



SafeTalk



Coming Events

- June 2, Vancouver Island Manufacturing Conference, Parksville BC*
- June 13, BC Fed Accident Investigation, Merritt BC*
- June 23-24 Local 1-424 Education Conference, Prince George BC*

On April 28 the USW and the town of Elliot Lake, Ontario, dedicated a memorial to uranium miners who died from occupational injuries and disease. Mining started in Elliot Lake in 1956; the last mine shut down in 1996. There are more than 200 names on the monument. Sadly, there is space for all those who will die in the future from silicosis or radiation-induced cancer.

Leo Gerard, who was once a staff rep at Elliot Lake was the keynote speaker. Ken Georgetti, a USW member and president of the CLC also spoke.

Unsafe working conditions in 1974 resulted in a work stoppage at Elliott Lake . Workplace health and safety concerns arose at Elliott Lake after many employees were diagnosed with cancer and silicosis due to radioactivity from the uranium. Management and the Ministry of Health were fully aware of what was going on but they failed to notify or admit that workers were in danger. The government appointed a Royal Commission in 1974 to investigate health and safety in the mines. The Commission was chaired by James Ham , a Professor of Engineering at the University of Toronto and the Commission became known as the Ham Commission. The battle led to the creation of Bill 70, which was important because it helped to establish the Occupational Health and Safety Act and worker's right to refuse unsafe work. Bill 70 required joint health and safety committees to be present in many workplaces.

USW President Leo Gerard was the keynote speaker at the Elliot Lake dedication to remember fallen miners.



Elliot Lake Uranium Miners Memorial

Five Deaths Demand Justice



The plane that carried the 5 men to their deaths. For more information:
<http://www.nwonline.ca/dhc2widow/>

On February 28, 2005 four loggers boarded a Beaver float plane in Campbell River BC to go to work. Dave Stevens, Fabian Bedard and brothers, Doug and Trevor Decock along with pilot Arnie Feast took off to two coastal BC logging camps at 10:10 a.m., the last time they were seen alive.

Three days later the body of Dave Stevens was found washed up on Quadra Island, the next day the RCMP called off the investigation. The Transportation Board (TSB) declared the missing plane a Class 5 occurrence, an accident to be listed for statistical purposes and not worthy of further investigation.

The families carried on their own search, eventually finding the plane 240 metres below the surface. The plane was raised. The plane was empty and the seatbelts were unbuckled, indicating the men initially survived the crash.

The engine that may hold the answer to why the crash occurred is still on the bottom. The family is not giving up trying to find out what caused this tragedy. Help the family by petitioning the TSB to conduct a public inquiry by signing their petition at <http://www.petitiononline.com/cgaqw/petition.html>

Safety Reps Ensure Safe Workplaces

The presence of a safety representative “is the only factor which is significantly related to safety behaviours,” says a research report commissioned by the Health and Safety Authority, Ireland’s HSE.

The study, *Safety behaviour in the construction sector*, compares actual injury rates and examples of safety behaviour with the perceptions of construction site workers and management, as well as the risk management system and safety enforcement.

They found “the variable with the strongest relationship with safety compliance is the presence or absence of a safety representative. A safety representative on site is associated with better compliance... safety representatives are associated with a greater likelihood of reporting risky situations and a lower likelihood of simply continuing to work in such situations, The presence of a safety representative is also strongly related to the effectiveness of response to audits and reported hazards.”

“This pattern of relationships suggests that safety representatives are the most important influence on the association between effectiveness of response to audits and hazards and safety compliance.”

It isn’t just that safety reps are the “best way” to improve safety, the research found that virtually “nothing else” had much effect.

The authors say “what is most eloquent about these results is the lack of any other significant relationships. In particular, the general safety management factor is not significantly associated with effective response to audits and hazards and has no influence on behaviour or compliance.”

The report ascribes the success of safety reps in particular to:

- Pressing management to do what they said they were going to do;
- encouraging workers to report hazards; and
- communicating effectively with the workers, including advising them against unsafe practices.

The study found “safety representatives are playing the critical role both in ensuring there is an effective response to audits and hazards and translating this into better compliance with safety requirements.”

Safety Behaviour in the Construction Industry

<http://publications.hsa.ie/index.asp?locID=6&docID=73>

Unions Help to Save Lives

New academic studies are showing the extent of the “union safety effect.” Reviewing the evidence, UK professors Phil James and David Walters conclude “a variety of studies, both in this country and overseas, have found the collective representation of workers to have beneficial consequences for standards of worker protection, particularly when it operates through trade union channels. In particular, several of these have highlighted the fact that injury rates tend to be highest in workplaces where there is unilateral determination of health and safety by management and lowest where mechanisms of union-based representation are present.”

Phil James and David Walters. Worker representation in health and safety options for regulatory reform, Industrial Relations Journal, vol. 33, no.2, page 141-156, June2002.



Canadian National Director Ken Neumann Addresses the Climate Conference

Steelworkers; International President Leo Gerard, former District 11 Director David Foster, President of the CLC Ken Georgetti and Ken Neumann made presentations at the North American Labour Assembly on Climate Crisis held recently in New York. Participants from over 40 countries and 5 continents came together to discuss alliances and organizing in the new energy economy. Leo Gerard told the audience that one thousand Steelworkers build wind turbines in Minnesota.



Carl Pope, Executive Director of the Sierra Club said, “there will be a new energy economy, it will happen because it is very, very lucrative.”



CLC President, Ken Georgetti said, “any pollution that affects our communities, affects the workers who work in those workplaces.”



Jerome Ringo, President of the Apollo Alliance and a former union president in the petroleum industry, told the audience that “the unemployed steelworker who came out of the Al Gore movie ‘Inconvenient Truth’ shocked about the climate was still unemployed”.

The Alliance is pursuing a program for clean energy that will create three million new, clean energy jobs and reduce US oil imports by the amount it imports from the Middle East.