

Preventing occupational cancer

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Rory O neil

Below, information on the new global trade union 'Occupational cancer/zero cancer' campaign. Related news releases are at the bottom of this note.

A new guide, 'Occupational Cancer/Zero Cancer: A union guide to prevention', published to mark the launch of the campaign, is backed by all 10 global union federations and the global union confederation ITUC. It is being distributed worldwide.

I have included links to the prevention guide on the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) website (English, French and Spanish editions are available online now, Russian is to follow). There are also links to related IMF news releases (English, French and Spanish) and Building and Wood Workers International (BWI) news releases (English and French). Additional links are provided to the new Hazards/IFJ trade union cancer prevention kit (English only) and the IMF cancer webpages (English) and BWI cancer webpages (English and French).

Occupational and environmental cancer prevention is one of the key themes for International Workers' Memorial Day, 28 April (www.hazards.org/wmd). It is expected trade unions in over 100 countries will undertake cancer prevention related activities on the day. The campaign will be ongoing.

[Occupational cancer prevention guide \[pdf\]](#)

Cancer Professionnel/Zéro Cancer: Un guide syndical tourné vers la prevention

http://www.imfmetal.org/main/files/07032311521079/Z_roCancer.pdf

Cáncer profesional/Cáncer cero: Guía sindical para la prevención

<http://www.imfmetal.org/main/files/07032310363279/CancerCero.pdf>

Cancer/Zero Cancer: A union guide to prevention

<http://www.imfmetal.org/main/files/07031915130979/ZeroCancer-Update.pdf>

Related news releases

IMF news releases

Prévenir les cancers professionnels

<http://www.imfmetal.org/main/index.cfm?n=47&l=5&c=15708>

Prevención del cáncer profesional

<http://www.imfmetal.org/main/index.cfm?n=47&l=28&c=15708>

Preventing occupational cancer

<http://www.imfmetal.org/main/index.cfm?n=47&l=2&c=15708>

BWI news releases

Hidden cancer epidemic kills hundreds of thousands each year

<http://www.bwint.org/default.asp?Index=753&Language=EN>

Epidémie de cancer cachée tue des centaines de milliers chaque année

<http://www.bwint.org/default.asp?Index=754&Language=FR>

Occupational cancer prevention online resources

Hazards occupational cancer webpages

www.hazards.org/cancer

Hazards occupational cancer prevention kit

www.hazards.org/cancer/preventionkit

IMF occupational cancer webpages

www.imfmetal.org/cancer

BWI occupational cancer webpages (English)

<http://www.bwint.org/default.asp?Issue=cancer&Language=EN>

IBB: cancer professionnel (français)

<http://www.bwint.org/default.asp?Issue=cancer&Language=FR>

Full text of BWI and IMF news releases

IMF news release

Preventing occupational cancer

A new cancer prevention guide, reveals that over 600,000 deaths a year - one death every 52 seconds - are caused by occupational cancer, making up almost one-third of all work-related deaths.

GLOBAL: A worldwide epidemic of occupational cancer is claiming at least one life every 52 seconds, but this tragedy is being ignored by both official regulators and employers.

This stark warning comes from a global union coalition, which this week launched stage one of a "zero cancer" campaign to tackle what it says is the No.1 workplace killer worldwide.

Marcello Malentacchi, General Secretary of the International Metalworkers' Federation, says: "Occupational cancer is the most common work-related cause of death, ahead of other work-related diseases and accidents, but it is not taken seriously by regulators or employers."

Preventing occupational cancer, the most common work-related cause of death, is the subject of the new guide, published today. Occupational Cancer/Zero Cancer: A union guide to prevention addresses the growing epidemic of occupational cancer and outlines steps unions can take to protect workers in the workplace. The guide was produced as part of the first ever international zero occupational cancer campaign, involving 11 global trade union organisations together representing over 300 million members in more than 150 countries.

"Despite occupational cancer being the single largest cause of work-related deaths, the risks have been downplayed by governments, health and safety enforcement agencies and employers. The end result has been a wholly preventable epidemic of cancers," says IMF general secretary Marcello Malentacchi.

