

A termly bulletin from the  
Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL)

Autumn 2008

## What's inside:

- Do's and don'ts of preventing stress
- Europe focuses on risk assessment
- Online help for pupils with medical conditions
- ATL's new online face
- Fatalities at work
- ATL investigates asbestos

## Health and safety rep training

The role of the health and safety rep is vital to maintain healthy and safe workplaces. The ATL health and safety rep training covers issues such as workplace bullying and risk assessments. Being a health and safety rep can involve educating members to ensure that they recognise both hidden and more obvious health and safety issues, talking to members about how health and safety issues can be resolved and working with other unions and employers to ensure positive outcomes when dealing with potential issues.

Our six-day course, delivered in three two-day sessions, is essential for you if you are a new health and safety rep or have yet to receive your training.

Courses are being held on:

### Manchester

Module one:  
Thursday 2 and Friday 3 October 2008

Module two:  
Thursday 5 and Friday 6 February 2009

Module three:  
Thursday 11 and Friday 12 June 2009

### London

Module one:  
Thursday 6 and Friday 7 November 2008

Module two:  
Thursday 5 and Friday 6 March 2009 (this is a date change since the *Being a rep* newsletter)

Module three:  
Thursday 25 and Friday 26 June 2009

Please note that you have a statutory right to attend this training and you should request the full six days' time off. For more info on this course or any other ATL course, please contact [training@atl.org.uk](mailto:training@atl.org.uk).

**ATL's excellent reputation on health and safety was enhanced as it was asked to deliver a workshop on bullying at the Trade Unions Congress (TUC) annual Hazards conference at Keele University in July. It was the first time ATL has been asked to run a workshop at this prestigious event, a fact that reflects the union's growing influence in health and safety and the work of its network of reps.**



## Success for ATL at TUC conference

The two-hour workshop was one of 21 in total running at the conference over the weekend of 19 and 20 July and attracted more than 50 of the 500 delegates from all the unions in the TUC, such as Unison, Unite and GMB. It covered various issues of bullying such as how to recognise and identify it, forming an action plan to combat it, developing wider policies and what to do if you are being bullied.

Delivered by the ATL team of Doru Athinodoru and Karl English, with health and safety reps Tamsin Buckingham, Carolyn Dutton and Kim Knappett along with Julie Winn of ATL solicitors Morrish and Co, the workshop was very well received. One attendee, a member of public sector union Unite, was so impressed he recommended ATL to his wife who has subsequently joined.

Reflecting on the day, Tamsin Buckingham commented: "My colleagues as I departed for the conference were pondering if they had ever heard of anything that sounded so boring and I never expected it to give me such a buzz and prove so inspirational and worthwhile – I will be recommending it to them all for next year!

"Sharing health and safety experience and expertise with reps from all over the country (yes, that is what I was doing with the firemen!) was a real learning opportunity," she went on. "It was great that in our ATL workshop the delegates were really enthusiastic and the two hours I had dreaded, in front of a full classroom of total strangers (and grown-up ones at that), rushed past, full of interesting and useful activity

and discussion. Many people stayed to continue talking at the end, said how much they had got out of the session and were full of praise and thanks – if only we got such fabulous feedback in school!"

ATL's member adviser on health and safety Doru Athinodoru said: "A bigger union could have been asked but they asked us and that reflects really well on all our health and safety reps."

So popular was the workshop that ATL has been invited to do it again next year and plans to take more reps to build on this success and further raise the union's profile in health and safety circles.



L-R: Kim Knappett, Carolyn Dutton, Tamsin Buckingham, Julie Winn and Karl English

# Do's and don'ts of preventing stress

Stress, depression and anxiety are a significant cause of sickness absence in the education profession. Indeed, a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) survey in 2006/7 found that 530,000 workers reported suffering from these illnesses as a consequence of their work.

