



OHCOW

Occupational Health Clinics
for Ontario Workers Inc.

Centres de santé des
travailleurs (ses) de l'Ontario Inc.



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Good afternoon,

We are writing today with an update on our long-running Rubber Workers Project (RWP). You are receiving this letter as a worker or family member who attended one of our Clinics or as someone who has otherwise made contact about this project.

The RWP started following a 2002 event held by the United Steelworkers Union (USW) and OHCOW. Workers talked with OHCOW staff about the hazards of their work in Kitchener's rubber industry and how they had been affected. This led to multiple WSIB claims, many of which were denied.

Following renewed interest, a similar event in 2019, and associated media publicity, the WSIB agreed to review all previously denied claims. If this has been done in your case, you should have received a letter outlining what they did and their decision. We understand that not all the claims have been reviewed. If you have not heard from the WSIB about reconsideration of a past claim, call WSIB directly and request one. Their toll-free number is 1-800-387-0750.

What have we been doing?

Over the years, OHCOW's project staff have continued to collect information about the layout of the plants, the chemicals used in specific areas and jobs, working conditions, Ministry of Labour inspection reports, product information (data) sheets, studies about the hazards and health effects of rubber work and other relevant information.

We've talked to former union leaders and health and safety activists and connected with the members of the "BF Goodrich employees" Facebook page. We are working with the Office of the Worker Advisor (OWA) and the Steelworkers to get information they may have. We have been to several libraries, looking for photographs and documents to assist with cases and to update the website.

The Project database now has 282 workers, many with multiple WSIB claims. It includes information about the worker's health condition(s), job history and claim status. We are creating another database to connect individual claims to relevant studies and other information that can help new and existing claims.

OHCOW staff have reviewed the files we have for WSIB claims involving rubber workers. This chart summarizes what we know about them.

Claim disease	Total # cases	Allowed	Denied	Pending	Unknown	At Appeal
Lung cancer	14	10	4			
Mesothelioma	1	1				
Pleural plaques	2	2				
Bladder cancer	21	13	8			
GI Cancers	48	12	36	1		3
Haematological cancers	20	8	11	1		3
Head & neck cancers	14	1	12		2	3
Kidney cancer	6	2	4			2
Brain cancer	4		4			1
Breast cancer	3		3			2
Skin cancer	13	5	7		1	
Prostate cancer	29	2	27			1
Salivary gland cancer	5		5			3
Parkinson's Disease	4		3	1		
Respiratory disease	27	6	20	1	3	2
Heart disease	4		4			1
Noise induced hearing loss	13	7	1		5	
Totals	228	69	143	4	11	23

Some are grouped by the body system involved. Here's what the terms mean:

- GI (gastrointestinal) cancers: esophageal, stomach, colorectal, pancreatic, liver
- Head and neck cancers: Mouth, throat, voice box, nasal cavity & sinus.
- Hematological (blood-related) cancers: leukemia(s), lymphoma(s), & multiple myeloma
- Respiratory disease: COPD, asthma, interstitial fibrosis

This review is improving our understanding and, in some cases, could lead to finding additional or new evidence to support individual claims.

One reminder, OHCOW does not represent someone who makes a WSIB claim. People may represent themselves or look for others to represent them. We supply medical and scientific information to support a claim and are happy to work with whomever represents you. If you have questions about this, don't hesitate to reach out.

We are contacting some individuals directly to obtain copies of their claim files to determine IF we can add additional support. Unfortunately, the scientific and medical evidence published (or gathered thus far) does not enable us to support ALL claims necessarily. At

this time, we are revisiting those with diseases/cancers we are most likely to be able to further support.

You can help:

Here's how you can help with our review and support for claims:

- If someone from OHCOW contacts you, give permission for OHCOW to obtain a copy of your (or your relative's) WSIB file (whether the claim was accepted or denied).
- tell others that we continue to take RWP (and other occupational disease or injury) cases. Requests for medical or scientific work-relatedness reports for new or denied claims can be made by individuals, their family members, doctors or an advocate. Information and forms are available at: <https://www.ohcow.on.ca/about/referrals/>
- the OWA is willing to provide support for new WSIB Claim submission without waiting for a report (<https://www.owa.gov.on.ca/en/workplace-insurance/filing-claim/>).
- let us know if you have papers, pictures, or materials you could share about working in any Kitchener plant for our database and/or the website. (Such documents can trigger useful memories about working conditions, chemicals used, etc.)
- share the website with co-workers and their families:
<https://www.ohcow.on.ca/occupational-illness/occupational-disease-cluster-investigations/rubber-workers-project/>

How do you find us?

We would be pleased to hear from you by any of these routes, whether it's about a specific claim, a question, or a concern. Here's how you can reach us.

- E-mail: rw@ohcow.on.ca
- Project cell: 705-313-1694
- Project office phone: 613-725-9999
- Project fax: 877-372-2458

Sincerely,



Valerie Wolfe
Executive Director, South Central Region