

TUCAN Newsletter

Issue 4

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Get active on Clean Air Day – 16 June

Breathing clean air at work should be a human right, but many workers are breathing toxic, unsafe air in their working environment and not everyone knows just how unsafe and unhealthy it is. This year TUCAN wants to get that message out to workers everywhere and are recommending some actions for trade union branches, workplace committees and individuals:

Collective actions to be taken by your trade union branch or workplace safety committee:

1. Organise a members meeting to discuss air pollution in the workplace or by the work activity.
2. Audit your workplace on ventilation – each area should be audited and documented on the activity, occupancy and length of time that it is occupied, how it is ventilated and if mechanical ventilation/air filtration units are used, when they were last maintained and any action needed to be taken including CO2 monitoring and purchasing more units. If the information isn't available then request it from management. Discuss your findings at the safety committee and prepare a plan of action to improve air quality.
3. Carry out a clean air inspection. Inspect the workplace for obvious signs about dust, dirt and odours or unhealthy working practices for example in the construction or engineering sector.
4. Monitor air pollution across the entire workplace either by purchasing or using borrowed equipment (monitor inside and outside the workplace).
5. Check the local air pollution levels for your workplace and post your findings on social media using #CleanAirDay and #TUCAN hashtags [addresspollution.org](https://www.addresspollution.org)
6. Circulate the chemical survey to all members and encourage them to complete it [here](#).
7. Most local authorities have air quality action plans which include air monitoring. Reps should visit their council websites to find out what is happening in their workplace area. For example Preston Council air quality action can be found [here](#).
8. Check useful online resources such as [Hazards magazine](#).

Individual Actions:

1. Check the local air pollution levels for where you live or where your children go to school and post your findings on social media using #CleanAirDay and #TUCAN hashtags [addresspollution.org](https://www.addresspollution.org)
2. Check out your council's website on clean air plans /climate action plans to find out what is happening in your local authority.
3. Check out any new developments that would impact on air pollution, like plans to build local incinerators or new reports of air pollution, and see if there are any associated campaign groups – and get involved.

Clean Air Day 16 June 2022

The annual day to recognise the health hazards of the unclean air we breathe and to call for action to reduce and eliminate those hazards, Clean Air Day, will soon be with us again.

One of TUCAN's primary aims is to make the link between unhealthy air and work, and to encourage trade unionists to take the issue up with their colleagues and employers. In that effort TUCAN also wants trade unions to take into account air quality on the way to work and both outside and especially inside the workplace.

We encourage trade union health and safety reps and people at work to get involved with **Clean Air Day**.



About TUCAN – get involved

The Trade Union Clean Air Network (TUCAN) was set up in 2019 by the Hazards Campaign, Greener Jobs Alliance and the union UCU with a coalition of trade unions and occupational health and safety activists. The Trade Union Clean Air Network Charter (linked below) provided a framework for unions to campaign for better worker health and workers' environmental concerns.



Then the pandemic came along and although we have continued to hold online events during the pandemic and worked with Global Action Plan carrying out some limited monitoring our work was disrupted and we now feel TUCAN is ready for a relaunch.

We are keen to involve as many trade unionists as we can in the discussion about our strategy and priorities. Our primary concern is for workers and how they are impacted by air pollution and how workplaces are contributing to our climate crisis. If you want to get involved and have any comments about the charter or about TUCANs priorities then please email janet@gmhzards.

Our original demands included:

We call on the Government to:

1. Introduce a new Clean Air Act that enshrines the right to breathe clean air. It must set stringent legal limits for ambient air quality, which reflect WHO (World Health Organisation) guidelines. There should be recognition that air pollution is an occupational health issue.

