

BULLETIN

380 died from workplace incidents or occupational disease in 2007, says BC Federation of Labour

June 1, 2008

The Report: June / July 2008 vol.29 num.2



April 28th is the International Day of Mourning for workers who have been killed or injured on the job or who have died from an occupational disease. Official statistics show a terrible toll of death and injury but they only tell part of the story.

In BC in 2007, 139 workers died as a result of a workplace incident including 71 from occupational diseases of which 59 were asbestos related, according to the Workers Compensation Board. The BC Federation of Labour believes the true death toll for 2007 is at least 380.

This discrepancy exists because WCB does not recognize or provide compensation for a significant number of claims, according to HSAs Occupational Health and Safety Officer Marty Lovick.

BC Federation of Labour President Jim Sinclair mourns this epidemic.

"We know these numbers fail to reflect the true number of workers and families profoundly affected by these diseases," he said.

"Too often these diseases go undiagnosed and unreported. As a result, injured workers aren't compensated and employers are not held responsible."

Asbestos related deaths continue to climb and are expected to peak in the next few years.

A 2004 study by the UBC Centre for Health Services and Policy Research found that fewer than half of some occupational diseases are reported. Conservative estimates suggest that 1,500 workers will die from asbestos related disease in the next five years.

Workers in BC are also routinely exposed to hundreds of hazardous chemicals, often with poor training and dangerous exposure limits.

The BC Federation of Labour is calling on the Workers Compensation Board to:

- Establish and maintain a permanent registry of worker exposure to asbestos;
- Implement lower levels of exposure rates for styrene and formaldehyde;
- Approve the implementation of the Workplace Hazardous Material Information System list for reproductive

toxins and sensitizers; and

- Implement an enforcement strategy for the prevention of workplace toxic hazard exposures.

-We need a coherent program to make sure workers know what they're working with and ensure that they are safe on the job," Sinclair added.

-We need to reverse this terrible death toll in BC and ensure that injured workers are fairly compensated and that employers are held responsible." 

Do you have concerns about workplace safety? Contact the Occupational Health and Safety at your workplace, or HSAs OH&S Officer at the HSA office.

Material Safety Data Sheets available online

That new solvent being used in your laboratory: is it safe? What about that disinfectant that gives you a rash? BC's Occupational Health and Safety Agency for Healthcare maintains a web-based Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) database system to address province-wide Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) needs.

OHSAs database of Material Safety Data Sheets allows you to:

- search, view, and print Material Safety Data Sheets
- view product ingredient and health effect information
- request specific Material Safety Data Sheets not already in the system: use the online MSDS Request Form, or contact OHSAs at msdsrequest@ohsah.bc.ca
- provide feedback or additional comments to OHSAs about the MSDS Database

OHSAs updates the database on a regular basis. You can search and view Material Safety Data Sheets online, substantially reducing the amount of time and effort needed to find, establish, and maintain an MSDS library. This information is free and accessible through the OHSAs website.

You can search for the MSDS that you need through the OHSAs website at www.ohsah.bc.ca.

Scroll down and click on the MSDS logo, which will take you to the MSDS search area. Alternatively, click through to Resources > Online Databases > MSDS Database.

The Occupational Health and Safety Agency for Healthcare is a collaboration of safety experts from both unions and employers in BC's health care sector. For more information, contact HSAs Occupational Health and Safety Officer.

Type:

[The Report](#)

- [Print](#)
- [PDF](#)

180 East Columbia
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website
www.hsabc.org

Telephone 604-517-0994
1-800-663-2017