

Turn your back on strains



pean strains campaign this year, European Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs Anna Diamantopoulou said:

"The aches, pains and injuries caused by poor workplace practices are a heavy burden borne by far too many European workers, with women being most at risk. Lightening the load is the key aim of this year's European Week for Safety and Health at Work. We want Europe to turn its back on work-related musculoskeletal disorders."

The UK Health and Safety Executive also welcomed the European week initiative. HSE's Peter Rimmer said: "Back pain and musculoskeletal disorders affect more people than any other industrial injury or disease. The Week is an opportunity for people to sign up and take action to eliminate health and safety problems in their workplace."

Resources

Union resources: A combined strains poster and brochure in English, Spanish, French, German and Swedish is available, together with campaign books and newsletters. The poster/brochure is available free from TUTB, Bd Roi Albert II, 5, Bte 5, B-1210, Brussels, Belgium. See: www.etuc.org/tutb/

TUC's *Putting back pain on the map* report and other strains resources are on the TUC website (click on health and safety). www.tuc.org.uk

European Agency: Factsheets, leaflets and posters are available on the Agency's dedicated Euro Week website: www.osha.eu.int/ew2000/

Beating back pain A new report gives occupational health guidelines on the management of back pain. Dr Olivia Carlton of the Department of Health's Healthy Workplaces Team said the Faculty of Occupational Medicine report and guidelines were the first strand of a "Back in Work" initiative, intended "to minimise the problem of back pain by identifying and promoting current examples of good practice in all aspects of managing back pain at work."

Occupational health guidelines for the management of low back pain at work - evidence, review and recommendations. ISBN 1 86016 131 6. £15.00. Faculty of Occupational Medicine, 6 St Andrew's Place, Regents Park, London NW1 4LB. Tel: 020 7317 5890. Send an SAE for a free leaflet, *Back pain at work: A guide for people at work and their employers.*

Building backs Excellent new guidance giving 27 real-life case histories on safe manual handling in the construction industry has been published by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). HSE's new Chief Inspector of Construction, Kevin Myers, said: "Workers are quite literally putting their backs out trying to help their employers. It's about time their employers put their backs into trying to help out their workers."

Backs for the future. HSE. ISBN 0 7176 1122 1. £8.50. From HSE Books. Address page 30). Copies of a HSE free leaflet, *Manual handling in woodworking* (INDG318), are also available from HSE Books.

Boring, boring workload A 1993 action plan to tackle monotonous work in Denmark by the year 2000 has been a dramatic success. The number of employees in "monotonous, repetitive work" has been reduced by 25 per cent, says a report this year from the Danish Technology Institute. It adds that the agreement struck between Danish unions and employers led to 90 per cent of all companies with boring, repetitive jobs successfully taking steps to improve them.

A year long trade union Europe-wide strains campaign has won backing from the European Commission, safety agencies and employers and will culminate in a continent-wide week of action in October 2000.

The European Trade Union Confederation and its safety research arm TUTB are co-ordinating continent-wide trade union activities during the 16-22 October week of action (see *Hazards* 68).

ETUC and TUTB say they are demanding:

- ▶ The full and effective implementation of community safety laws on manual handling, VDUs and safety management (the UK management regulations incorporate European requirements that our laws restrict boring, repetitive and monotonous work);
 - ▶ An agreed, Europe-wide list of recognised musculoskeletal disorders; and
 - ▶ Workable, consistent ergonomic standards for machinery and work equipment design.
- Pledging support for a Euro-