



Prevention E-News

Welcome to the OHCOW eNewsletter. Prevention E-News is a quarterly electronic newsletter that brings you regular updates on the **Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW)** efforts to prevent workplace injuries, illnesses and disabilities. Please email bkanduth@ohcow.on.ca to add someone to the Prevention E-News mailing list, or to suggest

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1. Preparing for the heat stress season

It was in a heat wave in 2001 that Kim Douglas Warner died of a heat stroke in a Barrie bakery. As Kim was a member of a newly organized CAW unit, the CAW approached the Clinics asking for a simplified way of preventing heat stress. The "official" way of measuring heat stress (wet bulb globe temperature or WBGT) is too complicated and expensive for most small or medium sized workplaces (it's even challenging for large workplaces). In response the Clinics put together a translation of the WBGT into Humidex – something workers are familiar with. Using the moderate unacclimatized category, a heat stress response plan was put together. View it at: <http://www.ohcow.on.ca/menuweb/hrplan.pdf>

The CAW/GM assembly plant in Oshawa was the first to try out the system and, subsequently, a modified version was negotiated into their collective agreement. Since then many other workplaces have adopted the plan. The general response to the plan is that it simplifies the sometimes contentious issue of when to start adjusting work to account for heat strain. The co-coordinating organization of the Ontario health and safety associations (HSA's) have established a sub-committee that is currently looking into adapting the Humidex plan into an action kit on heat stress for all workplaces in Ontario.

So what does a workplace need to do to be prepared for the heat stress season? First, unfortunately it has been determined from a Coroner's

Inquest, that the WBGT (and/or Humidex) system is not enough to prevent deaths due to heat stroke. The inquest determined it is absolutely imperative that each worker understand what the symptoms of heat stress are and what to do when they experience them. Worker deaths could have been prevented if they had understood what was happening in their bodies and how to deal with heat strain (slowing down and drinking more). To that end the Workers Health & Safety Centre is working on a new training video designed to reach workers explaining what happens to you when you are experiencing heat strain and what to do about it. Joint Health and Safety Committees have a crucial role to play to ensure their workplaces have a training system and a way of determining when adjustments to the work pace and worker fluid intake need to begin. Hopefully the Clinic's Humidex plan can assist workplaces to put heat strain prevention into practice.

For further information contact John Oudyk at the Hamilton clinic:
joudyk@ohcow.on.ca

2. OHCOW & Workers Health and Safety Centre (WHSC) to deliver NEW Hygiene Monitoring Program

They say "Two heads are better than one." With this adage in mind, the WHSC has developed an *Occupational Hygiene Monitoring* program to be delivered in partnership with the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW).

This six-hour program is intended for the first four hours to be facilitated by a Workers Centre-trained instructor, followed by a two-hour presentation from an OHCOW occupational hygienist.

This program is designed for workers, especially joint health and safety committee members, who may be involved with air sampling in their workplace. It discusses the use of hygiene monitoring as a method to detect the presence of hazards, to measure their concentrations, and to evaluate the risk to worker health and safety. Once results are known, appropriate control measures can be implemented.

While workplace health and safety representatives can use hygiene monitoring as an effective tool to help protect worker health and safety, participants will learn it has certain limitations. As such, hygiene monitoring should not be depended on as the definitive means by which workplace health and safety conditions can be improved. The reasons

for this include: unknown effects of long-term exposure to some substances; occupational exposure limits are often set too high to protect workers; exposure limits are often set using unscientific and inappropriate methods; and inaccurate results can stem from faulty equipment or subjective decisions by the hygienist.

Also discussed is the importance of developing an effective strategy for sampling that best evaluates worker exposure to a hazard. The sampling strategy should answer such questions as why is monitoring required, what should be sampled, where to sample, how and when to sample.

In the section addressing sampling techniques, participants look at instrument selection and sampling methods. These depend primarily on the type of substance to be sampled. Further as each Designated Substance Regulation contains a provision for hygiene monitoring and includes specific sampling methods, the program considers these as well.

Finally, the program emphasizes the role of the joint health and safety committee in planning and implementing an effective workplace hygiene monitoring program. It points out the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* allows for specific involvement of the certified member or the worker representative in any workplace hygiene monitoring.

One of two videos accompanies the program. *Matter of Facts* is approximately 27 minutes long and dramatizes a work refusal based on chemical exposure in an industrial workplace. Hygiene monitoring is one of the tools used by joint committee members, in the video, as they investigate concerns. The other video, *Air Apparent* is similar to the first, but the health and safety concern is poor air quality in an office environment.

The OHCOW industrial hygienist's presentation includes a discussion on what is expected from an industrial hygiene report and how to make sense of it. Where time permits the hygienist may demonstrate any available hygiene monitoring equipment.

To book this program, contact [Workers Centre training services](#)

Reprinted with permission from the April 2005- WHSC *Instructor Notes*

3. A guide for setting up an ergonomics committee

OHCOW has produced a new guidebook providing practical information about setting up and running an ergonomics committee. If you are thinking about establishing a committee to deal with ergonomic issues at your workplace this handbook is for you.

[Download a copy](#)

4. Airline workers land ergonomic improvements at Pearson airport

Many pregnant women will work right up until the very last possible. Despite the upheaval in the Canadian airline industry, workers at Toronto's Pearson International airport have nonetheless secured ergonomic improvements which will reduce suffering and injury.

[Read about how OHCOW assisted the airline workers and what the organization could do for you](#)

5. Air Quality and Outdoor Workers

We live in an ocean of air that we depend on in order to live. While air pollution is often invisible and can go unnoticed, it is a health hazard. Outdoor workers need to be especially aware of air pollution.

OHCOW has produced a new brochure on the subject.

[Download a copy](#)