

Inspectors to involve reps

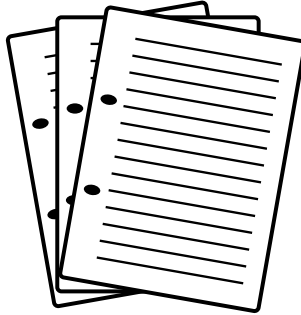
The Department of Labour will issue a Practice Note to its Health and Safety staff, Managers, Team Leaders and Inspectors this month, as it takes an active interest in supporting Health & Safety Reps.

Primarily, the notice is to advise Inspectors to engage with H&S Reps when carrying out workplace visits and investigations.

In most cases some level of contact should be achievable. If an employer refuses to allow an Inspector to involve H&S Reps, this will be noted and taken into account when evaluating the overall quality of health and safety programmes at the workplace.

During investigations Inspectors should inquire about the methods of employee participation, and even though you may not have been directly involved in the incident or complaint you may be asked about the effectiveness of your organisation's health and safety systems and management practices.

This is a positive step by the Department of Labour to engage with and acknowledge your statutory role as the workplace H&S representative.



Workers' Memorial Day - April 28 2010

Workers' Memorial Day is coming up next month, and this year the worldwide theme for the Day is 'unions make work safer.'

The first Workers' Memorial Day was observed in 1989 in Canada. Now, on April 28th each year, people in hundreds of communities and worksites around the world recognise workers who have been killed or injured on the job.

In January, the UK government announced it will officially recognise the day. Welcoming the decision, UK Trade Union Congress general secretary Brendan Barber said: "This special day commemorates the many thousands of people who have died as a result of their work and we're pleased the government has taken the step of recognising it."

Workers' Memorial Day events will be added to the CTU website as we hear of them. Check out www.union.org.nz/campaigns/workers-memorial-day for more details, and if you have an event let the CTU know by emailing it to healthandsafety@nzctu.org.nz.

Methyl Bromide scrutiny

The Council of Trade Unions says that methyl bromide, used for the pre-export fumigation of logs, should be completely banned as evidence mounts that it puts worker health and safety at serious risk.

"This neurological poison could have caused the fatal motor neurone disease in six Port Nelson workers, and its ozone depleting status means it is hazardous to us all," CTU President Helen Kelly said.

Maritime Union General Secretary Joe Fleetwood said the early reports of a possible link between methyl bromide and nerve damage should make it clear that use of methyl bromide must be immediately stopped while further research is carried out.

Impact of cleaning chemicals on childbirth should be investigated

The Service & Food Workers Union Nga Ringa Tota (SFWU) is calling for an investigation into the effect of cleaning chemicals on unborn babies.

SFWU southern regional secretary Campbell Duignan told the *Press* newspaper he was concerned about the findings of a United States study showing cleaners have the highest risk of having babies with birth defects.

"Cleaners are largely an invisible work force. Partly related to that lack of visibility is the lack of information and data in relation to health and safety. We would like to think that there could be some priority given to researching that as far as the New Zealand cleaning work force goes," he told the *Press*.



MARK HAMMOND, Christchurch Prison.

You might think that the hazards facing prison staff are very different to those of other workplaces.

That may be true but Public Service Association (PSA) health and safety rep Mark Hammond says it's the "slip, trip and fall" hazards that cause most accidents, the same as everywhere else.

Mark is a union delegate as well as a health and safety rep, and says the two roles mesh well together.

"They go hand in hand: helping other people and providing information to people who wouldn't otherwise be aware of their rights and obligations."

Everyone needs to take responsibility for health and safety at work, he says.

"Ignoring a hazard and thinking it's someone else's responsibility no longer cuts it if an accident occurs."

From PSA's *Delegates - the heart of the union*