



# SafeTalk



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## SASKATCHEWAN MINE LOCALS TACKLE HEALTH & SAFETY PROGRAMS



Seen here in the hoist at the Cory Potash mine are L. to R. Local 7458 President Randy Rounce, Andy King, Canadian Health, Safety and Environment Department Leader and Jim Frederick from the USW Health, Safety & Environment Department in Pittsburg.

Union health safety and environmental staff toured the mine when in Saskatoon and met with the six mine locals to discuss health and safety programs. The locals reported that companies are implementing a myriad of health and safety programs with little or no consultation with the union. Many of these programs tend to blame the worker instead of focusing on eliminating the hazards. The United Steelworkers know from our experience dealing with health and safety in thousands of workplaces, that focusing on workers' behavior is wrong. Hazards and unsafe conditions cause injury and illness. When hazards are properly identified and fixed, the injuries and illness decrease.

We insist on safety programs that enlist the skill, knowledge and commitment of the workforce in finding and correcting hazards. We will continue to assert our strong belief that our members are not the problem – they are the solution.

The locals agreed that a acceptable program must:

- Be enforceable and sustainable;
- Build on minimum requirements in the regulations;
- Be firstly, hazard based – using hierarchy of controls;
- Involve, respect and engage the role of the committee;
- Allow communication with the regulators;
- Be bargained.

## Coming Events

Feb. 23 BC Fed Incident Investigation Workshop, Fernie BC  
 March 2, 3 local 1-417 H&S Conference, Kamloops BC  
 March 10,11 District 3 H&S Conference, Edmonton Alberta

## FATALITY IN LOCAL 1-2963

On December 22, 2006 Mario Filice, 61 years old died when the truck he was driving went off the road. Mario worked for Bowater Canadian Forest Products Ltd. In Thunder Bay Ontario. He was delivering to Bowater Thunder Bay Sawmill from the bush. The accident occurred on the way to the mill on City Road in Thunder Bay.

Our sincere condolences to Mario's family, friends and co-workers.

## Vacation Time Shrinking in Canada

A recent Ipsos Reid Vacation Deprivation survey reveals that vacation time in Canada is shrinking. In 2005, employed Canadians reported receiving an average of 21 vacation days each year, while in 2006 the average is 19 -- giving us the dubious honour of receiving the fewest vacation days per year after the United States (14 days) and Australia (17 days). In addition, employed Canadians forfeit an average of two days of vacation per year which could be used to relax or travel, totalling 32 million untaken days.

Yet Canadians show a strong desire to take time off, with one in five employed Canadians saying they would take a lower salary for more vacation time (22 per cent), while "an extra vacation day" tops the list of perks employees would like to receive as a reward for company loyalty. "With today's buoyant economy, vacation deprivation continues to be a problem -- both in terms of the total number of vacation days provided to employees and the number that employees are actually able to take," explains sociologist and stress expert Beverly Beuermann-King. "No matter the profession, the importance of work-life balance and taking vacation is paramount," says Beuermann-King. "With 55 per cent of Canadians feeling rested and rejuvenated after a vacation and another 44 per cent feeling better about their job after a vacation, it's crucial to make the time to plan for a vacation, even during busy periods."

## WORKPLACE DEATHS SPIKING

According to a study by the Centre for the Study of Living Standards the number of work-related fatalities in Canada is rising sharply. Only four other countries have higher rates of workplace fatalities than Canada—South Korea, Mexico, Portugal and Turkey.

One explanation is Canada's goods producing sector is booming and it represents a much larger percentage of the economy than in most countries. It also reflects the number of workers dying from long-ago exposures to dangerous products such as asbestos. The report, titled Five Deaths a Day, shows the number of work related fatalities has risen 45%, to 1,097 last year from 758 in 2003.

## HAZARD ALERT

### FEWER LOGGERS DIE IN THE BUSH

Andrew A. Duffy - Times Colonist with files from CanWest News Service

**Type of Injury:** 1 Injury

**Type of Occurrence:** MVA

**DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT**

A loaded logging truck encountered an oncoming vehicle operating in the log trucks lane. In an attempt to avoid a collision with this vehicle, the truck driver steered the truck over to the side of the road, this resulted in the pup trailer wheels of the loaded truck going off of a steep edge of the road, causing the trailer and truck to roll over.

