



Health & Safety Matters



April 2010

April 28 is just around the corner...

Remember to fight for the living and mourn for the dead

April 28, the International Day of Mourning for workers killed and injured at work, is particularly important on the CUPE calendar.

It was our union's National Health and Safety Committee in 1984 that came up with the idea for a day to honour workers injured and killed at work. In 1991, the federal government passed legislation declaring each April 28 "A Day of Remembrance for workers killed or injured at work."

The Day of Mourning is now recognized in dozens of countries worldwide. CUPE Locals, Labour Councils and others across Canada mark the day with workers' remembrance ceremonies and a vow to continue the fight to make all of our workplaces safe and healthy.

Submitted by Marlene Kantz
CUPE BC OH&S Committee

WorkSafe BC enforcement to ensure orientation and training for new and young workers

In July 2007, WorkSafe BC Regulations were updated, under Part 3, Sections 3.22-25, to include training and orientation for workers. Employers are required to provide orientation and training for all new and young workers. Who are young workers and new workers? A young worker is any worker who is under 25 years of age.

A new worker can be any age, and includes workers who are:

- ◆ new to the workplace
- ◆ facing hazards that have changed or developed while they were at work or absent from work
- ◆ in a new workplace or location that has different hazards than the old one
- ◆ switched Departments within the same workplace.

More than half of workplace accidents involving young and new workers occur during their first six months

on the job. Providing effective orientation and training is the best way to prevent accidents. Employers are responsible for ensuring that all workers are prepared for the job before they start working. Training must be specific to the workplace and should be an ongoing process. Even an experienced worker will require a new orientation if circumstances change or new hazards develop. For example, there may be a new work process or new equipment; or the worker may be moved to a new work location or assigned to a different task. Does your workplace measure up? WorkSafe BC is now checking employer due diligence and enforcing this regulation.

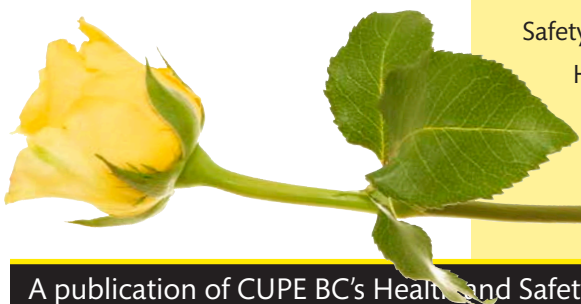
Submitted by Marlene Kantz
President, Okanagan Mainline
District Council

CUPE BC OH&S Committee

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Environmental Exposure: A new focus for breast cancer prevention



Violence and Education Assistants

Workers have often wondered what their rights were when working with a special needs child in the education system.

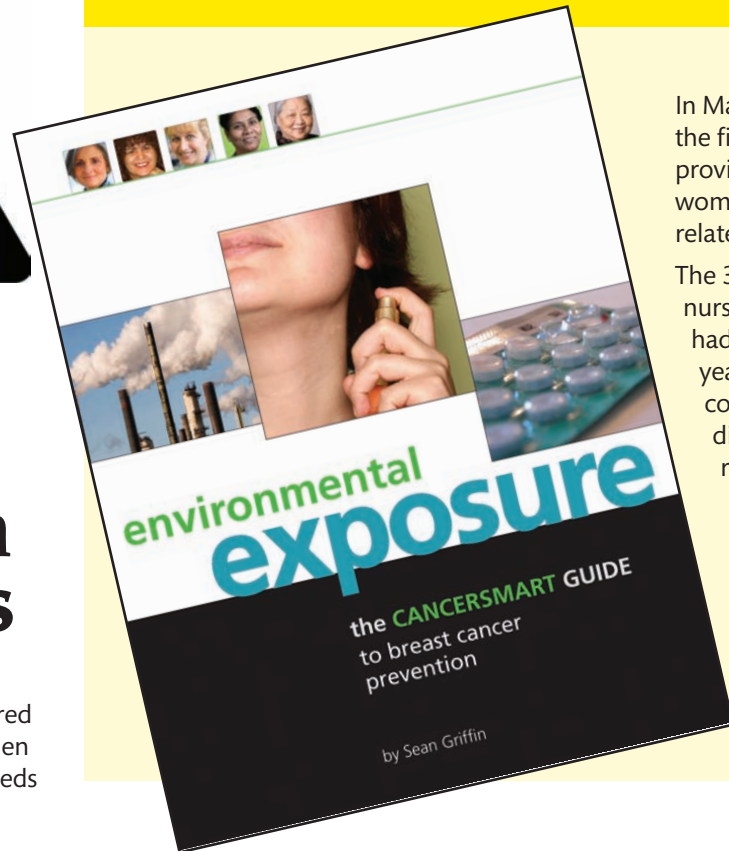
If you have attended any of my workshops you would have heard me preach to you about the importance of reporting and documenting incidents.

