



SafeTalk



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Lengthy and Legalistic Inquest Raises More Questions Than It Answers



District 3 Director Steve Hunt and Canadian National Director Ken Neumann are asking to meet with Premier Doer and Ministers after a failure to get justice in the Ewing inquest

The United Steelworkers (USW), who was also one of the union leaders who investigated the explosion eight years ago. The Steelworkers, Machinists, and Electrical Workers have recommended changes to the workplace health and safety legislation to clarify senior management responsibility, clearer regulations on hazard identification and priorities in prevention, specific regulations for molten and hot metal operations, and clearer roles for committees, including full-time union-appointed health and safety representatives in some cases. The Manitoba Federation of Labour presented further concerns related to similar fatalities.

The judge's report did recommend that legislation be amended to prioritize prevention, but concluded that the fatal mixing of water and molten metal was an unforeseen hazard. He further explained the delays in the inquest as part of the process.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent, and the case has seen nearly five years of delays and hearings. The decision was finally released earlier this month after further legal arguments challenging the judge's authority to complete his report since he had been appointed to a higher court.

"Not surprisingly, the judge himself saw nothing wrong with all this. In his world of trials, this is part of the legal process. It is not supposed to be the case in inquires where blame is not the objective. The goal of the inquiry is to get to the underlying practices that if done differently would prevent further tragedies. Manitoba inquiries are being turned into legalistic battlegrounds in which legal principles are trumping getting to what happened and why," said Ken Neumann, National Director of the United Steelworkers.

The company, Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting, plead guilty to charges under the Workplace Health and Safety Act in relation to the explosion on November 27, 2001 and received the maximum penalty at the time, \$250,000. One person was killed in the explosion and many were scarred for life.

The United Steelworkers, the International Association of Machinists, and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers are seeking an urgent meeting with Manitoba Premier Gary Doer, Justice Minister Dave Chomiak, and Labour Minister Nancy Allan, after a long and costly court inquiry into the death of Steve Ewing in the year 2000 that produced "so little on what went so terribly wrong" that the safety of workers in province is in question.

"Inquiries in Manitoba have turned into a boondoggle. They go on and on and lose sight of the responsibility to the victims, co-workers, and the public. The report recommends that Manitoba law be amended to make sure responsibility be clear and effective, but fails to explain how such a well-known hazard as mixing water and molten metal gets missed in such a lengthy process of management planning in the first place," said Stephen Hunt, Western District Director for the

Coming Events

January 15 SAFER/TLA H&S Conference, Vancouver BC

February 3 BC Fed Preventing Stress, Powell River BC

February 4 BC Fed Basic H&S, Powell River BC

March 22-25 District 3 HS&E Conference, Vancouver BC

Fatality in Local 2004

On December 4, 2008 Brother Terry Paradis, age 45 who was a member of USW Local 2004 was fatally injured when moving a 34 foot piece of steel rail off a boom truck with a remote control when the rail came out of the rail clamp. Terry was found with the rail on his back.

Terry was an employee of CN Rail and died at approximately 1:30 afternoon while on the job in Hillsport, Ontario. He had been with CN since 2002. The investigation into Terry's death is continuing.

Our sincere condolences go out to Terry's wife, his 18-year old daughter and family. Our condolences also go out to the members of USW Local 2004.

HAZARD ALERT

Worker struck when cutting wheel shatters and grinder recoils

A sawmill worker was using a hand-held grinder to cut off the head of a rivet on a lumber transfer chain. He wanted to remove a couple of links to shorten the chain. The grinder was not equipped with a guard. The worker was wearing safety glasses, not a face shield. The abrasive cutting wheel on the 4½-inch grinder got stuck and then shattered. Fragments from the wheel cut the worker's face. The grinder kicked back violently and also struck him in the face.



Safe Work Practices

- Always make sure the manufacturer's guard is installed before using a grinder.
- Ensure that workers are adequately trained in the safe use of grinders.
- Always wear adequate eye and face protection when using a grinder. Hearing protection must also be worn.
- Choose the appropriate grinder and abrasive disc for the job.
- Position your body to reduce exposure to flying materials and to shield yourself in case of wheel failure and/or kickback.

Prepare yourself for winter driving

- Plan your driving in advance.
- Avoid driving when fatigued.
- Contact your provincial "Road Reports" to get updates regarding road conditions in the region to which you are going.
- Check weather conditions for your travel route (and time) before you begin driving.
- Plan your arrival time at a destination by taking into account any delays due to slower traffic, reduced visibility, roadblocks, abandoned automobiles, collisions, etc.
- Inform someone of your route and planned arrival time.
- Choose warm and comfortable clothing. If you need to remove outdoor clothing later while driving, **STOP** the vehicle in a safe spot.
- Warm up your vehicle **BEFORE** driving off. It reduces moisture condensing on the inside of the windows.
- **NEVER** warm up your vehicle in a closed garage.
- Remove snow and ice from your vehicle. It helps to see and, equally important, to be seen.
- Wear sunglasses on bright sunny days.
- Bring a cell phone if you have one but do not leave it in the car as the battery will freeze.
- Buckle up before you start driving. Keep your seat belt buckled at all times.
- **SLOW DOWN!** - posted speed limits are for ideal travel conditions. Driving at reduced speeds is the best precautionary measure against any misfortune while driving on slippery roads. "Black ice" is invisible.
- Be alert. Black ice will make a road look like shiny new asphalt. Pavement should look grey-white in winter.
- Do not use cruise control. Winter driving requires you to be in full control at all times.
- Reduce your speed while approaching intersections covered with ice or snow.
- Allow for extra travelling time or even consider delaying a trip if the weather is inclement.
- Drive with low-beam headlights on. Not only are they brighter than daytime running lights but turning them on also activates the tail lights. This makes your vehicle more visible.
- Lengthen your following distance behind the vehicle ahead of you. Stopping distance on an icy road is double that of stopping on a dry one. For example, from around 45 meters (140 ft) at the speed of 60 km/h, to 80 meters (over 260 ft) on an icy road surface.
- Stay in the right-hand lane except when passing and use turn signals when changing lanes.
- Steer with smooth and precise movements. Changing lanes too quickly and jerky steering while braking or accelerating can cause skidding.
- Be aware and slow down when you see a sign warning that you are approaching a bridge. Steel and concrete bridges are likely to be icy even when there is no ice on the asphalt.
- Be patient and pass other cars only when it is safe to do so.

SAFER Conference January 15-16—Bayshore Inn, Vancouver BC
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MERRY CHRISTMAS & A HAPPY & SAFE NEW YEAR

