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UCU Region Northwest Regional Committee

Issue 4

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Up in Smoke - Is vaping safe? Public Health England accused of playing down dangers of e-cigarettes as a purely American phenomenon

Who are we to believe when it comes to public health advice about vaping?



e-cigarettes first appeared commercially in the United States in 2007. They work by inhaling a heated vapour containing nicotine, propylene glycol and/or vegetable glycerine plus flavourings. They do not contain tobacco and do not produce tar or carbon monoxide—substances that are known to cause serious harm to health.

Various vaping devices include: “Cigalikes” that look like cigarettes, “Vape” pens that are tube-like, “pod” systems similar to a USB stick—either pre-filled or refillable, and “Mods” that are the larger devices comprising of a refillable tank, rechargeable batteries and varying in power.

Controlled in the UK by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency, the current stance by healthcare experts in this country is that vaping is preferable (and safer) than smoking.

According to Professor John Newton, Director of Health

Improvement at Public Health England, he states: “The evidence is clear that vaping isn't risk free but it is far less harmful than smoking” In spite of this message, to date, India, Brazil, Singapore and Thailand have all banned e-cigarette use.

So what is all the “fuss” about?

Recent reports from America link a rare lung disease called Lipoid Pneumonia to vaping. The damage is caused by vaped oils getting into the lungs resulting in an immune response. This can be severe or even life threatening; Symptoms include chest pain, difficulty in breathing and a chronic cough. Already one patient is said to have died in the US, with a further 193 lung cases reported in 22 states.

Some 3 million+ people are said to be vaping in the UK. Scientists and public health experts are divided as to whether vaping is “safe”. The incidence of lung damage [caused by vaping] is unclear, although 200 adverse reactions have been reported to the MHRA.

Public Health England suggests that the crisis in the US is strongly associated with the use of cannabis oils (and vitamin E acetate—a cutting agent used by black market dealers and illegal in the UK). We do however know that other substances (including

illicit oils) are added to devices by UK vapers.

Professor Stanton Glanz, Director of the Centre for Tobacco Research Control and Education in the United States says: “What they [PHE] England is saying is frankly ridiculous, Lungs are lungs”.

There are concerns too that young people are experimenting with vaping in order to “give it a try” and tempted by the many flavours and tastes available. This is particularly worrying for those young people who have never tried smoking in the first place.

It is important to remember too that e-cigarettes contain nicotine, a substance known to be highly addictive. Concerns are that nicotine can affect the developing brain of teens and young adults. Some US studies also suggest that young people are more likely to take up smoking having tried vaping.

Other health risks of vaping

Reports of explosions and burns have been reported as a result of faulty devices — especially when recharging.

Liquids used to recharge the devices contain nicotine which can be especially harmful to babies and young children if accidentally ingested.

We do not know yet if there is any risk to the foetus of mothers vaping during pregnancy.

International Workers Memorial Day 2019
Sunday 28th April.
Albert Square Manchester.

Dangerous Substances



Get them out of the workplace!

“Remember the Dead: Fight like hell for the Living”

The North West Workers Memorial Day was attended by your regional health and safety representative to mark this important event.

We remembered those who have been killed through their work but at the same time making sure that such tragedies never happen again.



SAVE THE DATE
Mental Health in a Modern Workplace
Wednesday 4th March 2020
MANCHESTER

UCU reps and members come face-to-face with mental health issues on a daily basis; This conference aims to draw out some practical approaches to helping reps and members gain confidence when dealing with these issues.

Contact:

j.farrar@tmc.ac.uk

Why not consider becoming a health and Safety Representative?



H + S 1: Induction (Health and safety Reps role and functions)

27th–29th November 2019.

Duration: 3 days.

Venue: Manchester.

The course will cover:

- The role and functions of a safety rep.
- How to obtain facilities and time off to carry out the safety rep's function.
- Using the safety reps and safety committee regulations.
- Employers duties under health and safety legislation
- A trade union and equal opportunities approach to health and safety.

- How to organize UCU members around hazards at work.
- Develop essential safety rep skills.

See <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/4878/HS-1-Induction-Health-Safety-Reps-role-and-functions-27-29-November-2019-Manchester> for details and to register.

The TUC also provides a wide range of Health and Safety training courses. Some of these can be accessed on line or you can attend one of the local colleges.

Union representatives who wish to attend TUC courses in working time should first ask their employer for time off with pay. The Trade Union Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 and the Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations 1977 give accredited union and safety representatives a legal right to reasonable time off with pay to attend courses approved by the TUC or their union.

For all on-line courses you can access these

via the Union Learn website . See <https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/online-learning>.

For those who are already health and safety representatives, are you interested in joining a North West Region Forum?

During the regional meeting, a form will be distributed for those who wish to join a health and safety forum.

The forum will be an opportunity to meet on a regular basis in order to update, share good practices, and develop new ideas of how we as a trade union can increase the profile of health and safety matters in our workplace.

For further information, please contact me, Pam Sherlock via email listed below.

Created by Pam Sherlock UCU Regional Health and Safety Representative pamsherlock@btinternet.com

Useful numbers, contacts and websites

Got a concern about health and safety that you cannot resolve locally?

In the first instance get in contact with your regional office:

henorthwest@ucu.org.uk or
fenorthwest@ucu.org.uk
0161 772 7010 (FE)
0161 772 7011 (HE)
0161 772 7013.

UCU's Website for Health and Safety Representatives:

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/7754/UCU-health-and-safety-reps>

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Bargaining and Negotiations Official (Health, Safety and Sustainability)
University and College Union
Carlow Street
London NW1 7LH
Tel: 0207 756 2527
www.ucu.org.uk

Greater Manchester Hazards Centre—An invaluable resource and advice centre:
<http://www.hazardscampaign.org.uk/>
Contact: Janet Newsham or Hilda Palmer on:
mail@gmhazards.org.uk
0161 636 7558.

Health and Safety Executive
Website: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/7754/UCU-health-and-safety-reps>

