



SAFE WORK It's Your Right Insist Upon It

WORKING TOGETHER, MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Observe April 28, National Day of Mourning

In Canada, workers are killed in traumatic incidents every working day of the year. Thousands more die from diseases caused by toxic workplace exposures. Many more are permanently disabled. Hundreds of thousands are temporarily unable to work because of workplace injuries.

To help raise public awareness of this suffering the Steelworkers union joins the Workers Health & Safety Centre, other labour organizations and community groups to organize events in observation of the National Day of Mourning. First observed in Canada, the day is now recognized in communities across North America and around the world. Together as workers and worker representatives we believe in our collective power to make a world of difference.

Share your story

We don't need mainstream media to tell our stories, to shine a light on real-life work experiences, the bad, but also the good. We'd like to hear from you. Tell us about your workplace health and safety experiences. Tweet us at: [#makeworksafe](https://twitter.com/makeworksafe).

Support USW's Stop the Killing campaign

The United Steelworkers works to hold people criminally accountable for the health and safety of workers. If people were held criminally accountable for their negligence, it would deter others from callously endangering the lives of workers. To learn more visit www.stopthekilling.ca.



USW Canada
www.usw.ca
1-877-669-8792



facebook.com/uswmetallos



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WHSC
www.whsc.on.ca
1-888-869-7950



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SAFE WORK

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It could happen to you

Bad news stories about workers killed or seriously injured on the job abound. Here are but a few, mostly taken from recent media headlines.

Clemence Beaulieu-Patry, 20, from Montreal, Quebec, was stabbed to death while working as a clerk at a supermarket. The assailant stabbed her in the neck, back, and slit both of her wrists. Clemence died while her father waited in the parking lot to pick her up from work.

Ut Tran, 35, Han Pham, 47, and Chi Wai Chan, 55, from Langley, British Columbia were all killed while attempting to unclog a pipe in a mushroom farm pump shed. The three were overcome by a highly toxic gas (hydrogen sulfide) which had accumulated in the shed. Two other workers survived the incident, but both suffered permanent, severe brain damage.

Howard Willems, 59, from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, died of work-related cancer. As a food inspector, Howard was exposed while he performed inspections of older food plants undergoing renovations that disturbed cancer-causing asbestos. After his diagnosis, Howard became an advocate for the creation of a registry of buildings that contain asbestos. As a result of his efforts, Saskatchewan became the first in Canada to require mandatory reporting of public buildings that are known to contain asbestos.

Ian Henry Pervez, 24, from Brampton, Ontario, was killed when an airline baggage handling cart he was driving rolled over and ejected him onto the tarmac. The vehicle involved was found to have had “mechanical failures.” The airline has been ordered to fix hundreds of baggage carts. Months before the incident, Federal labour investigators had directed the airline to install seatbelts on these vehicles and others.

Alan Fraser, 21, from Halifax, Nova Scotia, fell six stories to his death while cleaning a building under construction. The company was charged with failing to comply with fall protection regulations. The construction company had been issued 17 safety orders. Alan’s death inspired a push for regulatory change and more education, especially for new workers in Nova Scotia.

But it's the job, not you

In each and every one of these cases, workers suffered as a result of **exposure to uncontrolled work hazards and very likely a lack of proper training**. All were followed by an outpouring of grief and rage. Some were followed by enforcement of health and safety laws, fines and even the creation of new laws. While this action will not restore those needlessly killed or harmed to their family and friends, we do know this action can prevent the suffering of others. Just as in road safety, research and worker experiences clearly tell us **strong laws, their enforcement, fines and penalties improve working conditions and save lives**. This is why the United Steelworkers and all concerned with worker health and safety work continuously for better and enforced occupational health and safety laws in jurisdictions across Canada.

And yet when faced with suffering and facts, there are those who still perpetuate the **myth of the careless worker**. Instead of documented workplace hazards, they tell us unsafe worker behaviours are the cause of workplace incidents. They tell us to work safe instead of insisting employers live up to their legal responsibility to provide safe work.

So what to do? Read on.



INSIST ON YOUR RIGHTS

Federal, provincial and territorial occupational health and safety laws set out hard-won rights as well as responsibilities for workers, their representatives and employers. However, because employers have the greatest control over the workplace, employers also have by far the greatest number of responsibilities and the ultimate responsibility to take every precaution reasonable to ensure the workplace is healthy and safe. Worker representatives can monitor whether employers meet their obligation, but it is the job of government inspectors and other staff at Ministries of Labour to make certain employers comply.