**Type of Injury:** 1 Serious

**Type of Occurrence:** Fall from elevation

**DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT**

A young worker fell 20 feet through a caged, fixed ladder. The worker was climbing up the baghouse to help with repairs.

**Type of Injury:** Non-Injury

**Type of Occurrence:** Motor vehicle accident

**DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT**

A loaded log truck rolled over on a public road. The conventional pole log truck was negotiating a sharp turn, on a paved road, when rear bunk became bound.

**Type of Injury:** 1 Injury

**Type of Occurrence:** Struck by object

**DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT**

A supervisor was bucking the tops of two trees which had blow down across the logging road. One of the trees sprung back striking the supervisor in the leg.

**Type of Injury:** 1 Injury

**Type of Occurrence:** Mobile equipment

**DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT**

A forklift drove into a stationary object. As a result of the impact, the operator was thrown forward in the cab and sustained an abdominal injury.

**Type of Injury:** 1 Fatal

**Type of Occurrence:** Caught in or between equipment or object

**DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT**

A worker was attempting to trouble shoot an operational problem with a skidder while the unit was running. The worker activated the reverse drive in the unit and the skidder ran over the worker.

**Type of Injury:** 1 Fatal

**Type of Occurrence:** Struck by object

**DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT**

The owner of a small logging company, who normally operated a skidder, was falling birch trees. After the falling cuts were made in a tree, the tree remained standing and wedging tools were not available. The owner then proceeded to buck trees within 1 tree length of the standing cut up tree. The standing cut up tree fell and struck the owner. The owner was not a certified faller.

January 17, 2007 -- The province's forest industry recorded its lowest number of fatalities on record last year, according to the B.C. Forest Safety Council. There were 12 deaths in the woods in 2006, down sharply from the 43 recorded in 2005 and well below the average of 25 who die every year in the forests.

While 2005 was a bad year in the woods, it was by no means the worst, as 63 died in 1972 and 50 died in 1973, numbers that reflect faller deaths only and not deaths across the industry. The biggest decrease in 2006 was in manual and mechanical tree falling where there were two deaths reported last year compared with 19 in 2005, while there were 32 serious injuries reported compared with 43 in 2005.

According to Safety Council CEO Tanner Elton the overall trend is encouraging though he did point out there is concern over the number of fatalities and serious injuries in the log-hauling sector -- there were five deaths and 23 serious injuries compared with eight deaths and 14 injuries in 2005. Five other deaths were reported in other sectors in the industry, including driving to and from work.

Elton said the number of deaths in trucking and use of equipment will be a focus in the coming year, and suggested the rapid harvesting of beetle-infested lumber in the Interior has put far more trucks on roads that were designed for lower loads, and that has created more hazards. "We are moving in the right direction but 12 fatalities are still unacceptable," he said. "We should not be satisfied until we reach our goal of no fatalities. "The council believes the improved results are the result of a combined effort of companies, workers and the agencies that work in the industry focusing on safety. "We must now continue our efforts to make safety an overriding priority and develop a culture of safety in our industry," he said.

"The kinds of programs that we are putting in place now are so different than anything we have ever done in the past. We are going to make sure that every company in the industry is certified as being safe every year," he said. "They will have to demonstrate that they have all of their safety programs in place and that they're exceeding all legislative requirements."

According to Rick Wangler, president of Steelworkers Local 1-363 in Campbell River, a culture of safety has yet to take hold. "The number [of deaths] is lower and that speaks for itself, but as to whether or not it's coming from something the companies are doing I don't think so," he said. "From what we're hearing from members, we don't agree safety is better, they are feeling it's non-existent."

Wangler said the paper trail is there and there are processes in place, but when it comes down to ground-level initiatives there is next to nothing. Safety meetings at many sites have been overlooked while workers are working longer shifts and more hours, he said. "When you have 43 fatalities [in 2005] people obviously start thinking about it a bit more," he said, suggesting awareness probably has a lot to do with last year's decrease in fatalities.