

Unlocking Hazard-Free Workplaces... **YOU ARE THE KEY**



On
April 28
Our Nation's
Day of Mourning
And everyday thereafter.

WE CAN HELP!
We are Ontario's
designated health and
safety training centre.

The Workers Health & Safety Centre has long supported working people, their representatives and others who seek to eliminate harmful, sometimes deadly, hazards. In particular we've offered training and information resources aimed at helping you to understand the legal rights and responsibilities of all workplace parties. Still, many workplace parties are not content to simply meet minimum standards. They realize the importance of meeting all the specific training needs of the workforce. In response, we've developed an extensive range of up-to-date hazard-specific and industry-specific training programs.

To learn more about Workers Centre training and other information services please visit our web site or contact a training service representative in your area.



A recent study conducted by the Centre for the Study of Living Standards found the number of fatality claims accepted by workers' compensation boards in Canada rose 45 per cent between 1993 and 2005.

For 2005, compensation boards across Canada accepted 1,097 worker fatality claims compared to 758 in 1993. And according to many, including the authors of *Five Deaths a Day: Workplace Fatalities in Canada, 1993-2005*, these statistics don't capture all work-related fatalities. Firstly, the annual statistics represent only accepted compensation claims. Many claims are denied. And many more, it would appear, are never reported. For instance, even conservative estimates point to 10 per cent of all cancer as being work-related. Using Canadian Cancer Society statistics, this translates annually into more than 7,000 worker deaths (2,600 in Ontario alone) — clearly far short of the numbers reported in this study.



On April 28, join with others in your community or workplace to reflect on how lives are affected by unsafe and unhealthy work environments.

On this day you might also offer support to suffering workers and their families. Equally important though, consider what you can do to end this preventable suffering. Ensuring all workplace parties understand their legal duties and responsibilities is a good place to start.

Provincial and federal health and safety laws place the greatest onus on employers to ensure safe and healthy work environments. Examples of employer duties include:

- establishing an effective hazard control program;
- providing training to protect both the immediate safety of workers and their long-term health;
- ensuring equipment, materials, and protective devices are maintained in good working order;
- taking every precaution reasonable in the circumstances to protect workers.

For workers, knowing and acting upon your rights can help lead to safer and healthier work environments. As a worker:

- ❖ you have the right to know about any potential hazards in your workplace and the duty to inform your supervisor about any hazard of which you are aware;
- ❖ you have the right to participate through your joint health and safety committee or representative in the process of identifying hazards and recommending measures to eliminate or prevent exposures;
- ❖ you have the right to refuse unsafe work you believe is likely to endanger you or someone else.

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Here in Ontario, workers face a range of potential unsafe work situations including violent incidents, harassment and exposure to harmful chemicals. Among many other safety and health concerns reported by workers and other workplace parties is the risk to health faced by new and older workers. The number of workers who suffer as a result of unsafe work environments is staggering and unacceptable. According to Ontario's Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) for 2006 there were:

- ▶ 529 reported worker fatality claims; and
- ▶ 341,437 reported claims for injuries and occupational disease.

As already mentioned we know these fatality statistics represent just a small per cent of the total number of workers who die annually because of cancer and other occupational diseases caused by workplace exposures years, even decades earlier. It is also commonly accepted that between 40 and 50 per cent of occupational injuries are never reported to the WSIB.

Violence/Harassment

Violence and harassment are serious safety concerns for workers in many sectors ranging from health care and education to retail and hospitality. In fact, the issue of workplace violence was recently reported for the first time in *Statistics Canada's 2004 General Social Survey*. It was reported nearly one-fifth of all incidents of violence occurred in the victim's workplace.

Even with greater focus on this issue, under-reporting remains a problem for many reasons including fear of the perpetrator and lack of reporting mechanisms. Workers and their representatives are insisting the issue of violence and harassment be taken seriously by employers and government regulators. To date, Ontario workers remain without any specific regulatory protection.

Occupational and Environmental Diseases

Cancer and occupational diseases of the respiratory, nervous, circulatory and reproductive systems kill thousands, perhaps tens of thousands of Ontario workers annually. Many more are living with these illnesses causing great physical and social hardship.

Workers, their representatives and many community groups remain committed to campaigns aimed at raising awareness about occupational disease. Many of these campaigns also serve to increase public awareness of the presence of

harmful, sometimes deadly, toxins in our neighbourhoods and in many consumer products. In both cases, campaigns are intended to encourage preventive action, toxic use reduction strategies, pollution prevention and community right to know initiatives.

Aging Workers

Participation of "older" workers in Ontario's paid workforce has grown significantly over the past decade. This is sure to increase as the Ontario government recently eliminated mandatory retirement at 65. For some, continued employment is a desired option. For many, it is an economic necessity. In either case, workers and their representatives are calling on workplaces and government regulators to further address age-specific health and safety considerations including musculoskeletal issues.

New Workers

Workers are more likely to be injured during the first month on a job than workers with more than one year experience, according to a recent study published by Canadian researchers. They also found this risk existed regardless of age. In other words, the risk to health was not related to being young, but rather to job tenure.

Workers and their representatives are calling on government regulators and employers for a renewed emphasis on new worker training.

Training for safer, healthier work.

With six locations to serve you



www.whsc.on.ca

A Workers Health & Safety Centre Near You

Central Ontario (Toronto)	Tel: (416) 441.1939
	Fax: (416) 441.2277
Eastern Ontario (Ottawa)	Tel: (613) 232.7866
	Fax: (613) 232.3823
North Eastern Ontario (Sudbury)	Tel: (705) 522.8200
	Fax: (705) 522.8957
North Western Ontario (Thunder Bay)	Tel: (807) 473.3634
	Fax: (807) 473.3655
South Central Ontario (Hamilton)	Tel: (905) 545.5433
	Fax: (905) 545.3131
South Western Ontario (Sarnia)	Tel: (519) 337.6083
	Fax: (519) 337.6807

1.888.869.7950