

Monday, 12 December 2011

UCATT Welcomes Reinstatement of Hidden Killer Campaign

Construction union UCATT have welcomed the Health and Safety Executive's decision to reinstall the award winning Hidden Killer campaign in 2012. The Hidden Killer campaign was launched by the HSE in 2008 and warned construction workers, particularly those involved in maintenance and refurbishment work, of the dangers of asbestos.

Construction workers are now the group most likely to be exposed to asbestos in the workplace. Despite this, there is a very high level of ignorance of the ongoing dangers of asbestos among these workers.

A further phase of the campaign was due to have taken place in October 2010 but it was postponed due to the Conservative-led Government's freeze on communications. In January 2011 UCATT became aware of the HSE documents that admitted: "there is no intention to run the Hidden Killer campaign again."

Once UCATT became aware of the decision not to continue with the Hidden Killer campaign the union embarked on a lobbying campaign including contacting relevant ministers and assisting MPs who raised the matter in Parliament.

At the HSE's Board meeting earlier this month it was announced that a new phase of the campaign would be launched in 2012.

George Guy, Acting General Secretary of UCATT, said: "This is excellent news, the Hidden Killer campaign saves lives. A fresh phase of the campaign is long overdue. All the feedback shows that the campaign has been successful in educating construction workers on the dangers of asbestos."

Natascha Engel, Labour MP for North East Derbyshire, who raised the proposed cancellation of the campaign in Parliament, said: "It is good news that the Hidden Killer campaign is being reinstated, it should never have been frozen in the first place. Far too many people every year die from asbestos diseases, the vast majority of these deaths could easily have been prevented."

Mr Guy, added: "It is vital that despite the HSE's financial constraints this is a fully funded information campaign which reaches its target audience."

On average each week approximately 8 joiners, 6 electricians and 4 plumbers die from asbestos-related diseases.

UCATT advises all workers that if they are unsure whether asbestos is present to stop work immediately and not to work with asbestos unless they have been fully trained.