

# CWU NORTH WEST REGIONAL CONFERENCE 2019



The communications union

North West Region

NCWUNWW19

TUESDAY 26TH FEBRUARY 2019

10AM – 3PM



ANNUAL REPORT 2018

AT THE  
MECHANICS INSTITUTE  
103 PRINCESS ST  
MANCHESTER  
M1 6DD

## NW Regional Forum H, S & E Annual Report 2018

**BT Safety Database** – all Lines of Business (LOBs) are buying in to this which has been muted in different forms since 2014 and there were several meetings over the year with BT Group HR to iron out continuing issues. The database will primarily just be a building to Union Safety Rep (USR) list; issues include adding an automatic time calculator for totalled building time; USR automatically added when completing joint course; joint USRs for a single building facility; need two people per branch not just the Coordinator; need to highlight that travel time is to be added to and from each building; need to precede everything that USRs are not mere building inspectors, they have a the legal right to inspect the workplace every three months and that is usually outside up poles or down holes and so on.

**Pole top / Mobile Elevating Works Platform (MEWP) rescue** – no confidence in system that appears to be bare minimum to meet HSE requirements of not using Fire and Rescue and first responders, when in fact, that is exactly what they are doing, the training list we have access to was from 2014.

**BT and non-compliance** - We have worked with colleagues from rest of NW, the NE and Scotland on a report regrading BT and non-compliance with legislative requirements and has support from the T & FS Executive. All based on what a USR can, is entitled and able to do under the legal standing of safety representative. Using the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) cost per incident figures and BT's own incident statistics there is a financial case, a legal case and not just the moral case for releasing USRs to fulfil their safety role to the best for their level of training and skill. The statics used do not cover sickness/ill health caused by the workplace such as mental health, welfare or stress.

**Environment** – we now meet regularly with BT's national lead Mel Grime and he agreed to support USRs getting more time if (those who volunteer) they pick up and chase environmental issues such as waste contamination.

**Engineering waste** - The Lloyds Registered Quality Audit will revisit some of our top waste disposing sites and buildings in January for several weeks in to February. In order to retain BT's ISO14001 certificate it needs to be demonstrated that they are **compliant on all their environmental obligations** and are continually improving the management of waste. ISIS RAL/ENV/B011 [*BT's Waste Guide for reuse, recycle and disposal*] has yet again been updated [now up to issue 29]. Also, a daily Red and Green (RAG) Status Report (based on Property & Facilities Services (P & FS) data and Yard Marshall updates) is looked at and discussed on a conference call to put pressure on the managers of the worst sties and to make it look to the auditor like everything is under control. Locally Neston, Aintree ATE, Hunts Cross PASS [red], Simonswood, Newton, Cressington Park have all been named and shamed. Slightly amusingly Rusholme ATE is on the list. However, the worst site in Merseyside was brought to our attention by Sue – Childwall. Fibre work has lots of BT engineers, managers, coaches and contractors all descended on the site which is totally unsuitable for the footfall. Cleaning, both domestic and engineering issues use of female facilities by males, stores piled up on stairs, continuous smoking at gate and rubbish littering pavement the road is like a van park

which is annoying the neighbours. We raised suitability if the Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) and the likelihood of asbestos disturbance etc.

**Radon** – The NW report from three years ago and our conference proposition two years ago have led to BT Group creating policy with guidance, a radon post-code-check underway with Public Health England (as we recommended), site monitoring to commence imminently with additional mitigation to be implemented summer 2019.

**Legionella** - HSE are going to target Legionella Risk Control Assessment". BUPA fined £3m over death of man in Essex last year; six monthly inspections of cold-water programme, need to look at "dead ends" like mothballed areas in BT; quarterly cleaning of shower heads.

