

Health & Safety



Standard

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National Day of Mourning April 28, 2009

In 1984 744 workers died on the job. In 2007 that number jumped to over 1,055. Remember to pay your respects on the 25th anniversary of this special day with one minute of silence on April 28 to respect all of those who have died or been injured on the job.

Occupational Safety & Health Week - May 3 - 9, 2009

Be aware and stay safe. Take some time out of your busy schedule to see what is going on for Occupational Safety & Health Week at your workplace. Learn precautionary measures you can take to avoid injuries at work.

When did you get certified?

The Ontario Government is considering a new law that requires health and safety representatives to recertify every several years since workplaces change over time. Representatives would need to keep up-to-date with new health hazards that arise in the workplace. The actual number of years between each recertification is yet to be decided.

N95 Masks

The Ontario Government is still on track to procure N95 surgical masks for health care workers in high risk settings. N95 masks are the most effective mask against diseases, such as SARS, and can filter 97-99% of all germs.

SEIU Unit Meeting Reports

SEIU's health & safety representatives will be taking an active role in workplace unit meetings, in addition to inspecting workplaces, producing health and safety reports, and resolving safety issues. Since health care settings are loaded with hazards that can seriously injure workers, SEIU wants to ensure workers are aware of any hazards in their workplace.

"The situation got worse when Judy found out her client had Hepatitis B."

Judy Weldon is a hard working Developmental Services Worker who loves her job. She works in a group home in the Belleville area that cares for people who are developmentally challenged.

Weldon is also a committed joint health and safety committee member in her workplace, and is on the SEIU Local 1 Canada Health and Safety Committee.

She is also an inspiration and an example to us all. Weldon was pierced by a lancet while taking care of a client.

"The lancet I was using was faulty and it wouldn't release," said Judy. "I tried to pull it out of its container and I poked myself. It drew blood there was a chance I could be in a lot of trouble."

When she called a coordinator about her injury, she was told to read the policies and procedure manual. She did the right thing by ignoring his advice and headed straight to a hospital.

"My doctor got very upset with my employer. He couldn't understand why they didn't tell me my client had Hepatitis B."

The situation got worse when Judy found out her client had Hepatitis B. None of this medical information was in the client's file.

"The doctor at the hospital was very upset with my employer," Judy



Judy Weldon

stated. "He didn't understand why they didn't tell me my client had Hepatitis B."

Sometimes employers will not divulge this information to staff for confidentiality reasons.

Judy wasn't the only staff member who had been poked by a Lancet. Her co-worker was also pierced with a lancet that had been used on a patient who had Hepatitis B as well.

Judy spoke with her SEIU steward and demanded action. After several letters, meetings and even interventions by her own doctor, her employer now only uses safety-engineered lancets and workers have full knowledge of their client's medical history.

A client has the right to keep their medical backgrounds private from the public. But if their medical condition can jeopardize the health of the worker whose job is to take care of their daily needs, this information should not remain private. Workers' safety and well-being depends on it.

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Workplace safety must begin with “precautionary principle”

The provincial government has the power to take some important steps to reduce workplace injuries. It needs to start shifting their focus to prevention by adopting the “precautionary principle.”

Justice Archie Campbell outlined the precautionary principle in his SARS Commission report in 2006: the government should take the necessary steps to improve workplace safety even if they may not have large amounts of research to back their



Occupational Health & Safety Act.

decisions at the moment.

Unfortunately the precautionary principle is in only one piece of legislation, the Promotion and Protection Act, requiring the Chief Medical Officer of Health, when issuing a directive to health care workers in a health emergency, to consider the precautionary principle.

The government needs to go further. The precautionary principle needs to be incorporated into the

Workplace violence hits health care workers hard

According to research produced by the Ontario Federation of Labour, workplace violence is a big problem in health care centres.

Health care and social service workers are more likely than others to be beaten, sexually assaulted or even killed on the job.

Violence is most likely to occur at mental health treatment centres than other health care facilities.

Unfortunately, Ontario lags behind other provinces in protecting its workers from violence. The province needs to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to recognize violence as an occupational hazard. Workers need to have the right to refuse work where violence can occur. The act also needs to stop employers from intimidating workers from reporting violence. And employers should be penalized when they do not prevent violence in their workplace.

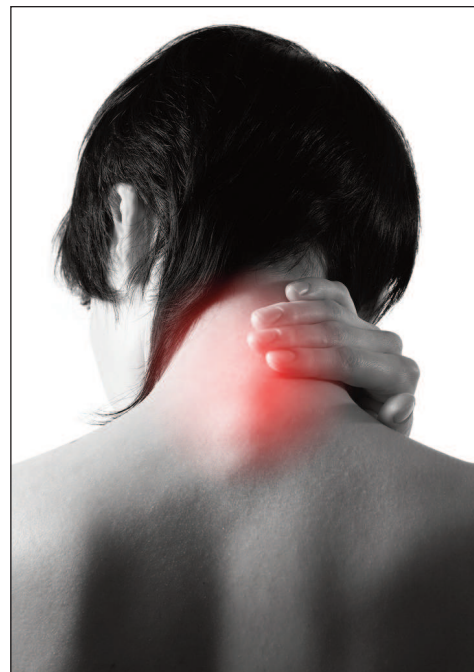
No one should fear being assaulted on the job.

Ontario Labour ministry targets musculoskeletal hazards in workplace

It has been reported that Ontario's Ministry of Labour is going to kick-off April with a spring cleaning blitz to flush out any hazards that cause musculoskeletal injuries. The Ministry will be targeting the health care, construction, industrial, and mining sectors. Government inspectors will be focusing their efforts on nursing and retirement homes, a sector that employs over 20,000 SEIU members.

Musculoskeletal disorders are when pain strikes a persons' muscles, joints, tendons, ligaments and nerves from repetitive lifting, pushing or pulling objects. Many people who have a disorder have gotten this injury at work. Sometimes the pain can be so bad it forces employees to take time off work and apply for WSIB compensation.

Inspectors will be paying particular attention to how workers are lifting, transferring and repositioning residents. They will check written policies and procedures, training programs and supervision involving these tasks. They will also examine whether assistive devices, such as equipment for patient lifting, transferring and repositioning are being maintained properly.



Inspectors will further ask joint health and safety committee members and health and safety representatives if their inspections identify musculoskeletal risk factors.

This drive is the latest in a series under the Ministry's Safe at Work program. Other campaigns have resulted in charges laid on many employers for failing to comply with fundamental responsibilities including the duty to establish and certify a joint health and safety committee.

Health & Safety Committee Members

David Blake
Niagara Health System
Louise Burbidge
Cambridge Memorial Hospital
Carol Cooke

Quinte Health Care Corp.
Kathy Decarlo
Extencicare
Susan Hughes
Huntsville Memorial Hospital

Caroline Jaeger
Dale Brain Injury Services
Ted Marcotte
MICs Group of Health Services
Carrie Moore

McCausland Hospital
Nancy Rieger
Baycrest Centre & Jewish
Home for the Aged
Julianna Stewart



Niagara Health System
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