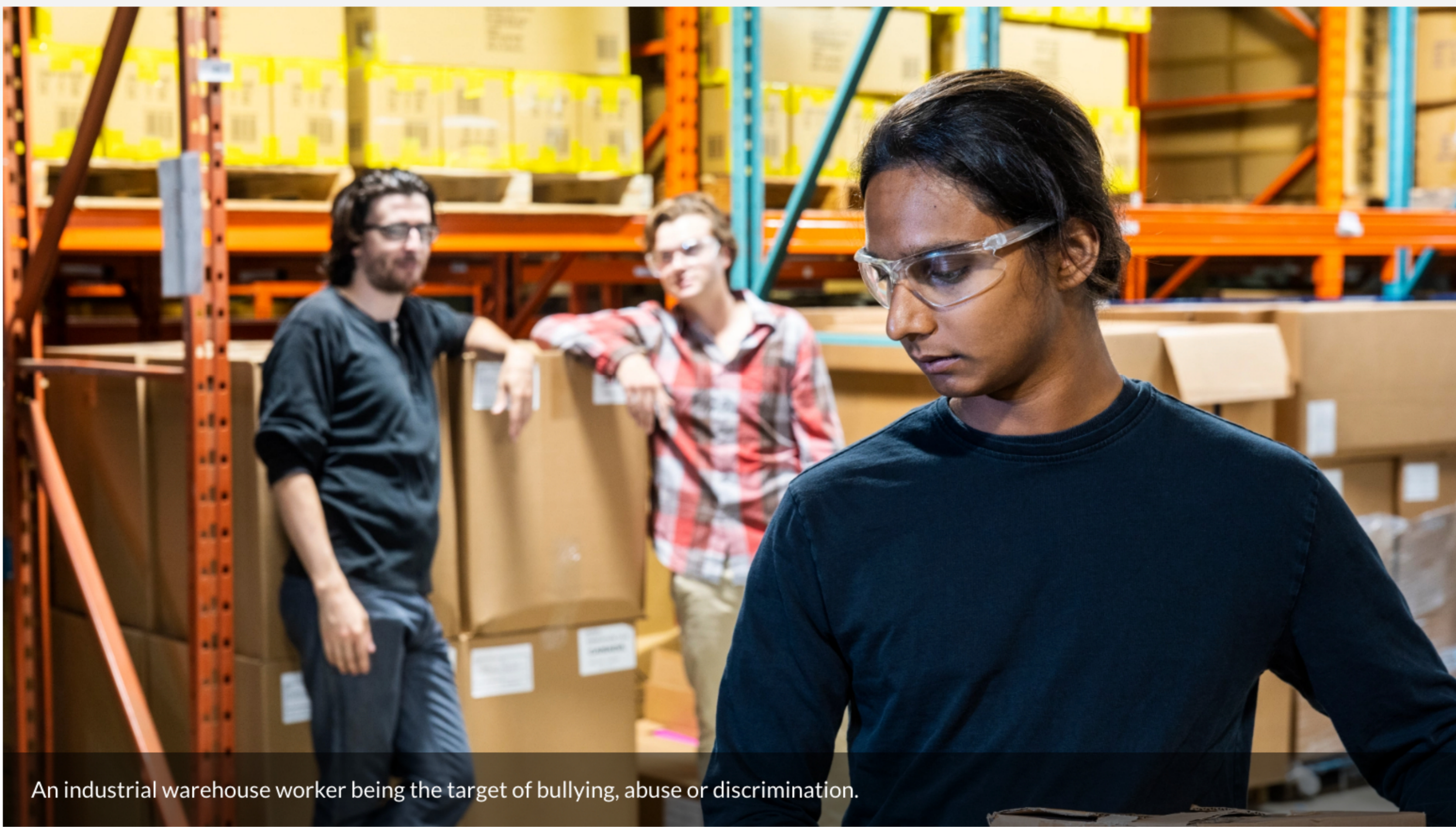


Worrying signs your job might be toxic – and what to do if is



An industrial warehouse worker being the target of bullying, abuse or discrimination.

