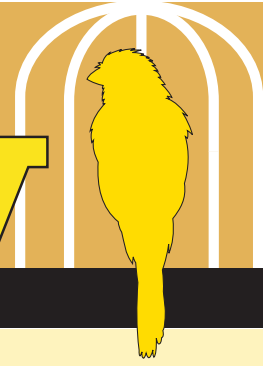


THE canary

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NEWS CUPE WELCOMES ASBESTOS BAN

Victory for health and safety: Government announces ban on asbestos



As we go to print, the federal government has announced a ban on the manufacture, import, export and use of asbestos. This is a major victory for the labour movement and the CUPE health and safety activists who have been on the front line of the fight for decades.

For years, CUPE sounded the alarm about the danger of asbestos in public buildings and the risks to the lives of the workers who build, maintain and work in them, even as government and industry were working hard to keep the asbestos mines in business.

The announcement, made on Dec. 15, follows a private member's bill introduced by NDP Member of Parliament Sheri Benson in

November. Benson's bill sought to amend the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* to legislate a complete ban on asbestos and all products containing asbestos in Canada.

CUPE National President Mark Hancock welcomed the news.

"The ban announced by the federal government is a step in the right direction," said Hancock, "Now it's time for the federal government to work together with the provinces to harmonize regulations and to collaborate on health strategies for asbestos-related diseases."

Hancock noted that there was still more to be done to deal with the asbestos that has already been used in countless workplaces.

"We especially ask the Liberals to show leadership to protect workers who may be exposed to asbestos in workplaces across the country."

The federal government must work with local governments to address safety concerns, said CUPE National Secretary-Treasurer Charles Fleury.

"We encourage the federal government to work with municipalities on asbestos disposal to protect the thousands of CUPE members who work in landfills and other disposal related activities," Fleury said.

Five things the federal government should do to deal with asbestos in existing buildings:

1. Create a pan-Canadian, publicly available registry for all public buildings that contain asbestos
2. Create a federal registry for workers who have been exposed to asbestos
3. Work with provincial governments to develop a comprehensive health response to asbestos-related diseases, including early detection and effective treatment of asbestos diseases
4. Work with provincial governments to change compensation legislation to make it easier for workers diagnosed with asbestos-related diseases to receive the compensation they deserve, and
5. Add chrysotile asbestos to the list of hazardous products under the Rotterdam Convention, a multilateral treaty that promotes shared responsibilities in relation to importation of hazardous chemicals. We should ban asbestos in Canada – and everywhere else.

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Domestic violence is a health and safety issue

Domestic violence is not a new issue.

A study by the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) previously reported on in the Canary found that domestic violence is prevalent across all socio-economic classes, cultures and faith groups. (Read the Canary story at cupe.ca/domestic-violence-workplace-health-and-safety-issue-0)

One thing is common however: women are by far at greatest risk, in both prevalence and potential severity of the abuse.

What is new is a growing recognition amongst unions that we have a role to play in raising awareness, offering support and guiding victims – and possibly helping abusers get proper support.

On the surface, domestic violence may not seem like a workplace problem, or one that unions might be concerned with. However, the CLC survey showed that almost 82 per cent of victims of domestic violence reported that the abuse also negatively affected their work, with many reporting they were distracted, tired, unwell or injured. Most said they did not consider speaking with their union for help.

The job performance of workers who experience domestic violence can suffer as well. Affected job performance can lead to potential discipline or even termination, especially in workplaces that lack appropriate domestic

violence support programs.

Having a job can help a victim leave an abusive relationship. By offering assistance at work, unions and employers can provide more safety and security for an employee in all aspects of their lives, including addressing any work performance problems in a positive way.

Our society's understanding of violence is evolving. For example, it is no longer acceptable that employers blame, fire or punish victims of domestic violence. In fact, employers have an obligation to protect their employees from all forms of violence at work, and can be judged liable under health and safety legislation if they do not.

Workplace responses to domestic violence will be different from other kinds of violence. Employers should work with health and safety committees to develop policies and safety procedures for the worksite, and they must also work with the victim to develop safety plans that do not put the victim at further risk.

As unionists, we can help our members overcome domestic violence. Here are some key concepts to bargain into our collective agreements:

- Dedicated paid leave that can be taken in small chunks without long wait-times for approval
- Flexible work arrangements, including worksite relocation

- Confidential processes that ensure information is shared only on a “need to know” basis

- A process to develop workplace safety plans that ensure the victim's safety and well-being, as well as that of co-workers

- Referral processes for employees to appropriate domestic violence support services

- Appropriate training and paid time off work for designated worker support roles (such as social stewards or women's advocates)

- Protection against adverse action or discrimination

CUPE recognizes we can all help keep members safer by recognizing and responding to domestic violence in our workplaces. This is why we are currently working on developing resources for members for release in 2017.