Guidance has been published to help managers and human resources professionals to tackle stress. The guidance is a combined effort of the HSE, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, and Investors in People (the organisation which manages standards for employee development). It advises managers on what they should and should not do to tackle stress and is designed to work alongside the HSE's stress management standards.

The guidance identifies four competencies which managers need to help combat stress, which involve the following:

- ✓ be respectful, have integrity and manage emotions
- ✓ manage and communicate current and future work
- ✓ be reasonable and manage difficult situations
- ✓ manage the individual within the team.

It cites some examples of poor behaviour managers should avoid such as: speaking about team members behind their backs; saying one thing, then doing something different; passing stress onto colleagues; and imposing their way as the only way.

Employees need to know where they can go to speak to someone, confidentially, about stress as there is a great deal of stigma attached to admitting you may be suffering from stress. The first line of action is usually to talk to the line manager. It is vital, therefore, for line managers to be trained in soft skills to deal effectively with colleagues who are suffering from stress, anxiety or depression.

The guidance can be downloaded from:

[www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/health/stress/\\_strwkcmtptn.htm](http://www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/health/stress/_strwkcmtptn.htm)



## Online help for pupils with medical conditions

A new website has been launched as a policy resource to help schools create a safe environment for children living with a medical condition. One of the resources available on the website is an information pack on asthma, anaphylaxis, diabetes and epilepsy; medical conditions which can have a substantial and potentially life-threatening impact on a young person's time at school.

The website will be useful for education establishments which have pupils with medical conditions that require support to enable them to maintain their attendance and to participate in activities. It will help develop policies in the management and administration of pupils' medicines.

The website has been launched by Asthma UK, the Anaphylaxis Campaign, the Cystic Fibrosis Trust, Diabetes UK, Epilepsy Action and the Long-Term Conditions Alliance and can be found at: [www.medicalconditionsatschool.org.uk](http://www.medicalconditionsatschool.org.uk).

# Europe focuses on risk assessment

***"Healthy workplaces – good for you, good for business."***

This is the catchy slogan for the two-year campaign on risk assessment organised by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EASHW). A number of nationwide events are planned for European Week, which runs from 20-24 October 2008. ATL safety reps are encouraged to highlight the campaign in their workplaces.

The campaign aims to demystify the risk assessment process and to promote a participatory approach to it. It is essential for the workforce to be consulted and involved at all stages of risk assessment, according to EASHW.

ATL health and safety reps will know that they have the right to be consulted on risk assessments. Whilst the campaign is mainly aimed at employers, it will also involve trade unions.

Risk assessments are only the start of the risk management process. **Someone in the EU dies in a work-related incident every 3½ minutes** and employers need to understand what action ought to be taken to improve workplace health and safety. Risk assessments enable them to do so. EASHW advocates the following approach to risk management:

- eliminate risks
- avoid risks
- combat the risks at source
- adapt work to individual employees
- adapt to technical progress
- replace dangerous equipment with non- or less dangerous equipment and materials
- develop a coherent prevention policy
- prioritise collective protective measures over individual ones
- provide appropriate training, information and instruction to workers.

Risk assessments must be kept under review and updated whenever changes are made to work activities or premises, advises EASHW.

The campaign will culminate in a major risk assessment summit in November 2009.

Campaign material is available in 22 EU languages. The material, which includes fact sheets, posters, case studies and links to related organisations, can be downloaded free of charge from this website: [www.osha.europa.eu/campaigns/hw2008](http://www.osha.europa.eu/campaigns/hw2008).

Information is also available on the HSE website: [www.hse.gov.uk/campaigns/euroweek](http://www.hse.gov.uk/campaigns/euroweek).



