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UK National Work Stress Network – New 'Work Stress Guide Handbook':

To: All Branches

Dear Colleagues,

The UK National Work Stress Network is a voluntary organisation that campaigns to secure proper recognition of the damage caused by work-stress and to prevent work-related stress. They aim to educate and raise awareness of work-stress and to improve legislation on health, safety and employment rights in the UK and Europe. The organisation is part of the 'Hazards Campaign' and has close links to the Trade Union movement. The UK National Work Stress Network consists of unpaid volunteers, bringing together workplace trade union and health and safety representatives, academics, safety professionals and others to campaign for the better protection of workers against stress-related mental and physical illnesses caused by poorly controlled workplace psycho-social hazards.

The UK Work-Stress Network has been fighting for years alongside Trade Unions and the Hazards Campaign for the protection of Health and Safety in the workplace, action on Stress and Mental Health. The organisation, Trade Unions and the TUC, now have major concerns about the outcome of any shift of EU-based health and safety law into UK law and the very likely future diminution of Health and Safety and other associated laws.

The latest edition of "Work Stress Guide" handbook has been published with the CWU being one of the publication's sponsors, along with several other Unions; FBU, FDA, GMB, NASUWT, UNISON, Unite and both the Hazards Campaign and Scottish Hazards.

The New handbook examines:

The problem:
- The extent of work-related stress illness.
- The cost of work-related stress illnesses to the individual, society and the economy.
- The causes of work-related stress.
- The effects of stress on the mental and physical health of workers.
- Obstacles to progress.
- The law.
- The solution.
- Preventing work stress (the role of Government, employers, Trade Unions and individuals).
- Conducting a risk assessment.
- Dealing with individual stress.

CWU 150 The Broadway, Wimbledon, London, SW19 1RX
email: info@cwu.org   Tel: 020 8971 7200   Fax: 020 8971 7300
General Secretary: Dave Ward

@DaveWardGS **Dave Ward CWU**

Appendices

- WorkStress (UK National Work Stress Network).
- Fit notes.
- Sample workplace audit forms.
- The European dimension.
- Useful sources of information.
- References.

The Appendices give further information about the WorkStress Network, examine how other European countries are tackling the problem of psycho-social workplace hazards, give some examples of Workplace Audit Forms and lists some further sources of information.

The handbook should be of use to many, including:

- Employers, managers and human resources staff.
- Trade Union Health and Safety Representatives and Union Reps.
- Trade Union tutors and students.
- Professionals in the field of mental health and occupational health.
- Academics.
- Employees with personal experience of workplace stress and its effects.

Handbook pdf Download Copy:

A pdf copy of the handbook is attached and the Health, Safety and Environment Department will be distributing hard copies of the books to Senior Health and Safety Reps via Regional Health and Safety Forums and there will be copies available at Annual Conference at the Health and Safety Fringe Meeting. Bulk copies can also be purchased by Branches (details below).

Problem and Extent of Workplace Stress-Related Illness:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed upon them. Too many workers are trapped in highly stressful environments as a result of poor work organisation and negative behaviours in the workplace. As a result, levels of stress-related mental and physical illness caused or made worse by work are very high. Those at the bottom of the workplace pecking order are often the major victims of stress-related illness. Sufferers are not weak individuals who are incapable of coping with the normal demands of working life. The reverse is often the case, and it can be those who refuse to bend under these pressures and who refuse to admit to themselves that they are being overwhelmed who often succumb to incapacitating stress-related illnesses.

Highly stressful workplaces are 'dysfunctional' because they work to the benefit neither of the employee nor of the employer. The former can suffer from a range of stress-related mental and physical illnesses and the latter reaps this harvest in terms of low productivity, low employee morale and rapid staff turnover. Instead of taking measures to prevent this epidemic of injury, too often managers or employers make excessive demands, neglect their common-law duty of care and clearly ignore the cost to their organisations of sick pay, long-term absence, reduced productivity and potential claims for compensation by workers made ill by their negligence. However, it is the human cost of work-related stress, in terms of wrecked lives and relationships, debilitating mental and physical illness and sometimes, tragically, death that should concern us most.

