



SafeTalk



District 3 Kimberley Summer School



District 3 health, safety and environment coordinator Ron Corbeil and Local union 6034 president Lana Heaman facilitated the summer school workshop on health & safety. More at <http://www.usw.ca/program/content/5098.php>

This year's District 3 Summer School had over 140 participants at the weeklong event, which ended on June 13.

Local union members from BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba enrolled in six classes, held at the Kimberley BC.

In addition to the classes, instructed by homegrown USW instructors, special guests included BC NDP leader Carol James and visitors from the National Confederation of Forest Workers of Chile. District 3 Director Steve Hunt visited each class and made a brief presentation highlighting current events in the district.

Twenty two of the delegates participated in the health and safety workshop. There was no lack of participation as delegates discussed and developed solutions on topical health and safety issues such as; under reporting of injuries and illnesses and hours of work and shift work.

Other topics covered included accident investigation, occupational hygiene, unions' role in health and safety, workers rights, legislation, identifying and analyzing hazards and H & S committee functions.



Some of the health and safety workshop participants, clock wise from the left; Monty Clifford- lu 5890, Katherine Hoblyn- lu 6673, Graeme Dirks- lu 9347, Owen Johnson- lu 5890 and Beryl Haigh- lu 9705.

Coming Events

June 30-July 3 USW Intl. Convention, Las Vegas NV.

Aug. 18-22 USW Intl. HS&E Conference, Pittsburgh PA

Sept. 14-17 CSSE 2008 conference Quebec City, Que.

Underreporting of Workplace Injuries & Illness a Hidden Tragedy

A report from the US house of representatives identified epidemic under reporting of workplace injuries and illnesses. Extensive evidence from academic studies, media reports and worker testimony shows that work-related injuries and illnesses in the United States are chronically and even grossly underreported. As much as 69 percent of injuries and illnesses may never make it into the Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses (SOII), the nation's annual workplace safety and health "report card" generated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

If these estimates are accurate, the nation's workers may be suffering three times as many injuries and illnesses as official reports indicate.

A major cause of underreporting, according to experts, is the reliance on self reporting by employers. Employers have strong incentives to underreport injuries and illnesses that occur on the job. Businesses with fewer injuries and illnesses are less likely to be inspected by OSHA; they have lower workers' compensation insurance premiums; and they have a better chance of winning government contracts and bonuses.

Self reporting allows employers to use a variety of strategies that result in underreporting of injuries and illnesses:

- Workers report widespread intimidation and harassment when reporting injuries and illnesses. Reports, testimony and news accounts show that many employers have fired or disciplined workers who report injuries and illnesses or complain about safety hazards. Others have added "demerits" to an employee's record for reportable injuries or illnesses or for absenteeism that allegedly result from "safety violations."
- Employers have been reported to provide inadequate medical treatment and force workers back to work too soon after serious injuries sometimes right after surgery so that their injuries will not be properly recorded.
- While they may be well-intentioned, widespread and popular safety incentive programs which provide awards for a period of time without a recordable injury, can have the effect of putting pressure on workers not to report their injuries.

To view the report go to: <http://edlabor.house.gov/publications/20080619WorkplaceInjuriesReport.pdf>

HAZARD ALERT

The driver of a crew cab lost control of the vehicle on a gravel road and the vehicle rolled when it slid into the ditch. A tree planter was fatally injured when ejected during the roll-over and was pinned under the vehicle.

A fire originating in the veneer dryers spread to other areas of the plywood plant resulting in the complete destruction of the 300-person facility. Four Canfor employees were transported to hospital with non-life threatening injuries.

A driller blaster was fatally injured when he was returning from a post blast inspection and was struck and pinned against the tracks of an excavator by a large log that rolled off the steep cut bank above.

A worker was seriously injured when descending a set of stairs holding the rail and he turned to assess noise from the chipper. Upon turning back to the descent, the worker thought that the next step was the floor, however, it was the second to last step, and the worker caught their heel and pitched forward falling to the floor.