THE RIGHT TO KNOW

As a worker, you have the legal right to know about all hazards and dangers in your workplace, how they can affect you and how they should best be controlled.

All jurisdictions include a general duty for employers to provide workers with information and instruction to safeguard their health and safety. Some require specific training aimed for instance at the prevention of workplace violence and harassment and safe operation of equipment.



One very important way to exercise your right to know is through WHMIS (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System). This now globally harmonized system provides information to users of hazardous materials by means of: warning labels on containers, safety data sheets, and worker training on how to use this information. As a worker, your employer must train you in procedures for safe handling, storage and disposal of the hazardous materials used or made in the workplace and emergency procedures to follow for all situations involving hazardous materials.

What does good training look like? Not all training or training programs are created equal. Some of what passes for health and safety training (lectures, videos, posters and online resources) is not training at all. Some training actually blames workers for their own demise. Truly effective health and safety training is hazard-based and prevention-focused. So be sure to insist on proper training too.

THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE

All workers have a right to participate in workplace health and safety. However, the best way to participate is through collective action. For instance, workers chosen by other workers, or where there is a union in the workplace by their union, have the right to participate as a worker



member of the joint health and safety committee (JHSC) or worker health and safety representative. The joint committee is made up of at least equal numbers of worker and employer representatives. They have the right to inspect the workplace, identify hazards and make recommendations to the employer about training and control measures to name a few.



THE RIGHT TO REFUSE

Perhaps the most important tool to ensure your health and safety is your right to refuse unsafe work you believe could endanger you. To refuse unsafe work though, you must follow certain procedures. These procedures can be found on special “work refusal” cards provided by the Steelworkers union or by visiting the web sites of the Steelworkers or Workers Health & Safety Centre.

Can your employer get back at you for exercising your rights?

By law you should not be fired for refusing unsafe work or for raising health and safety issues. Neither is it legal for your employer or someone acting on behalf of the employer to intimidate, threaten, penalize or discriminate against you because you exercised your health and safety rights.

STARTING A NEW JOB?

Ask questions

When you start a new job you need to ask about more than just the hours of work and rate of pay.

You also need to ask your new employer the following:

- **What are the hazards on the job?**
- **How will you protect me from these hazards?**
- **Will I get training for the job I'm going to do?**
- **Will I get proper health and safety training before I start?**
- **Will I have proper supervision and does that person know about health and safety laws?**
- **What do I do in an emergency?**
- **Who can I talk to about health and safety?**

Many employers and supervisors will welcome these questions. However, if they refuse to answer these questions, look for a job elsewhere. You deserve better and your life may very well depend upon it.

ONCE ON THE JOB

***Rights are important.
But sometimes they aren't enough.
Reach out for help***

Even when you know your rights, it isn't always easy to insist upon them. Talk to those who care.

YOUR FAMILY

Don't keep your worries to yourself. Let your family know if you think there is a dangerous situation. After all, they may be more experienced than you are.

YOUR CO-OP TEACHER

If you're on a placement, your teacher needs to know about any health and safety problems you encounter.

YOUR COMMUNITY ADVOCATE

If you belong to a community group, your community representative may be able to help you too.

YOUR UNION REP

If you work in a unionized workplace, talk to your union representative. He or she can help you figure out what to do next.

YOUR WORKER HEALTH AND SAFETY REP

Talk to a worker member of the JHSC or health and safety representative about any questions or concerns you may have regarding your health and safety. They in turn will make recommendations to the employer.



UNITED STEELWORKERS UNION (USW)

The Steelworkers are the largest private sector union in North America. They can be found in many communities across Canada. Visit their web site at www.usw.ca or call the National Office at **416-487-1571** or **1-877-669-8792**.

WORKERS HEALTH & SAFETY CENTRE (WHSC)

The Workers Health & Safety Centre is a unique worker-inspired, worker-driven health and safety training and information organization. Visit their web site at www.whsc.on.ca or call **416-441-1939** or toll free in Ontario at **1-888-869-7950**.

FEDERAL / PROVINCIAL / TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENTS

Government representatives may also be able to help you. If necessary, you can make an anonymous complaint to those who govern health and safety in your province or territory. For a complete listing visit Canada's National Occupational Health and Safety web site at www.canoshweb.org.

***Remember, if it feels unsafe, it likely is.
Talk about it!
Silence can kill.***