Employers must be required to make environmental impact assessments on the pollution related to their work activities. They should have a duty to present strategies for minimising and eradicating pollutants within the workplace and in the wider community
2. Update health and safety law - The COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) Regulations and related guidance should be amended to reflect new research on indoor and outdoor air pollution. This includes amending Workplace Exposure Limits to place duties on employers to monitor and adopt control measures for diesel and other toxic vehicle emissions not currently covered by HSE (Health and Safety Executive) EH40.
3. Ensure effective enforcement – Strict enforcement by relevant agencies of the occupational and environmental legislation with the power to hold public bodies and employers to account. Representatives of the trade union movement must have seats on the relevant agencies.
4. Involve the workforce – Air quality measures for indoor and outdoor occupational air pollution must be subject to the consultation requirements of the SRSC (Safety Reps and Safety Committees) Regulations. Measures should cover both employees and others, and especially the needs of vulnerable occupants of buildings, including in particular children and young people. Employers should be required to raise awareness and support workforce training on risks and control measures. Workers may need access to independent advice on exposure levels and health effects.
5. Protect jobs – Government and employer clean air strategies will have implications for jobs and employment. The application of just transition principles, including consultation and negotiation with appropriate and industry unions, must include full equality impact assessments, to ensure positive and fair outcomes for all workers.
6. Rapidly expand clean and inexpensive public transport systems alongside investment in active transport to increase levels of cycling and walking – Cleaning up air in the UK will require significant public expenditure. Government should drive the policies to ensure that those least able to afford it are not expected to pick up the bill, and to subsidise measures for less polluting forms of energy and transport. Including affordable public transport. This will encourage more integrated and more active forms of transport.

[Download the Trade Union Clean Air Network Charter here](#)

Air quality monitoring available for your workplace

If you're wondering about the quality of the air at your workplace, TUCAN might be able to help with our professional particulate air quality monitoring equipment.

It's easy to use and can give an overall and real-time picture of airborne particulate contamination.



If this sounds like something you might be interested in to investigate what's actually happening at your workplace – just get in touch via this e-mail: gjacoms@gmail.com

On line air pollution resource

There are a good number of on line air pollution resources but we think addresspollution.org is among the best. It is very simple to use, you just put your postcode in and it gives an overall air quality assessment and details of particulate and gaseous pollutants, including comparing exposure to the World Health Organisation's recommended limits (see the article on the government's consultation elsewhere in the newsletter). It also encourages users to take action.



Many local authorities and other bodies monitor air pollution and publish their findings on

the web. These are also worth investigating.

www.addresspollution.org

Government consultation on environmental targets extended

The government's recent new Environment Act was passed without setting some key environmental targets but rather leaving them to further consultation before setting them in law. That consultation has been extended to 26 June 2022.

The Act requires the government to set at least one long-term target in each of the following areas: air quality; water; biodiversity; and resource efficiency and waste reduction. It also requires targets to be set for fine particulate matter (PM2.5) and species abundance.

Whilst all of these areas are incredibly important, TUCAN's focus has been on air quality and particulate matter, especially given the government's apparent unwillingness to adopt the standards recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Anything less would be a massive opportunity missed and would severely limit the potential for cleaning up the air we breathe and properly improving the effects on everyone's health.

We are therefore encouraging supporters to at least tell the government to adopt the WHO standards. TUCAN calls for the target date to be set at 2030 at the latest, instead of the proposed 2040, and government should seek to reach 10µg m⁻³ as soon as possible. This should be viewed as an interim target and the ultimate objective should be to reduce annual mean concentration to 5µg m⁻³ in line with WHO's recommendations.

It is worth noting that whilst WHO currently offers the best recommended authoritative standards they are not entirely health based, and any standards set in law now should allow for strengthening if and when further evidence or stronger recommended standards arise.

- The government's consultation can be found [here](#).
- Detail of the WHO standards can be found [here](#).



Image by Peggychoucair from Pixabay

UNBREATHABLE THE FIGHT FOR HEALTHY AIR

Unbreathable is an award winning short documentary about the history of air pollution in the United States made in support of campaigns to stop pollution and clean the air we breathe.

Whilst the story is from the US the issues are global. The film is available for home or community viewing with a streaming-license from the link below.

www.unbreathable.org