**General** - many of our telecom members are putting in Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) and 5G services which will bring in the biggest communications revolution since we went from two tin cans joined by a bit of string to wired telephony. The H & S community should be looking at the opportunities to take risk assessments and safe methods of work out of the files on a shelf in an office, just coming out once a year for the annual review and sign off then placed back on the shelf to gather dust, changed into the immediate delivery of safety information on demand to a field worker when needed. Over the Top (OTT) services offer new ways of making the workplace safer and we need to embed delivery and use at the beginning of the revolution and not play catch up later in the day. A worker out in any situation will be able to call on Network Functions Virtualisation (NFV) for a visual run through of a situation he/she may have never met before, highly defined with millisecond latency, problems highlighted and solutions offered before they commence work. Whilst this would never be a replacement for suitable and sufficient training the use of new resources on demand can only improve safety. We can work with the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector to look for new innovative ways of delivering H&S when needed most in the best suitable manner. We have to embrace the communications evolution, look to develop and grow influence in making all workplaces and working practices safer, the BT Safety Co-ord will look to set up a round table discussion amongst interested stakeholders.

**Re-Design and H&S structures in the CWU** - the NW were instrumental in the creation of a document looking at a better way forward for H & S within, and influencing outside, the CWU. Re-Design is a positive thing for this Union and as USRs we are all behind it because of the opportunity it gives us to create a health & safety department and structures below national level; that are second to none. Sustainability and money talk, especially at the moment, and rationalisation of available resources is necessary but safety is not merely working at height, unsuitable female facilities or vicious dog bites but it is highly political, lobbying, engaging within the trade union movement and outside it; it is educational to prevent the same mistakes being repeated by those young people who will follow us into the workplace. Health, safety and environmental issues cross every trade union area and they should construct their organisation around it and not lump it into the bottom draw of another department. The reorganisation of the CWU is as an opportunity to fully utilise Safety Reps in their whole role as Health, Safety and Environment Representatives - in the community and not just in the workplace. ...there to help you look after your family.....the environment you live in.....the trip to school and

welfare within the school itself..... the streets you live in and the roads you drive on have all been affected by CWU campaigns over the years. Changes to Dangerous Dogs legislation that affect every community [not just Post men/women] came about purely because of the CWU H and S Department and backed by campaigning SRs around the country. Campaigning on issues such as implementation new and revised Workplace Exposure Limits; eco-design requirements for standby, networked standby and off mode electric power consumption; DeFRA animal welfare; consultations on local, national and European environment issues; consultation with the Directorate General of Environment for European Community (EC) on Ivory Trade; affected European Union (EU) legislation on plant protection products and pesticide residues and so on. We are not just there for holes and poles or for dogs and bogs.

**Consultations Forum has taken part in:**

Defra consultation on the draft Animal Welfare (Sentencing and Recognition of Sentience) Bill.

Gov.UK Fire consultation Approved Document B (fire safety): amendments to statutory guidance on assessments in lieu of tests.

The Law Commission consultation on creation of a single Sentencing Code.

Consultation on the form of experience, case studies or research on the prescribing in regulations of LA public health activity whether the system is working well and is fit for the future.

HSE questionnaire in response to invitation to comment on the proposals on implementing new and revised Work Exposure Limits (EC Directive 2017/164/EU) "*your views have been noted and recorded, and will be taken into account*".

EU consultation on eco-design requirements for standby, networked standby and off mode electric power consumption

Consultation on the banning of third-party sales of puppies and kittens in England. Would mean that pet shops, pet dealers and other outlets and licensed sellers of puppies and kittens would be unable to sell these pets unless they themselves have bred them.

Ofcom Physical Infrastructure Market Review: Access to ducts and poles to support investment (see below);

"Whilst we understand the rationale for the proposals to give unrestricted access to Openreach's network of underground cable ducts and poles we have extreme concern over the health, safety and environmental issues that will arise from such free access.

We accept that there will be competition and that it is central to Ofcom means of stimulating investment among different networks but that must not lead to a dangerous workplace for those who follow or a damaged environment for the general public. If such access is not managed or controlled from the beginning it will lead to a cut-and-run approach and the situation will become unrecoverable.

The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (CDM 2015) design in health, safety and environmental management from the outset and this approach should be encouraged. When preparing or modifying network access it is important in ensuring construction is carried out in a way that avoids clearly foreseeable health, safety and environmental concerns. A strong auditing procedure predetermined during the very early planning and design stages of the access will support the health and safety of not only those carrying out work, but those who use, maintain, repair etc. as well as the general public.