# ATL's new online face

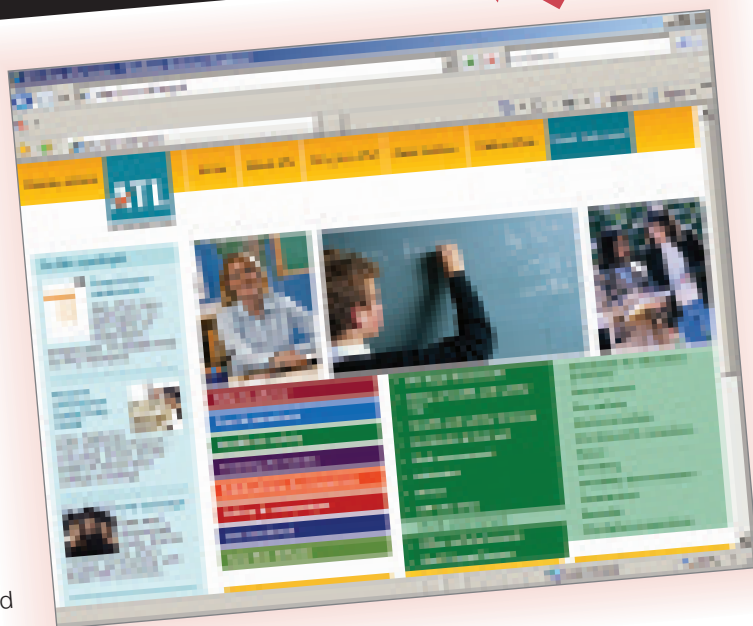
It's all change for ATL's website this term, with the launch of a brand-new site that promises to make it easier to find the information you need as easily as possible.

If you haven't taken a look at [www.atl.org.uk](http://www.atl.org.uk) in a while, then now is a good time to start. Our old website was no longer serving its purpose, with over half of you telling us you didn't use it. Many of you said that you knew information was there, but you simply couldn't find it!

In response, ATL set about asking members what you wanted from your union's website. Through answering online surveys, attending focus groups, filling in charts at events and taking part in online user testing, you told us that your top priorities were to be able to get answers to your employment questions, information on your pay, download or order a publication and find out about training courses, all as easily and quickly as possible. So improving the navigation and making all of these things only one click away was our top priority.

As you can see from the picture, much of the information you will want to access sits within a central coloured panel, which has a series of drop-down menus. It is here you will find ATL's publications, training courses, upcoming events and over 100 topics giving help and advice on employment or pay issues, all updated by ATL's legal and pay and conditions teams.

For health and safety reps in particular, you'll find a whole new section dedicated to health and safety issues, from stress and bullying, to asbestos, slips and trips and how to do a risk assessment. Each section has a 'see also' list, from which you can download related documents or access related sections of the website. And if you need to pass the information on to a colleague, you can use the icons in the top right corner of the page to print a printer-friendly version of the information or to email it.



Other features of the new website include the My ATL column on the right-hand side of the home page, where you can choose what role you play and in which sector as your default settings, which will then give you quick links to the areas of the website most relevant to you. We also have a password-protected area of the website called the 'Reps' toolbox' (you'll need your membership details to log in), accessible from the top yellow toolbar. Here you'll find lots of information and downloadable resources especially designed to support our reps.

You can also find out how to get involved in your union – whether it is by answering a survey or joining a special interest group – in our 'Get involved' section. And you can download all of ATL's policies on the key education issues of the day in our 'Policy and campaigns' section.

We'll be continuing to develop new features and add new content. If you have any comments, or something you would like to see, please email [vposkitt@atl.org.uk](mailto:vposkitt@atl.org.uk).

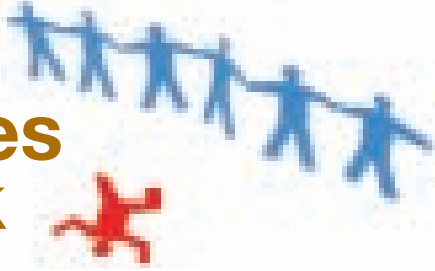
## Reps' progress

The role of the ATL health and safety rep has changed dramatically over the last 12 months. With a newly accredited six-day training course (see page 1) available to reps, and dedicated health and safety advisors on hand to help with any issues in workplaces, ATL has proven its commitment to providing our reps with the tools to tackle a wide range of issues affecting our members' safety concerns in workplaces.