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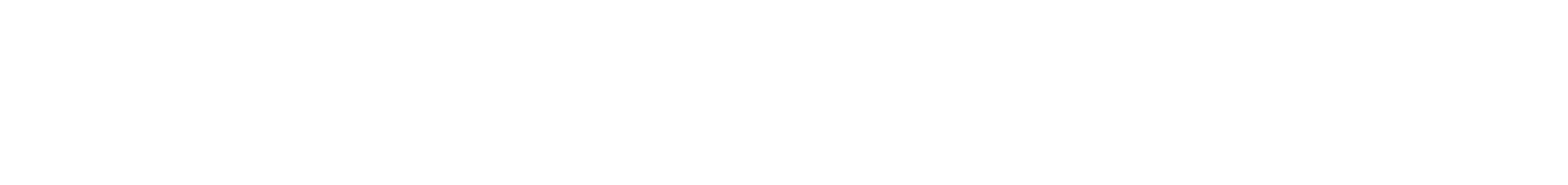
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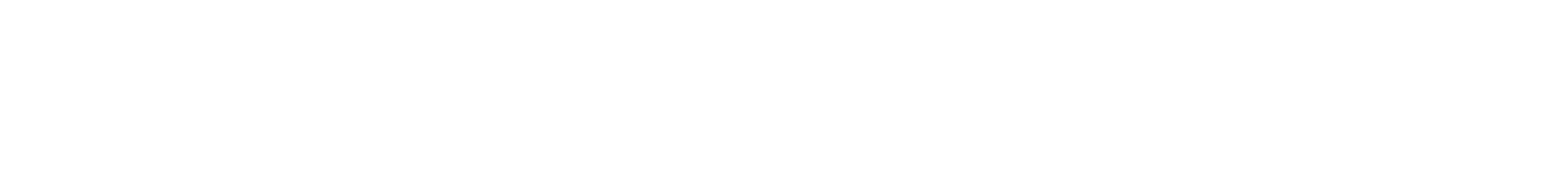
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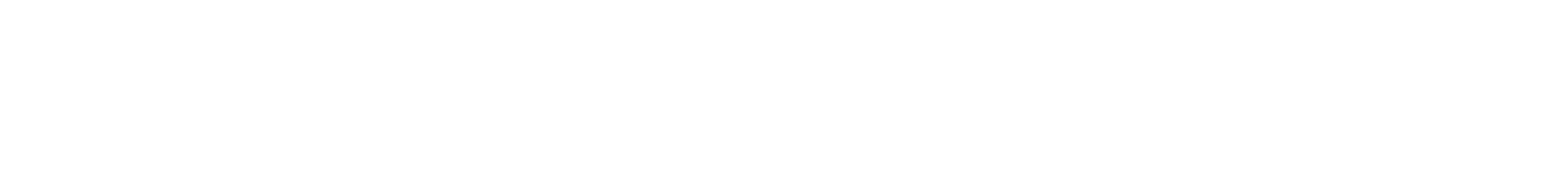
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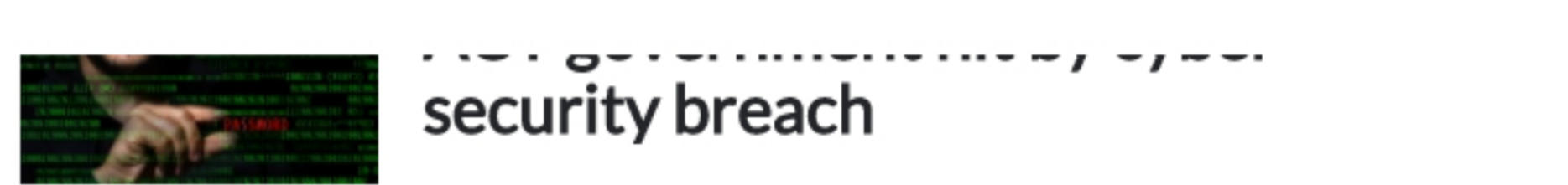
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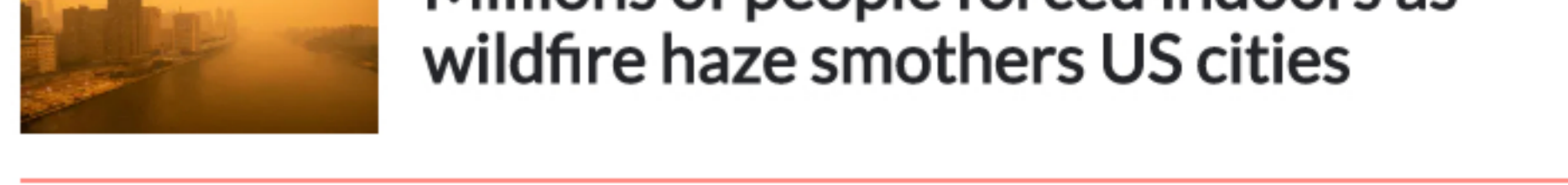
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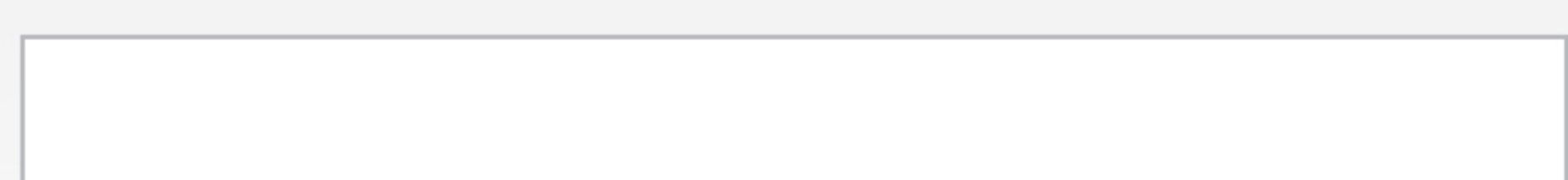
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Kate Jones
Senior Reporter

