDITORS:

- *Occupational Health: Dealing with the Issues* is being launched at Congress House on Workers' Memorial Day (Monday 28 April). Attending the TUC event will be Safety Minister, Lord McKenzie of Luton, TUC General Secretary, Brendan Barber and Health & Safety Executive Chief Executive, Geoffrey Podger.

- Worker's Memorial Day is held on 28 April every year, when all over the world workers and their representatives conduct events, demonstrations, vigils and a whole host of other activities to mark the day. The day is also intended to serve as a rallying cry to “remember the dead, but fight like hell for the living.”

- Events taking place across the UK on Monday include:

The Southern and Eastern TUC and Thompsons solicitors are hosting an event in Congress House, Great Russell Street, London at 6pm – 8pm with Paul Mason, author of *Live Working or Die Fighting*, and Tom Jones, Thompsons Solicitors. A short film *Mesothelioma: the human face of an asbestos epidemic* will also be shown.

Darlington Borough Council and Darlington Unison have organised a tree planting ceremony for 28 April. The Mayor of Darlington will be in attendance and will plant the memorial tree in South Park, Darlington at 12:30pm. Hazards Campaign Wales is launching a telephone support line for families who have been bereaved through a workplace fatality and the colleagues of people killed at work.

### Contacts:

*Media enquiries:*

Liz Chinchon T: 020 7467 1248 M: 07778 158175 E: [media@tuc.org.uk](mailto:media@tuc.org.uk)

Rob Holdsworth T: 020 7467 1372 M: 07717 531150 E: [rholdsworth@tuc.org.uk](mailto:rholdsworth@tuc.org.uk)

Elly Brenchley T: 020 7467 1337 M: 07900 910624 E: [ebrenchley@tuc.org.uk](mailto:ebrenchley@tuc.org.uk)