



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 news items.

Winter Edition vol. 1 issue 4. December, 2005

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1. Violence in the Workplace

The recent murder of a nurse in Windsor Ontario has renewed demands for legislative changes that would treat sexual harassment as a workplace hazard. The Windsor Occupational Health Clinic for Ontario Workers recently conducted a public meeting on the subject. Toronto OHCOW has also put together a presentation on the issue.

[View the OHCOW Toronto presentation "Violence in the Workplace"](#)

2. Problems and Limits of Occupational Exposure Limits (OELs) and Threshold Limit Values (TLVs)

Even though most workplaces are in compliance with current OEL's, this does not mean there are little or no hazards due to the exposures among Ontario workers. First of all, not all workers will be protected by complying with OEL's. In fact if one follows the history of OEL's one will notice a gradual decline in most OEL's over the years as more evidence of workers experience symptoms and diseases are established. What is to say that an exposure which may be legal now may in the future be considered associated with an occupational disease once the evidence (i.e. affected workers) has been collected and assessed. This has been

the pattern in the past and there is little reason to suspect it will not continue.

The Ministry of Labour has instituted a policy which recognizes that just because exposure assessments demonstrate compliance is no reason to ignore workers symptoms and health problems associated with such exposures.

The standard of evidence for the basis of some OEL's is extremely poor by general scientific standards; some merely suggesting limits by analogy or based on animal toxicity experiments despite that fact that thousands of workers are exposed daily to such chemicals.

The limits to OELs and TLVs are explored in depth in a presentation made by OHCOW to Workers Health and Safety (WHSC) instructors.

[View presentation](#)

New OELs enacted - changes to styrene and formaldehyde.

[View ontario regulation 607/05](#)

3. Finding Patterns of Illness and Injury- Questions to Ask When Screening for Occupational Disease

While a simple set of questions does not exist for screening all occupational diseases, OHCOW has had experience using simple screening tools for specific occupational diseases (e.g. asthma, hearing loss, vibration white finger, chronic bronchitis, and neuro-psychological symptoms).

OHCOW Hamilton presented "Finding Patterns of Illness and Injury" at a CAW Compensation training session. [View presentation](#)

If you have any questions about the presentation contact [John Oudyk](#)

4. RSI Day 2006- Highlighting the Need for Ergonomic Regulations

February 28th, 2006 marks the 6th annual international RSI (repetitive strain injury) day.

This day is important for raising awareness of work-related musculoskeletal disorders, which account for approximately 50% of all occupational injuries and illnesses.

Injured workers, union activists, health and safety professionals, and many others will gather together at several events across the province and around the world. Along with raising awareness of these injuries, the events will focus on preparing and executing strategies which are aimed towards the prevention of occupational injuries (e.g. ergonomic legislation).

Several of OHCOW's ergonomists and health and safety professionals will be in attendance at these events, often playing a very active role. Check your local union calendars in the New Year for a list of activities in your area.

In the meantime OHCOW has written to Ontario Labour Minister Steve Peters urging that the Provincial Government enact ergonomic regulations similar to those in place in British Columbia and Saskatchewan.

[View OHCOW letter to Labour Minister](#)

5. On-line Survey to Gather Data About Workplace Health Issues for Teachers and Education Workers

The Province's elementary and secondary teacher's federations representing some 150,000 teachers and education workers have asked OHCOW to conduct a survey of all their members.

The purpose of the survey is to address an increase in reported complaints regarding health symptoms and conditions among education workers in Ontario.

The survey will collect valuable information from education workers across Ontario about their health and working conditions. The survey will collect information on worker's backgrounds and working history, current work status, general health, medical history, mental health and work environment concerns.

An internet data collection method will be utilized for the survey. The survey will be housed with OHCOW and be made available to federation members through their websites.

The survey which will be available in both French and English is currently being test piloted with small groups from each of the federations.

The surveying of all the teachers and education workers will take place early in 2006.

The survey should provide valuable information on the health and working conditions of Ontario education workers. The results should also help to identify areas of concerns and possibly lead to further investigation.