No one should leave work at the end of the day less healthy than they were when they started. All too often we hear of workers trapped in highly stressful environments, often also the subject of bullying, victimisation and harassment or discrimination. When we see how many people are affected by their work (and sometimes by fellow workers), it is heartrending to say the least. We learn that their managers or employers make excessive demands, neglect their common law duty of care and clearly ignore the cost to the organisation through sick pay,

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long-term absence, reduced production and potential compensation for making their workers ill.

Stress is a major cause of sickness absence in the workplace and costs over £5 billion a year in Great Britain. It affects individuals, their families and colleagues by impacting on their health but it also impacts on employers with costs relating to sickness absence, replacement staff, lost production and increased accidents.

The UK National Work-Stress Network is committed to the eradication of the causes of work-related stress and associated illnesses. They campaign to advance this aim through involvement with the Hazards Campaign and in conjunction with the TUC, UK trade unions and European organisations.

The Network consists of many hundreds of like-minded people, some of whom have suffered the consequences of work-related stress. Amongst their numbers are experienced caseworkers, counsellors, occupational health workers, Trade Union officials, and those who are just determined to see effective management which recognises the needs of the workforce as well as of business.

The UK National Work-Stress Network's website (**www.workstress.net**.) regularly receives over 40,000 visits each month and is the basis for the information they provide. They also produce three or four electronic newsletters each year. All documents on the website are free to copy and circulate. In addition, they facilitate workshops and seminars as requested and play a significant role at Hazards Conferences in the UK and Europe.

The UK operates in a climate of uncertainty and job insecurity, as the rights of employees have been regularly eroded in favour of a 'business and enterprise culture'. Short-term and temporary contracts, zero-hours contracts, casualisation, privatisation, the conversion of public services into 'businesses' in which a smaller number of workers are expected to deliver the same amount of work, and increased lone working - have all increased pressure on the worker, thus changing the face of employment. Excessive target-setting, bureaucracy and performance measurement now pervade many aspects of work, applying additional pressures to workers, at every level. Coercive management practices (bullying) flourish as pressure increases to cut costs, and to meet targets, often with reduced staffing. This profit-motivated attitude has led to an unacceptable rise in the reported cases of stress-related workplace illness.

The UK National Work-Stress Network calls for:-
- Employers, company directors and managers at all levels to acknowledge their duty of care and their acceptance of their health and safety responsibilities to the workforce.
- Legislation and enforcement procedures to outlaw all forms of workplace stress, bullying and victimisation; also to ensure full corporate liability for workplace injury.
- The creation of a caring supportive workplace culture with 'Dignity at Work' and worker-sensitive procedures for all.
- Specific regulations or an Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) or giving clear instructions to management on the necessary actions to remove stress related illness from the workplace, regulations in which the right of people at work to be treated with dignity and respect is explicitly stated to prevent the abuse of hierarchical position, which creates a bullying culture.

The UK National Work-Stress Network provides speakers for local and national events and facilitates workshops and seminars for Trade Union and human resources groups. The Network continues to be closely involved with the Hazards Campaign and takes an active part in both UK and European Hazards conferences.

Purchasing Bulk Copies Of The Work-Stress Guide Booklet

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Copies of the Work Stress Guide Booklet can be purchased as follows:-

A box of 55 copies comes at a charge of £1 per copy plus admin and p&p = £80. Orders can be processed via:

Bob Woods (Network Coordinator)
UK National Work Stress Network
Mobile: 07590 598587
Email: ukstresscoordinator@gmail.com

The UK National Work-Stress Network Annual Conference
The UK National Work-Stress Network holds an Annual Conference in November each year at the Hillscourt Conference Centre, Rednal, Birmingham B45 8RS. When details are confirmed and application forms are available, full details will be published via an LTB to Branches, Safety Reps and Regional Health and Safety Forums.

Attachments:
- Electronic pdf copy of the 'UK National Work Stress Network - 'Work Stress Guide Booklet''
- Copy of the CWU 'How To Identify Stress Factsheet'.

Yours sincerely

Dave Joyce
National Health, Safety & Environment Officer

In order that people may be happy in their
work these three things are needed...
■ they must be fit for it;
■ they must not do too much of it; and
■ they must have a sense of success in it.
(John Ruskin, 1871)