Whilst users of the network will have to be licenced and accredited to be at the same, or better than, Openreach standards we have seen precious work by some, not all, contractors severely lacking leaving the said equipment almost near unworkable for the following Openreach engineer. If this is applied to poles it will be further exacerbated by being unsafe for the following engineer(s) and the general public.

Therefore, we would want to see a complete and thorough auditing mechanism funded pro-rata by all those who use the network provided by the Openreach as owner of the network. The auditors must be able to demonstrate they have the health and safety skills, knowledge and experience, the organisational capability, to carry out the audit to which they are appointed to undertake with skills proportionate to foresee the complexity of the work and the range and nature of the risks involved".

**GDPR** – Forum raised concern at Head Office, CWU appointed lead officer Kevin Curtis who has been dealing and will issue guidelines for safety investigation as well as other union functions; he thanked us for some of the issues we raised and took concerns to the TUC. Personal data is very wide and means anything that can identify a person. Penalty is a fine of up to 4% of turnover; so, if a Branch gets £59k per year can be fined £2k for each offence, should that be a block breach of 25 members [e.g. a BT team list] and we were prosecuted for each individual breach of GDPR that would be a fine of up to £50K.

**Unionsafety** - for those who look at it the unionsafety website has been revamped, it had been ten years with the same banner etc. also now postal colleagues are included so the site will now appeal to the whole of CWU. Such as the coverage of Jamie's recent work with dogs.

**Combustible Cladding** - it is astonishing that there is such a slow response and dithering over the banning of combustible cladding in the UK, the claims that it should banned from all new high-rise buildings are wide of the mark. The Government announcing that new high-rise residential buildings, hospitals, registered care homes and student accommodation will be covered by the ban fall far from any duty of care to the public. It should be banned full stop, and all that which is in situ should be removed as soon as reasonably practicable. With respect to colleagues at IOSH who note the public concern about fire and call for the cladding to be banned from all high-rise buildings, existing and new, and both residential and non-residential, that is insufficient. As Judith Hackett [said](#) it is vital that changes are implemented to fire regulations or it is impossible to rule out another catastrophe like Grenfell.

**New technology** - the opposite of useful intervention, as the TUC recently noted, is the fact that some UK companies are considering microchipping workers – like dogs. Allegedly to help them get access to secure areas. This is **not just active 100% surveillance, full time monitoring whether in work, off work, at home or at the football then.** Tracking toilet breaks is one thing and abhorrent but this is just for more power and control over their workers, some employers already make staff wear location-tracking devices. Such an erosion of dignity and the natural right to privacy in, and outside, the workplace must never be allowed.

**Occupational Health** - British businesses asked the Government to review occupational health provision to more than work related sickness absence; however, when digging down it appears that it was led by an insurance company, maybe it was even led by their concern for paying out vast sums of money that could be avoided? Some of us have access to OH services but they are not the all-round care of years ago, now often diluted to even “over the phone physiotherapy” advice. It is not a huge leap in imagination to know that a healthy workforce is a more productive workforce consequently investment in the wellbeing of workers by the employer and Government makes sense for business and for society from reduced benefits and pressure on the chronically underfunded NHS.

**Northern Rail** - We were disappointed to see Northern Rail withdrew from ACAS talks in guards' safety dispute. As regular users of the areas rail network we want safe and secure journeys, support for people with needs, families with prams etc. and this is not best delivered by Arriva Rail North's plans to introduce Driver Controlled Operations across its franchise. We continue to support the RMT campaign to ensure passengers using Arriva Rail North Train Services are provided with a continued and guaranteed safe, secure and accessible railway journeys.

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**Mesothelioma** - Disease News recently reported on a clinical trial on mesothelioma has shown results surpassing expectations. Treatment with radiofrequency ablation using radio waves following treatment with chemotherapy showed no complications and a reduction in the size of the tumour. A long way to go but international cooperation amongst clinicians may one day show that surgery, treatment followed by radiotherapy may help to prevent the development of new tumours.

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