

Workers Memorial Day marked

Workers Memorial Day was marked at events around the country on April 28.

“This year has been one of our worst and one where far too many of our fellow workers went to work and didn’t come home,” said CTU president Helen Kelly, who spoke at an event on the West Coast.

“The Pike River mine was open for only a year before it exploded killing 29 people including a 17 year old boy, and having a service in Blackball this year serves as a poignant reminder to us all of the tragedy of workplace accidents.”

Workplace injuries kill about 100 people a year, and more than 700 people die prematurely from work-related illness or disease. 200,000 people are seriously harmed annually and there are 17,000 new cases of work-related disease each year.

Workplace health and safety regulations will be under the microscope as part of investigations into both Pike River and the Canterbury earthquake, and now is the time to make health and safety at work a priority for the government, she said.



Memorial unveiled at the Manawatu event

Maritime workers board Flag of Convenience ships

New Zealand maritime workers checked out ships flying “flags of convenience” to ensure that crew conditions, wages, and health and safety standards were up to scratch, during a week of action in June.

Flag of Convenience (FOC) vessels are registered in countries with very lax or non-existent regulations, provide a means of avoiding labour rules in the country of ownership, and become a vehicle for paying low wages and forcing long hours of work and unsafe working conditions, the Maritime Union of New Zealand said.



The union’s General Secretary Joe Fleetwood said the week of action in June was part of an ongoing international campaign to improve standards in the shipping industry.

unions talking health and safety

Safeguard award winner

Fonterra tanker driver Greg Chaffey has won the NZCTU Ross Wilson Most Influential Employee Award at the annual Safeguard Health & Safety Awards.

Greg (pictured below with the CTU’s Sandra Crews) is a health & safety representative, union delegate and member of the Dairy Workers Union Runanga/Fono.

He is actively involved in audits, first aid and permits to work, and has ensured health and safety reps are involved in all incident investigations.

He has persuaded colleagues to do safety training in the off-season, and has championed design changes to the plant to make it safer.

Greg said that he could not have undertaken his role without the full support of Dean Morrison, Fonterra’s Edendale Depot Manager who always makes resources and time available for him to address health & safety matters.



Greg believes that it is important that everyone in the workplace works together on health and safety.

On the night Greg delivered a great speech and was supported with a waiata by Dairy Workers Union organiser Mark Apiata-Wade, Sandra Crews from the CTU and the EPMU’s Anne-Marie McNally.

IN THIS ISSUE

- Pg 1 Safeguard awards winner
- Pg 2 Career development; news briefs
- Pg 3 Methyl Bromide; ACC Partnership Programme
- Pg 4 Workers Memorial Day

ABOUT

Unions Talking Health and Safety is published every three months by the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions Te Kauae Kaimahi. To be added to the mailing list, email healthandsafety@nzctu.org.nz to subscribe.

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Career-building opportunities for H&S reps

We know a number of you have gone on to develop your skills after doing the CTU training for elected H&S Reps, and some have moved into careers in the field of H&S, so you may be interested to know about the New Zealand Institute of Safety Management.

NZISM has branches around the country providing peer networking functions, conferences, seminars, continual professional development and career pathways.

The Auckland branch is keen to let H&S Reps know they can help and support them if they want to further their careers in health and safety.

They are offering a Practitioner Development Award 2011 - for people working or studying in the health and safety sector wanting to start or extend their qualifications and technical knowledge.

You can find out about this award and download an application form by checking out the Auckland web site: <http://www.nzism.co.nz/wawcs0141887/auckland.html>



ON THE WEB: www.nzism.co.nz

Asbestos risk in Christchurch

Lack of protection and awareness about asbestos is a serious risk for demolition crews and workers in disintegrating asbestos cement buildings in Christchurch.

“There are real risks for workers and the public in the Christchurch clean-up,” EPMU health & safety officer Fritz Drissner said.

“Despite clear recommendations to the Department of Labour in 2008, there’s not been a lot of action on the ground. This whole area is a ticking time-bomb.”

Thousands of cases of lung cancer may be the result of asbestos exposure, but the impact of this exposure on workers goes largely undetected and unreported, he said.

New factsheet: Workplace Injury & Disclosure of Medical Information

The Health & Safety Organisers at the NZCTU are currently updating their ACC partnership programme resources for union officials, health & safety reps, delegates and members.

They have recently produced a factsheet on Workplace Injury and Disclosure of Medical Information under the Health Information Privacy Code.

The factsheet can be found on their NZCTU website: union.org.nz/ACCPartnershipProgramme

New Rules on Use of Methyl Bromide

New rules around the use of the fumigant methyl bromide came into effect in May 2011.

This follows a review by the Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA), during which the NZCTU called for a complete ban on methyl bromide to keep in line with the European Union.

The new rules restrict the level of public exposure to the fumigant, set minimum buffer zones around fumigation sites, provide for notification to nearby residents and require users to monitor air quality during fumigations and report back to ERMA each year. All methyl bromide fumigations must use recapture technology within 10 years.

The Government has also introduced a five-year, \$2.5 million research proposal looking at alternatives to the controversial fumigant methyl bromide.

New Zealand is among the countries whose use of methyl bromide has risen. NZ is exporting more timber to countries which require fumigation at the port of export.

More info: www.union.org.nz/news/2010/methyl-bromide-ban-needed-now-26110



Higher participation called for

The CTU supports greater union participation in the new ACC Partnership Programme.

The new “employer self assessment forms” make it clear to employers that unions and union reps play a key role in the ACC partnership programme. The CTU sees the new forms as an opportunity for unions to increase engagement with employers around health and safety.

The forms require accredited employers to show evidence and sign off that they have involved union reps in the annual self assessment process which includes the development of H&S procedures and involvement in injury management procedures.

ACC also requires employers to provide full information to employees about their rights under legislation around claims, rehabilitation, assessments vocational independence and disputes resolution. This is a clear opportunity for unions to ensure that union reps are more actively involved and informed around the partnership programme.