

No More Bloody Bandages!

This year's Workers' Memorial Day occurs against a background of:

- government attacks on safety regulation (see issues 2 and 3 for more on this)
- and one year on from the Bangladesh factory collapse

International Actions on Bangladesh Factory Collapse

1,127 were killed in last April's tragic collapse of the Rana Plaza clothing industry factory, with an estimated over 4000 affected if you count those injured, disabled and bereaved.

Here is some good news for a change. Unlike with so many other large-scale tragedies, this one has sparked off a number of moves round the world to help those affected, and to try to prevent anything on this scale happening there again. This is exactly the kind of action Workers' Memorial Day supports, so let's help spread the word.

Last July, a speaker from West Midlands Hazards Trust was among those, including local MPs, councillors and MEPs, who shared a platform in Lozells to review what has happened so far and what else can be done. This is a small part of the international pressure that has been going on all year.

Two key initiatives have emerged:

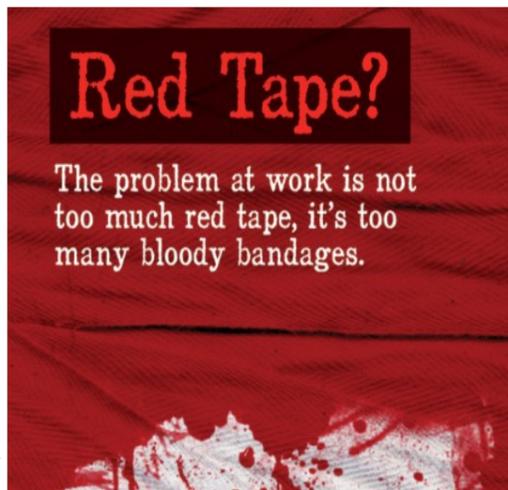
1. The **Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh** is a legally binding agreement which, amongst other things, sets up a new Safety Inspection regime and commits retailers who are signatories to make repairs, put aside enough money for this, and ensure all workers continue to receive a salary. To date, it is signed by over 150 clothing manufacturers, several major trade unions and global union confederacies, and NGOs such as the Clean Clothes Campaign.
2. A fund for a no-fault compensation scheme has been set up, called the **Rana Plaza Donors' Trust Fund**, to which a growing number of clothing firms have contributed, and some of those firms have made small up-front compensation available.

A new law has been passed in Bangladesh to outlaw padlocking factory doors with workers inside, and for structural changes to be inspected. It was adding extra floors which was

a key cause of the collapse.

That's where the good news ends. The Bangladesh government have only now begun to try to list all the people affected. We need to make sure that those who have suffered do not end up like those affected by the huge gas incident in Bhopal who still don't have proper compensation 30 years later.

It's no surprise that, with some notable exceptions, most clothing firms have joined up to these schemes very reluctantly and many are still to do so. It is down to people like us, who buy clothes from these firms, to make them aware that customers are not impressed. We need more actions such as the recent highlighting of what student activists in US call "North Face Deathtraps" to bring attention to the fact that parent company VF Corporation will not sign the Accord. We also need to make sure that companies like Benetton and the anti-union Walmart give to the no-fault compensation scheme. Above all, we need to continue to insist that safety laws need proper enforcement, both in this country and abroad, so that they have teeth. There is no use having a law against padlocking doors in Bangladesh, or against employers breaking safety laws in this country, if the laws are inadequately enforced. We should oppose HSE cuts.



We love Red Tape

Our government makes out that safety laws are too much "red tape" and they want to make a bonfire of them. They have convinced too many people that anyone who cares about maintaining safety standards is a threat to the economy. The opposite is the case: when the government tried to consult employers on their attitudes, they were told by employers they actually wanted more help with safety, not less.

We need to support the call of the Hazards Campaign which contrasts calls for an end to "Red Tape" with a campaign saying "No More Bloody Bandages!" See the Facebook pages on <https://www.facebook.com/groups/123746101003963/> to send a campaign "selfie" photo with placard to your MP, David Cameron and the above Facebook page.



Safety Net Online

We have decided we need to campaign through social networking and expand our internet coverage from our existing Asbestos Support site to building a new website with info on other work hazards and related local events..

We are glad to say that Awards for All has awarded us a grant to do just that, by enabling us to work on a project called Safety Net. We are currently putting this in place, and we hope as many as possible will support this initiative and attend the public launch of that project later in the year.

Please give us your contact details if we do not have them already, so that we can keep you in touch with progress on this or any aspect of our work. Please consider joining as an individual or as a representative of an organisation.

If you would like to join the West Midlands Hazards Trust and/or make a donation and/or receive information about our work please complete the section below and return.

Accident gives local man horrific injuries

An accident in a Midlands factory resulted in injuries "more akin to those sustained in a battlefield" (HSE inspector).

Clive Dainty suffered horrendous injuries when a huge vessel exploded when it was being pressure tested, at Filtration Service Engineering in Kidderminster, in Dec 2011. He suffered head injuries, and had to have both legs amputated; while his arms, which had to be repaired with metal plates, now have restricted movement.

The company had tried to pressure test the vessel with compressed air, rather than water. The compressed air built up in the vessel until it exploded.

The firm was fined £30,000, with £15,325 costs. The HSE inspector commented that "the management of health and safety in the factory was woefully inadequate and simple measures could have been implemented to prevent the accident from happening. ..It is a miracle that more people were not injured and that nobody lost their life."

Dates for your Diary

Workers' Memorial Day
Mon 28th April 2014

Solihull -12.30pm Brueton Gardens
Birmingham- 12.30pm St Phillips' Churchyard, Colmore Row
Wolverhampton- 12.30pm. The Cenotaph in front of the Civic Centre and St Peters Church, WV1 1TS

Action Mesothelioma Day
Friday 4th July- 11am. Birmingham Council House, Victoria Square

This year's event will include presentations on current medical research into the treatment of asbestos related diseases and the search for an eventual cure.

National Hazards Campaign Conference
29th – 31st August 2014
University of Keele, Stoke-on-Trent
 Download a booking form at www.hazardscampaign.org.uk

I/we want to support the work of the West Midlands Hazards Trust:

- I would like to join the West Midlands Hazards Trust, please send me a membership form
- I would like more information about the work of the Trust
- I would like to make a donation towards the work of the Trust (Please make cheques payable to the West Midlands Hazards Centre)

I would like to sign up for the email list and receive regular updates on the work of the Trust

Name:
 Address:
 Telephone:
 Email:

I enclose a cheque for £_____

The West Midlands Hazards Trust

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