



SafeTalk



BC Wood Council Locals Share Coveted AQ Evans Award for Campaign to 'Stop the Killing'



USW District 3 Director Steve Hunt (r) accepts AG Evans Award on behalf of Wood Council local unions in BC. It was presented by the International union's Jim Frederick.

United Steelworkers Wood Council local unions in British Columbia have been honoured and distinguished by the International Union for their involvement in outstanding accomplishments in the field of health and safety.

On August 9 at the USW International Health, Safety and the Environment conference in Dearborn, Michigan, the ten local unions were issued the prestigious AG Evans award in recognition of their participation in a campaign which included the "skilled use of the media, constant pressure on public officials and aggressive collective bargaining."

Accepting the honour on behalf of the locals was District 3 Director Steve Hunt. Presenting the award was Michael Wright, Director of Health, Safety and the Environment for the International Department and Jim Frederick, Assistant to Brother Wright,

"The AG Evans Award is a great recognition of the dedication that each of our BC woodworker locals have given to the make the forest industry safer to work in," says Brother Hunt. "It has been a truly province-wide effort – to bring focus to conditions that loggers, millworkers, wood haulers and others face."

In 2005 there were 43 workers that died traumatically in BC. Another 6 died due to industrial diseases contracted in the industry.

The award is named after the late Steelworkers Local 5444 president AQ Evans who died of complications from lead poisoning in 1979. Brother Evans fought for and won new OSHA standards to reduce workers' exposure to lead. In the 70's Evans refused to take any more chelation therapy. At the time if workers in Indiana refused such therapy they were ineligible for state workers compensation.

Coming Events

September 16-19 Canadian Public Health Association 2007 Annual Conference, Ottawa Ont.

September 17-18 CCOHS Forum '07 Emerging Health & Safety Issues in Changing Workplaces, Vancouver BC

September 20-21 SHARP Conference, Prince George BC

October 5 UBC Ergonomic Quality in Facility Design Conference, Vancouver BC



Local 6166 wins the Falkowski/Seguin award.

Accepting the award on behalf of local 6166 from Thompson Manitoba are; l. to r. Perry Oxford, the local environmental coordinator and Les Ellsworth, president of local 6166. Presenting the award is Diane Hemmingway from the International Union.

The local won the award for their successful 3 year campaign for federal pollution prevention regulations that govern smelters throughout Canada. They were also recognized for their current campaign to reduce sulfur dioxide emissions at the CVRD/Inco nickel smelter in Thompson Manitoba.

TimberWest Safety Claims False

TimberWest one of the struck companies in the current coast forestry dispute is claiming their demand to sub-divide contractors into smaller operators will improve worker safety.

TimberWest who participated in the 2004 Forest Safety Task Force report to the BC Minister of Labour seem to have forgotten the reports findings.

The report in part stated, "The result has been consolidation into larger stronger companies and greater use of contractors and sub-contractors. These changes have an impact on safety. Small operations—those that employ 20 or fewer workers—perform some of the most dangerous work in the industry and the rate of fatalities and serious injuries is much higher for the 50% of forest workers who work in these small operations (67 percent of serious injuries and 70 percent of the deaths in the forest sector occur in small operations). The growing use of contractors and sub-contractors are reinforcing these trends. There is less capacity in the small firms to provide in-service training and the quality of employee supervision and training programs routinely available in larger companies".

HAZARD ALERT

The operator of a grapple skidder was fatally injured when he was travelling down slope on a 50%+ previously used skid trail to retrieve a bundle of logs in the harvesting block. At some point control of the skidder was lost and after pushing over a tree the skidder rolled approximately 200ft.+ downslope before coming to rest on a ridge above the log landing.

A young worker reached for a waste board that was to be placed into a chipper conveyor located below the work station. The board passed in front of the worker on a transfer chain taking boards that were cut from cants away from the Horizontal Band Tailer. While reaching for the board, the young worker's right gloved hand became caught in a chain sprocket which amputated the right index and ring ringer tips.

Two workers were fatally injured when driving out of the bush in a one ton crummy skidded off a narrow portion of the logging road, rolled, and went end over end at least once, down about 150 feet on a 78% grade. Both workers were ejected from the vehicle (seat belts not worn).

A Supervisor/Millwright was on top of a belt conveyor wall attempting to dislodge a jammed-up board. The board came free and knocked the worker backwards seven feet to the ground. He sustained head and neck injuries. The conveyor was not locked out.

A skidder operator was fatally injured when his skidder rolled several times down a steep slope. The operator was wearing the seatbelt. However, it failed during the rollover due to previous damage to the webbing.

A worker was in the process of starting up a gang rip saw. He had started the ribbed outfeed landing roll and was in the process of checking the saw outfeed before starting the saw. His gloved left hand contacted the rotating landing roll and was drawn into a narrow gap between the roll and a sloped steel plate on the downstream side of the roll.

Conflicting Court Rulings on Worker's Casual Drug use

Two competing cases on the controversial practice of workplace drug testing show a growing schism in the courts on the validity of such actions, making it harder for employers to figure out when their practices are outside the bounds of the law.

Both cases deal with employees who were terminated after testing positive for marijuana use during pre-employment screening. Neither employee claimed to be drug dependent, which can be considered a disability under some provincial human-rights legislation. The cases also considered *Entrop v. Imperial Oil*, the leading Canadian drug-testing ruling, which came down hard on employers who test employees and prospective employees, even in safety-sensitive positions.

In the first case, *Chiasson v. Kellogg Brown & Root (Canada) Company*, Alberta Court of Queen's Bench Justice Sheilah Martin rejected KBR's pre-employment drug-testing policy and in the process essentially extended the umbrella of human-rights legislation over a self-avowed recreational marijuana user.

In the second case, *Chornyj v. Weyerhaeuser Company Limited*, a three-member panel of Ontario Superior Court of Justice (Divisional Court) did the opposite, upholding Weyerhaeuser's drug-testing policy and preventing Mr. Chornyj from bringing his complaint before the province's human-rights tribunal.

Ironically, up to now courts in western Canada have usually been more tolerant of drug testing than those in eastern Canada, especially Ontario. It's an interesting reversal of the two jurisdictions' approach to drug-testing and seems to further muddy the legal waters.

Canadians Worried About Pollution Affecting Health

A recent survey for the Canadian Medical Association showed one in four Canadians have sought medical treatment for a problem they believe was caused by the environment, ranging from asthma to skin cancer. The highest level of concern was about environmental standards in other countries, with 88% either somewhat or very concerned about their effect on imported fruits and vegetables.

Climate change and its impact was a concern for 81% of the respondents, while 82% said they were specifically concerned about the "potential for climate change to encourage the spread of disease."

There were similar levels of concerns about pesticides (75%), air pollution (79%), soil contamination (73%), and water quality (71%).

Only 36% gave the federal government an "A" or "B" grade for their efforts, while the approval ratings for the provincial governments was only slightly higher at 46%.