Members have often stated that they find it meaningless to fill in incident reports on violent situations all day when there is nothing that happens to protect them from the hazard in the first place.

You will be happy to know that there has been a significant change at WorkSafeBC. Officers seem to have a better understanding of the work that Educational Assistants do and they are enforcing the regulations with the School Districts like never before.

One of the problem areas was that the WorkSafe BC officers would never clarify what information was required for workers, and the employer would always say that privacy was an issue around the disclosure of children's information. This will now change.

A recent decision out of Campbell River states: "WorkSafe BC's position



In March of 2009, Denmark became the first country in the world to provide workers compensation to women whose breast cancer was related to occupational exposures.

The 37 women affected were mostly nurses and airline attendants who had worked night shift for many years, which exposed them continually to light at night and disrupted their natural body rhythms.

The light-at-night factor is one of the many environmental and occupational links to breast cancer discussed in Toxic Free Canada's new publication, **Environmental Exposure: the CancerSmart guide to**

breast cancer prevention. Like the organization's popular *Cancer-Smart Consumer Guide*, **Environmental Exposure** looks at the many environmental factors that contribute to breast cancer and offers prevention strategies, including avoiding carcinogenic products and reducing exposures in the workplace.

Breast cancer awareness campaigns have put billions into cancer research and have significantly reduced the number of people who die from the disease. But breast cancer rates remain stubbornly high and more than half of all cases can't be explained by the established risk factors.

"For years breast cancer programs have focused on care and treatment

and often haven't even recognized many of the environmental and occupational causes of cancer," said Toxic Free Canada executive director Mae Burrows. "Publications like **Environmental Exposure** put a spotlight on environmental exposures and provide Canadians – as well as their governments and health agencies – with ways to prevent breast cancer."

Produced with funding from the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, the 24-page guide looks at the latest peer-reviewed research and identifies key environmental links to breast cancer.

Among them are hormone replacement therapy, pesticides, industrial solvents, diesel exhaust and estrogenic

chemicals in common consumer products, including the now-familiar bisphenol-A. In addition to offering ways to reduce exposure and find alternative products, the guide looks at prevention strategies in the workplace and policy directions that governments should take to enhance breast cancer prevention.

Environmental Exposure was researched and written by Sean Griffin, who is also author of *CancerSmart 3.0: The Consumer Guide*. It can be downloaded from <http://www.toxicfreecanada.ca/pdf/Breast-cancer-guide-TFC-2009.pdf> Print copies are also available on request.

Submitted by Susan Zander

is that the School District (the employer) needs to share information (including names) where it is necessary for a worker to be aware of the individual in order to take steps to protect themselves."

Of course we are talking about information being kept as focused as possible to need-to-know individuals only. None the less, there is a requirement under Regulation 4.30 to inform workers about the risk of violence from a person with a history of violent behavior.

Secondly, when an incident has occurred, an investigation should be conducted by the employer and worker rep with participation of the Joint Health & Safety Committee.

Thirdly, the employer has to perform a risk assessment under Regulation 4.28 (separate and apart from a Safety Plan for the child) to try to eliminate the risk to the worker and

if that is not possible, then to try to minimize the risk to the worker.

Refuse Unsafe Work – KNOW YOUR RIGHTS.

Submitted by Vanessa Wolff
National Health & Safety Representative – B.C.



As a safety committee representative, you have always had 'The Power'

We hold a tremendous amount of power, although we sometimes forget this.

If our Committees do not function properly, then we lose credibility amongst our membership. If our representation on the Committee does not promote the best interests of our members, we give our power away.

This year we should focus our energy towards our joint health and safety committees that we legally have the right to participate on.

As members of a union, these committees gives us a tremendous amount of equality with the Employer. When changes need to be made regarding our safety at work and the environment we work in, we have power.

Unfortunately we sometimes forget this and fall into the Employers' lull and start procrastinating.

We as workers have to understand that it is us who decides who will represent our best interests. And if we do not actively support our Committee Reps, then we are not serving ourselves or our union very well.

The unfortunate thing is if we feel that our safety committee does nothing... and nothing ever changes... and it's always the same people and... – whatever other excuse we want to make – we need to only ask ourselves why!

Why do we let this happen?

We have the ability to change it. Our Executives need to realize the importance of Health and Safety issues and need to ensure that our Committee Reps are properly trained and supported by our Locals. We need to step up and take control again of our Committees so that we

can ensure proper process is being followed. We need to alternate as chairpersons, participate in workplace inspections, have a say in our work procedures, and partake in accident investigations.