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Toxic work environments are notoriously damaging on a mental and emotional level. They breed negativity and dysfunction and manifest in a variety of ways including bullying, discrimination and a lack of transparency.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month – an excellent time for workers to assess their workplace as a negative or positive environment.

It can be difficult to pinpoint the signs of a toxic workplace, particularly for new employees or staff working under a new boss.

Are you being micromanaged or is it simply a case of receiving extra support? Was nepotism a factor in that recent appointment or was the successful person actually the best candidate?

It can leave a worker second-guessing their judgment, said Vanessa Vershaw, high-performance coach and author of *Unreasonable Ambition*.

“Don’t be fooled – toxic workplaces aren’t all aggressive and angry looking – false harmony, people pleasing behaviours and silence in the face of negativity, can be a sign of an even bigger problem – people just going along with a dominant view and acting as bystanders to obvious crimes in the workplace,” she said.

“This one can be even tougher to navigate because it’s not as obvious unless you’re in it.”



Constant micromanaging can be a sign of a toxic workplace.

In some workplaces the signs are obvious and the personal cost can be high on employees.

A 2022 study by McKinsey and Co found **toxic workplace behaviour was the biggest predictor of burnout symptoms, as well as distress, depression and anxiety.**

Workplace culture and leadership expert Tammy Tansley said toxic work environments were on-inclusive, disrespectful, unethical, cut-throat and had abusive management.

Telltale signs include high absenteeism, multiple grievances and complaints and a high staff turnover.

A toxic corporate culture is by far the strongest predictor of industry-adjusted attrition, a 2022 study by researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found.

Ms Tansley said workplaces could be remedied, but it usually hinged on leaders wanting to make a change.

“Do management recognise that the culture is toxic? Do they care? Or is it a culture that they are trying to perpetuate?” she said.

“In one organisation I know of, key leaders were told about examples of bullying and harassment and responded with, ‘Does it matter, if we are getting the results?’. In this sort of organisation, employees are better off finding an organisation that better aligns with their values.”

There are options for those who feel stuck in an unhealthy workplace. Ms Tansley advises identifying the problems and taking action at either a formal or personal level.

“Identify the impact of the culture on your health and wellbeing,” she said.

“If the environment is not ideal, but it’s not having a massive impact on you or your team, perhaps it might be a case of hanging in there to see if things get better – although make sure you let the right people know what’s going on.

“If it’s having a negative impact on your health – get support internally through HR or mental health first aiders or externally through your GP or employee assistance program. Consider what grievance and other mechanisms are available and the impact of using those.

“Ultimately, your health – whether that’s psychological or physical is more important – so take steps ASAP to keep yourself safe.”