Perhaps the most important thing that we can do for our members is to build awareness and create better training – for all workers, employers, leaders and representatives. When we recognize and respond to domestic violence in our workplaces, we can help keep members safe.

If you require additional resources or support please contact your CUPE National Servicing Representative or Health and Safety Specialist.

The Canary, CUPE's health and safety newsletter, is published four times a year. Canaries were once used in mines to warn mineworkers about changes in air quality. Since then, the canary has become a symbol of workplace safety, and an important reminder of dangerous working conditions. For more information on the importance of the symbol, check out cupe.ca/canary.

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Please email Troy Winters at health_safety@cupe.ca with corrections, questions or suggestions.

Find past issues online at cupe.ca/canary

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CUPE Canadian Union
of Public Employees



Year of Health and Safety Recap

AS 2016 COMES TO A CLOSE, WE'RE HAPPY TO TAKE A MOMENT TO CELEBRATE THE RESOUNDING SUCCESS OF CUPE'S "YEAR OF HEALTH AND SAFETY."

We were busy this year. We organized over 150 workshops across the country, with 4500 participants taking part. Alongside these educationals, locals have taken steps to recognize their health and safety activists through the presentation of Appreciation Awards.

This raises the overall profile of health and safety – and gives

activists more visibility to do their work. You can nominate someone for an award by visiting cupe.ca. We held eight provincial health and safety conferences across the country, with close to 1200 members attending. These events helped highlight important issues in each division, and provided opportunities for rank and file members to experience the new health and safety learning series.

This year, we also created profiles of members across our sectors, showcasing their efforts to overcome workplace hazards.

Many locals embraced the Year of Health and Safety. CUPE local 3967, health care workers in Regina, booked off around

120 members from their steward and health and safety networks to take the new nine-hour introductory session. And the CUPE Vancouver Island District Council offered a number of the new learning series courses in their educational conference which saw around 125 members attend.

It's been a great year, and we hope the momentum, especially around training and sharing, continues for years to come.

We'll see you in 2017!

For more information, visit cupe.ca/2016-proclaimed-cupes-year-health-and-safety



Members of CUPE 3967, health care workers in Regina, helped us make the Year of Health and Safety a success.



Respiratory Protection

Many CUPE members work in occupations that put them at risk of exposure to respiratory hazards.

These hazards include oxygen-deficient atmospheres, airborne contaminants (including mists, fumes, dusts, or other gasses that may be toxic), or biological contaminants that may harbour infectious diseases. Workplaces that include confined spaces may expose workers to a number of these respiratory hazards at once.

When it comes to controlling these hazards, removing hazards is always better than policies, procedures and protective equipment to mitigate them. The best solution is to control them with permanently engineered solutions, including mechanical ventilation or isolation. Personal protective measures should only be used as a last resort, where the hazard cannot be removed. This approach is called the “hierarchy of controls.”

Where there are respiratory hazards at the worksite, employers must develop and implement a written respiratory protection plan. Employers must also provide adequate employee training, including respiratory hazards identification, proper respirator selection and use, and emergency procedures.

TYPES OF RESPIRATORY PROTECTION

There are a number of respiratory protection products on the market. They do not all offer the same level of protection.

FACEMASKS

Facemasks are not respirators. A facemask is a loose-fitting, disposable (usually single use) device that creates a physical barrier between the mouth and nose of the person wearing the mask and potential contaminants in the immediate environment.

When worn properly, a facemask is only meant to help block large-particle dust or droplets (splashes, sprays or splatter) from reaching your



mouth and nose. Facemasks do not provide complete protection from viruses or bacteria and other airborne contaminants because of the loose fit between the surface of the facemask and your face.

RESPIRATORS

The two main types of respirators are supplied-air respirators (SARs) which provide fresh air from a tank or external source, and air-purifying respirators (APRs) which rely on filters to clean the air before it enters your lungs. They come in different sizes and styles, covering either just the nose and mouth, or the lower half of the face, or the entire face including a shield for the eyes. There are further classifications depending on the work environment and the type of hazards present in the air. Some respirators can be fitted with additional filters that will remove different types of vapours, as well as particulates. The selection of the type of respiratory protection will depend on the hazards present in the work environment.

Read the new CUPE fact sheet on respiratory protection. It reviews the different types of respirators and provides some guidance on the diverse choices available to keep workers safe on the job. Find it at cupe.ca/health-and-safety-fact-sheets

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE! cupe.ca/health-and-safety

• more information on workplace health and safety issues • fact sheets and guidelines on a wide range of topics • the latest health and safety news AND MORE