



News release

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Employers must do more to protect staff from climate change, says AEA in landmark report

Damage done to the environment by past and present carbon emissions is forcing companies to think about adapting their products and services to a changing climate, but few have considered what such a dramatic change in the UK's weather will mean for their staff and the jobs that they do, says AEA, in a report commissioned by the TUC, released this week.

Changing Work in a Changing Climate is published to coincide with a TUC conference on climate change, and says that over the next few decades wetter winters, hotter summers and more frequent storms and floods will become the norm.

The report says that adapting to this changing climate is one of the greatest challenges affecting the UK economy, and urges employers and the Government to start planning ahead now to protect employees and vulnerable families from the coming climate extremes.

AEA asked both private and public sector organisations what they were doing to adapt to climate change. Many said they were beginning to think about what climate change meant for future business planning, markets, products and services.

But the same organisations admitted that little, if any, work was underway to equip their workers with the knowledge, skills and equipment to work safely and effectively in a changing climate. Of the 134 organisations interviewed, only one had given serious attention to how their staff might be affected.

According to the report, those on low-incomes will suffer the most from the effects of climate change. Poorer families are more likely to be the victims of coastal flooding and are unlikely to be able to afford the premiums necessary to insure property in high risk areas.

Changes in the UK's climate will also have a huge impact on the emergency services and on health workers who will find themselves increasingly called upon by the public as floods and excessive rainfall become more commonplace and as heat extremes cause new health problems.

Changing Work in a Changing Climate warns employers to think about the risk to their staff from future flooding, the increased health risk to staff working outside as summer temperatures soar and the impact that severe weather conditions will have on transport, causing problems for the millions who commute to work.

The report says that some people working in factories or on the transport network already have to work in hot and poorly ventilated conditions, while those who work outside run the risk of increased health risk caused by direct sunlight and searing summer heat. Employers will need to provide their staff with improved work clothing, headwear and sun creams, and uniforms will need to be adapted so that staff can work comfortably as our summers warm.

TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber said: "The UK's weather is slowly changing so that by the middle of the century our winters and summers will be very different. Some companies are planning for how they need to change to stay ahead of the competition, but few have given any thought to how climate change could dramatically alter the lives of their employees and have a huge impact on the way they work.

"Employers who take the challenge posed by climate change seriously and consider the welfare of their staff as they adapt will reap the benefits with a more motivated, highly skilled and well-equipped workforce."

Gill Hall, Sales and Marketing Director at AEA, said:

"This report is the first of its kind in looking at the effects of climate change on staff, and our analysis highlights that those companies who do not invest both in climate change mitigation and in strategies to adapt to the impacts of climate change will be left behind. Our study underlines our view that we need to take a holistic approach to understanding the impacts of, and solutions to, climate change."

Changing Work in a Changing Climate features a number of recommendations for Government, employers and unions including:

- The Government should produce new guidance on adapting workplaces to deal with the impacts of climate change. Employers should be encouraged to adapt their buildings so that their staff are secure and can work comfortably.
- A new maximum temperature should be introduced, above which, employees would not be expected to work.
- Employers should work with their employees and unions to develop adaptation policies that work and that are sustainable for the long term.

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NOTES TO EDITOR

- A copy of *Changing Work in a Changing Climate* is available at <http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/adaptation.pdf>

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About AEA

AEA is one of the world's leaders in the field of climate change and energy consultancy - operating in the UK, Europe, the US and China. It is the leading provider of advisory services to the UK Government and works extensively with the EU and major private sector organisations. With internationally renowned expertise in air quality and climate change, carbon management, resource efficiency and the environmental impacts of transport, AEA employs many world leading experts and provides a high-level of policy consultancy and a range of technical services to its public and private sector clients.

AEA manages for the UK government's Envirowise project, one of the world's largest resource efficiency programmes and provides carbon management expertise to many of the UK's largest private sector organisations.

AEA is voted Number One Consultancy for Climate Change and Renewables by industry consultants (Edie surveys 2006, 2007 and 2008).

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