Topics: Mental health • Workplace

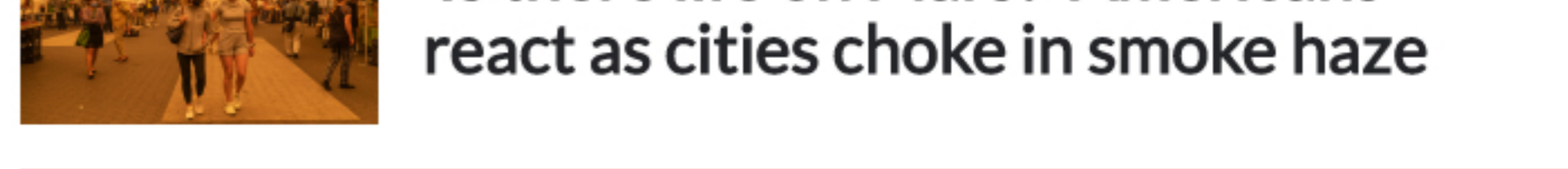
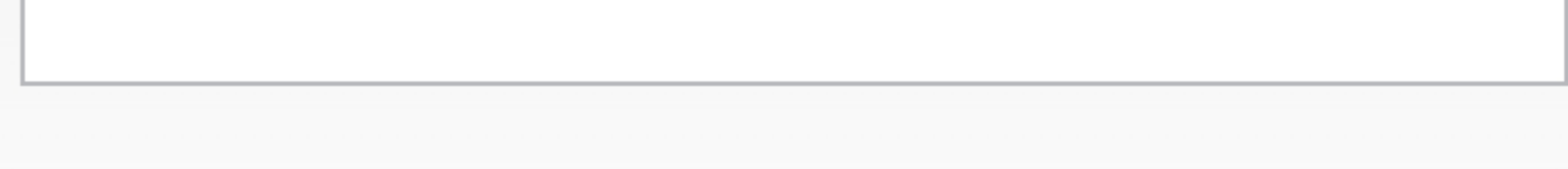
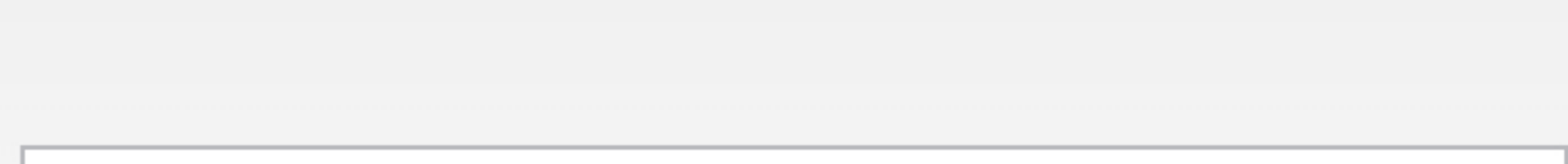
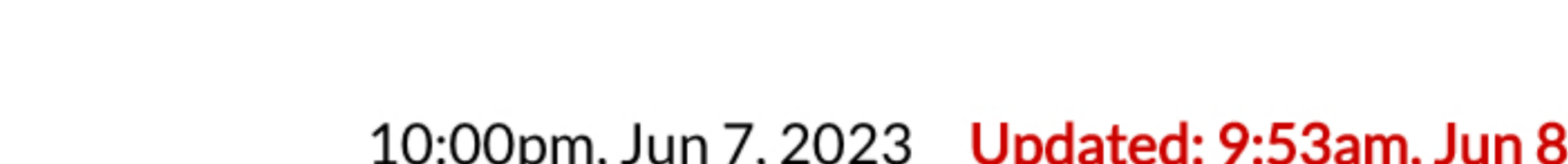
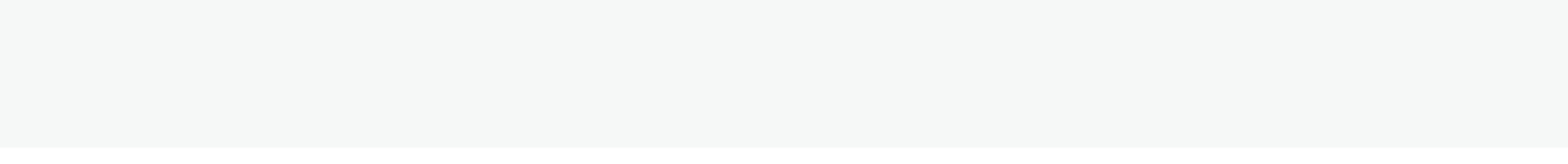
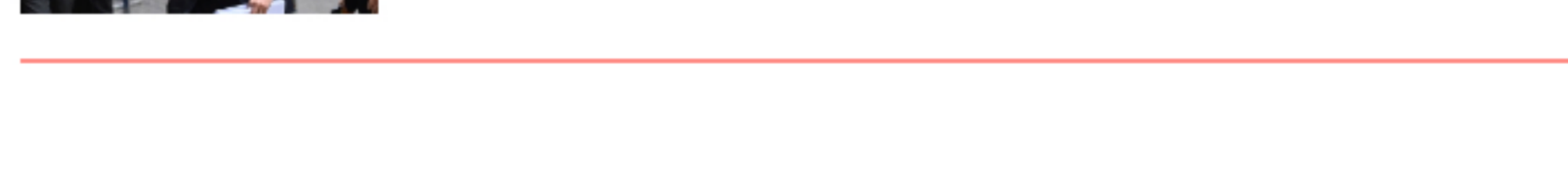
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