"This epidemic has to stop. Trade unions in hundreds of countries will be joining the campaign. We'll be calling for widespread workplace mapping, inquiries and surveys, and a big drive to get rid of the top killers, such as achieving a global ban on asbestos," adds Malentacchi.

IMF published the guide with the support of the International Trade Union Confederation the other global union federations: BWI, EI, ICEM, IFJ, ITGLWF, ITF, IUF, PSI and UNI.

Copies of the guide are being sent to IMF affiliates along with a zero cancer campaign poster, both available for download on the IMF website in English. The guide will also shortly be available in French, Spanish and Russian, in print and as a pdf on the IMF website at: www.imfmetal.org/cancer.

Affiliates that would like to receive additional copies of the guide should contact the IMF at: news@imfmetal.org.

BWI news release

Hidden cancer epidemic kills hundreds of thousands each year

A worldwide epidemic of occupational cancer is killing one person every minute, but this tragedy is being ignored by both official regulators and employers. This stark warning comes from a global union coalition, which this week launched stage one of a "zero cancer" campaign to tackle what it says is the No.1 workplace killer worldwide.

Anita Normark, General Secretary of the Building Workers International highlights the problem: "Bad, and often illegal, working conditions cause ill health that mean disaster for hundreds of thousands of families every year. The social invisibility of the impact of working conditions on our health creates a vicious circle where diseases are not recognised as occupational, so they are not recorded and notified, therefore they are not properly treated or compensated and, worst of all, they are not prevented. Health and safety is top priority for unions in the building and timber trades, where our people are exposed to a wide range of nasty, cancer causing substances."

The global unions have produced a a new cancer prevention guide, which reveals that over 600,000 deaths a year - one death every 52 seconds - are caused by occupational cancer, making up almost one-third of all work-related deaths. The guide launches the first ever international zero occupational cancer campaign, involving 11 global trade union organisations together representing over 300 million members in more than 150 countries.

Normark continues: " Our global campaign to ban deadly asbestos is gaining momentum but much more needs to be done to prevent exposure to asbestos which is already present in millions of buildings all over the world. This year we want to expand our asbestos campaign to cover other cancer causing substances in our sectors, for example silica from cement; wood dust; organic solvents in glues, paints, lacquers and wood finishes; deadly pesticides used in forestry and in timber treatments; asphalt used in roofing and paving, and the dangers of skin cancer from outdoor work. We need to alert workers to the hazards and the prevention measures that should be in place. This year for Workers International Memorial Day, around 28th April, hundreds of unions in the building and timber trades will be carrying out training and campaigning activities on the prevention of workplace accidents and ill health."

Occupational Cancer/Zero Cancer: a union guide to prevention, published today, provides information about workplace cancer risks and advice on practical steps workers and unions can take to make workplaces safer and is being distributed with action guidelines to unions worldwide.

Notes to editors:

1.Occupational Cancer/Zero Cancer: a union guide to prevention is published in English on the IMF website at www.imfmetal.org/cancer

Copies in French, Spanish and Russian will follow.

2.According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that occupational cancer causes over 600,000 deaths a year - one death every 52 seconds - making up almost one-third of all work-related deaths.

3.A World Health Organisation (WHO) study concluded 20-30 per cent of males and 5-20 per cent of females in the working-age population could have been exposed to an occupational lung cancer risk during their working lives.

4. The European Union's CAREX database of occupational exposures to carcinogens estimated that in the early 1990s 22-24 million workers in the then 15 EU member states were exposed to carcinogens classified as group 1 by the International Agency for Research on Cancer - those known to cause cancer in humans.

5. The zero cancer coalition includes the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Building Workers' International (BWI), Education International (EI), International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Union (ICEM), International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF), International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF), Public Services International (PSI), UNI Global Union (UNI) and the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF).

6. ILO's 1974 occupational cancer convention (C.139) has only been ratified by 35 countries worldwide. ILO's 1986 asbestos convention (C.162) is ratified by fewer countries still, with just 29 countries signed up.

7. [LINKS TO OUR MATERIALS FOR 28TH APRIL ON CANCER HERE](#)

For further details, interviews or photos please contact:

Fiona Murie, Director of Health and Safety, Building workers International

fiona.murie@bwi.org