ATL's ultimate aim is to identify a health and safety rep in every workplace to ensure our members can carry out their jobs in a safe environment, so if you've ever thought about becoming a health and safety rep why not get in touch and find out more at: [hs@atl.org.uk](mailto:hs@atl.org.uk). We have also produced a poster, which was circulated with the June/July copy of Report to help recruit new health and safety reps – make sure one goes up on your workplace noticeboard by ordering a copy from ATL Despatch on **0845 4500 009** or by emailing [despatch@atl.org.uk](mailto:despatch@atl.org.uk) quoting PS067.



## Fatalities at work



The Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007, which came into force on 6 April 2008, is the first generally applicable Act on health and safety since the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. It applies to fatalities arising from work activities.

The Act creates an offence of corporate manslaughter in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and corporate homicide in Scotland. The offence is committed when an organisation has a duty to take reasonable care of a person's safety, but the manner in which it has managed or organised its activities amounts to a "gross breach" of that duty and as a consequence, someone is killed. If found guilty, an organisation can be ordered to pay an unlimited fine.

No new health and safety management duties have been brought in by the Act, which is concerned with the corporate liability of organisations. Therefore, an organisation can be found guilty of corporate manslaughter if someone is killed as a result of a senior manager's gross failure to ensure safe working practices. The Act also makes it possible for a senior manager to be prosecuted for "gross negligence manslaughter". The following must be proved:

- the senior manager owed a duty of care to the deceased
- s/he breached that duty
- the breach caused the death of the person
- the senior manager's negligence was "gross" i.e. it showed a blatant disregard for the life and safety of others so as to amount to a crime and deserve punishment.

Under the Act, senior management is defined as those who play a significant role in the decision-making process about how the organisation's activities are managed and organised. What constitutes "senior management" has been much debated. However, much will depend on the structure and size of the organisation involved. Educational establishments should ensure that all managers with responsibilities for health and safety receive appropriate training and information.



7 Northumberland Street, London WC2N 5RD  
Tel: 020 7930 6441 Fax: 020 7930 1359  
Email: [info@atl.org.uk](mailto:info@atl.org.uk) Website: [www.atl.org.uk](http://www.atl.org.uk)

August 2008. ATL Product Code: BUL02

## ATL investigates asbestos

As many of you will know, for many years ATL has been concerned about the presence of asbestos in education establishments. At this year's annual Conference in Torquay, we called on the government to conduct a survey of all educational establishments to determine whether asbestos is present and to ensure that all asbestos is removed in accordance with approved HSE standards by firms licensed under the Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations, by 2010.

Against this background, agreement has been reached between ATL and some of the other recognised unions representing education staff to undertake a joint project to survey a representative sample of approximately 100 schools across England and Wales to assess how asbestos is being managed and to determine whether it would be appropriate to undertake further investigations, including air monitoring.

Agreement has been reached with Asbestos Testing and Consulting (ATAC), the trade body for asbestos testing and circulatory specialists, who share ATL's concerns. The project involves ATAC specialists visiting the sample schools and providing a report.

There are 26,277 primary, secondary and special schools in England and Wales. The project has identified schools built during three eras: those built up to 1944, those built between 1945 and 1975 and those built between 1976 and 1999. It has also been deemed important to obtain a reasonable geographical spread of the schools which will be surveyed.

ATL local officials in the areas identified will be liaising with their counterparts in the other teaching associations. We shall be seeking the support of individual schools in these areas for inclusion in the project. It is important to emphasise that no schools will be "named and shamed".

ATL general secretary, Dr Mary Bousted said: "ATL is happy to collaborate with other education unions on this worthwhile project. We do not know how many schools contain asbestos or how well it is being managed. The health and safety of staff and pupils in schools is of paramount importance."