A certified hand faller was seriously injured when felling a 22" diameter hemlock tree that was limb tied into the adjacent 42" diameter cedar snag. As the faller was finishing the back cut in the hemlock tree, it began to move forward. A hidden ten to twelve pound piece of the cedar snag fell from a height of 37' striking the faller's head and shoulder area. The faller was transferred to hospital and released four days later.

While working at a shingle machine a sawyer lost his footing and as he reached out to steady himself he placed his hand on the clipper saw board which depressed allowing the energized clipper saw to contact his hand.

A certified faller was seriously injured when in the process of wedging over a 3-foot diameter cedar tree. While wedging the tree, the tree came over sideways. The faller attempted to use his alternate escape route but tripped over a high root and the tree came down on the worker. The faller received severe injuries.

A worker planting trees was seriously injured while on a steep slope was run over by a log that had become unstable.

An employer climbed into the cab of a rubber-tired skidder that had previously become stuck by a worker (right front wheel over the bank of a skid trail). The employer climbed in to the cab. The machine began to roll over before the operator could be seated. The skidder rolled over two times on a slope of 39% before coming to a stop approximately 21 meters down slope.

Agrium Found Guilty

Agrium potash mine at Vanscoy in Saskatchewan was found guilty in the August 2006 injury to local 7552 member Paul Goddard. Paul was crushed by about 900 kilograms of rock while working underground. His spinal cord was broken and both arms were shattered.

The company plead guilty to one charge of "Failing to ensure the health, safety and welfare of a worker" as is required by Section 3(a) of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993 and agreed to a fine of \$180,000. With all provincial offences, there is a mandatory victim surcharge of 30% that is allocated to the Government's Victim Services Branch. With this included, Agrium's total fine becomes \$234,000.

Lead Found in Lipsticks

Health Canada has found lead in some lipsticks for sale in Canada, but the agency says the levels do not pose a health risk for consumers.

The government decided to test lipsticks after the U.S. group Campaign for Safe Cosmetics released a report last October titled "A Poison Kiss: The Problem of Lead in Lipsticks."

Twenty-one of 26 samples tested at Health Canada's product safety laboratories contained lead levels of 0.079 parts per million to 0.84 parts per million. One lipstick sample had 6.3 parts per million, while the remainder contained no detectable levels of lead.

Health advocate Carol Sexter isn't comforted by government assurances about lead levels in lipstick, pointing to a growing body of scientific evidence suggesting there is no safe level of lead in the blood.

"One application at a very small level is unlikely to cause you any serious harm or no harm at all. But the lead built up in your body doesn't dissipate. And you apply it everyday and many times a day. It's not the one-time exposure that's the problem," said the president of the Breast Cancer Action Montreal who oversees its safe cosmetics campaign.

Mexican Government Refuses to Recognize Gomez

Mexico's labor ministry said on Tuesday it would not recognize the reelection of Napoleon Gomez the leader of the largest Mexican mining union, who is wanted on trumped up corruption charges, despite worker threats to strike in protest.

The union voted to keep Napoleon Gomez at its helm in May, although he is living in Canada to avoid arrest in Mexico, and the government gave itself two months to review the result. Gomez denies the corruption charges and says he is being unfairly targeted because of his successful negotiations of pay hikes and profit-sharing schemes. Gomez has also been very critical of the governments handling of health and safety.

Labor Minister Javier Lozano told a news conference that Gomez's status as a "fugitive" stripped him of his right to lead the labor movement.

"There are three arrest warrants for him and his status as a fugitive from Mexican law living outside the country limits his rights," Lozano said.

He said the union's second-in-command, Mario Garcia Ortiz, also was wanted on legal charges and would not be recognized by the government either.

The union rejected the government's decision not to recognize Gomez and said it would take the ruling to court.