So when all this happens and committees become efficient again, maybe the Employer will realize that the bottom line does look better due to properly run Safety Committees. And maybe the Employer then comes to the realization that it's worth it to spend money on training and education. Hopefully then the horrible statistics we hear through WorkSafe BC on fatalities and injuries will be drastically reduced.

We have the power to make this happen... Use it!

Submitted by Barry Jones
CUPE 116 - University of British Columbia

HAVE MORE CLASS

OK, cute title, but really, this is important. Probably the most important thing that gets discussed at CUPE functions – besides decent wages, pensions, benefits and safe working conditions – is our wonderful education program.

We are in dire times, and especially now need to revitalize our use of CUPE's vast Education department. Classes for Occupational Health and Safety workshops can be full to the brim with participants.

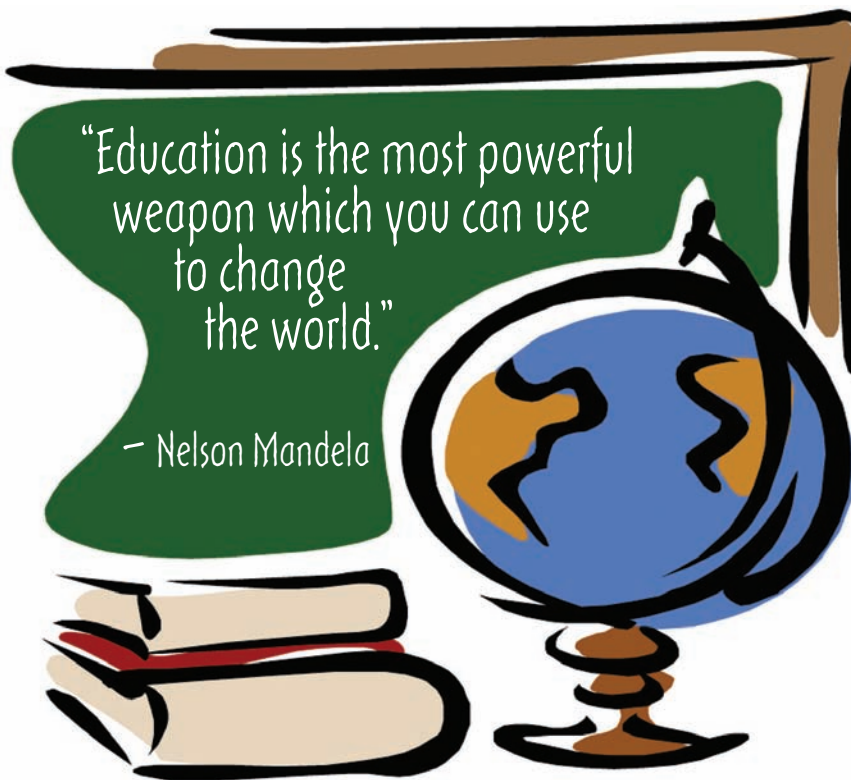
These days, our hard-working Executives forget that health and safety education is the cornerstone from which all our credos are derived. We are here to remind you about your union and what it wants to do for you.

When you consider what your Local is spending on education, be supportive. If you are not sending members to schools, workshops or conferences, you are not educating your members about what is going on today. Just presenting an education calendar at your next meeting will prompt some discussion about where some holes might be that need to be filled.

My first involvement with health and safety was from a friend and co-worker who recognized there was a need, and here was a newly sworn in member who seemed to have some willingness to volunteer her time. A health and safety activist was born.

Not long after I attended my first committee meeting, I was sent to a 30-hour health and safety school taught by activists who stayed in this game all their lives. It becomes part of your membership's culture... to care about others' work and community environments in such a way as to try and make improvements.

This cannot be done without educating people, both in and outside of our trade union movement.



It's easy to request health and safety courses for your Local, your District Council or an education event such as a Think Tank. Just call your Education Representative and ask about workshops you can offer to your members.

At a National Conference a few years back I heard Brother Claude Généreux speak about health and safety in the workplace. He said, "Every dollar spent in your Local has a connection to health and safety."

I will never forget that profound statement. Keep this in mind as you plan your annual spending on education, and be generous. Remember our CUPE t-shirts that read: "Education is the most powerful

weapon which you can use to change the world."

Submitted by Beverley McKeen
Co-Chair

CUPE BC OH&S COMMITTEE

Welcome

The Occupational Health and Safety Committee is pleased to welcome CUPE Metro regional vice-president Mike Jackson as committee chair. The committee also thanks Susan Zander for her many years of dedicated service.

WCB coverage for unions

Tom McKenna, National Representative – WCB Advocacy, has received a number of requests for information on if, and how, local unions should cover activists, members, and staff for WorkSafe BC benefits. As a result, he has compiled information on WCB coverage requirements. Tom can be contacted at the B.C. Regional Office in Burnaby or by email at tmckenna@cupe.ca for further information.

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