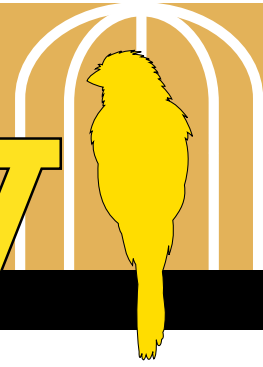


THE canary



FALL 2013

HAZARDS **WORKING ALONE**

CUPE develops working alone survey for members

Many jobs require two people to be done safely. When working alone in jobs where exposure to a serious hazard is part of the working conditions, workers face a greater chance of serious injury. It may mean that a worker will be

denied help or assistance, and as a result may suffer further injury or death.

CUPE's National Health and Safety Committee has identified working alone as a priority issue to improve in our workplaces. To

learn more about how many of our members are working alone, and what additional hazards they face while working alone, the committee has developed a survey that CUPE is encouraging all members to fill out.



Complete our working alone survey:
cupe.ca/working-alone

The survey takes less than five minutes to complete. All answers will remain confidential. The data collected will be used to determine what the committee's next steps should be to help raise awareness and protect CUPE members from the added risk of working alone.

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CUPE contributes to new guidelines for paramedics

Paramedic work is filled with challenging mental, psychological and physical demands. Less than five per cent of paramedics make it



to retirement, leaving because the work became too physically demanding. Those who continue face frequent injuries and high rates of long-term disability.

To help face these challenges, a new program offers advice on how to perform tasks in a variety of situations and work environments that are specific to paramedics.

Guidelines for the Prevention of Back Injuries in Paramedics was developed jointly by CUPE, CUPE 4705, and the Greater City of Sudbury, with support from the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW).

“A serious back injury can end a paramedic’s career, and they are often faced with lifting people in extremely cramped environments, like small bathrooms or shower

stalls,” said Andréane Chenier, CUPE Health and Safety Representative in Sudbury. “The best, most practical way to curb these injuries is through preventative training like this.”

The online program consists of three modules that cover important information on why injuries happen, tips on how paramedics can approach various work situations so that we can prevent injury, and guidelines for safe practices.

Locals interested in the program or seeking more information can contact the OHCOW Sudbury Clinic, 1-877-817-0336, or visit their website: ohcow.on.ca/sudbury

■ **Troy Winters**

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CUPE defines working alone as working for any period of time as the only worker, where assistance is not readily available in the event of injury, ill health or emergency. When working alone, a worker has no ability to call for help if incapacitated by an un-

expected incident or emergency. When working alone, competent supervision and guidance is not present to ensure that appropriate controls are in place and safe procedures followed. Many CUPE members are put at risk because employers have no policy or procedures that recognize and seek

resolutions to the problem of working alone.

National Health and Safety Committee members will be conducting the survey in their regions.

■ **Troy Winters**

FIND the survey online at cupe.ca/working-alone

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

COPE 491

Changes coming to WHMIS as Canada adopts international standard

Chemicals can be a real hazard for workers. People are frequently exposed to chemicals at work, regardless of their age, languages, culture, or literacy level.

That's why, in 2002, the United Nations established a single global system for classifying chemicals – one that can be understood by all workers around the world. The

Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals – or simply GHS – not only standardizes chemical identification, it provides the basis for a comprehensive chemical safety program for countries where one does not already exist.

In Canada, GHS is being integrated with our existing

Workplace Hazardous Materials Identification System (WHMIS). It is expected that the required safety legislation updates will be completed by June 2016. When ready, employers will need to update their WHMIS programs to include the GHS. As before, it will be up to employers to ensure that workers are properly trained on how to read and use the information.

CUPE is encouraging all members who sit on health and safety committees to demand proper comprehensive training for using WHMIS and the GHS, to ensure all members who work with or near chemicals can protect themselves and their coworkers from dangerous exposures.

■ **Troy Winters**



NEWS **MEMBER DEATH**

Quebec lifeguard killed at work

A young lifeguard lost her life at work during a violent storm on July 19, 2013.

Laurie-Ève Cormier, 21, was struck by a large tree branch as she evacuated small children from a public swimming pool in Boucherville, QC. A child, 6, and a woman, 40, were also hurt in the accident, according to media reports. Cormier was a member of CUPE 306.

“Our deepest heartfelt condolences go out to the family and friends of Laurie-Ève,” said Paul Moist, CUPE national president. “To lose someone so young is an awful tragedy. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all those affected by her death.”

Charles Fleury, CUPE national secretary-treasurer, also offered condolences.

“I have a daughter of my own. This kind of tragedy is the greatest fear of any parent, and my thoughts are with them, her family, friends and coworkers. That she died while saving others is something she should be commended for,” said Fleury.

The Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (Quebec's workplace health and safety commission) investigated the incident and determined the cause was accidental—a result of sudden and extreme weather conditions.

■ **Wes Payne**

safe@work

HEALTH AND SAFETY FACTS FROM CUPE



New GHS hazard pictograms

These new pictograms, from the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS), will likely replace existing WHMIS hazard symbols. Workers who use chemical products should familiarize themselves with these symbols. All descriptions below are courtesy of the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. Find more info at cchohs.ca.



SKULL AND CROSSBONES

- Acute toxicity (fatal or toxic)



CORROSION

- Corrosive (skin, eyes, or metals)



EXCLAMATION MARK

- Irritation (skin or eyes)
- Skin sensitization
- Acute toxicity (harmful)
- Hazardous to the Ozone Layer



HEALTH HAZARD

- Carcinogenicity
- Respiratory sensitization
- Reproductive toxicity
- Specific target organ toxicity – single or repeated exposure



EXPLODING BOMB

- Explosive
- Self-reactive (severe)



FLAME

- Flammable
- Self-reactive
- Self-heating
- In contact with water, emits flammable gases



FLAME OVER CIRCLE

- Oxidizer



GAS CYLINDER

- Gas under pressure



ENVIRONMENT

- Hazardous to the aquatic environment (acute or long-term)

WATCH cupe.ca/health-and-safety for additional updates as GHS regulations are implemented.

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