



HEALTH
&
SAFETY

UPDATE

CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

WINTER 2011

TOFINO PARAMEDICS LAID TO REST AT CEREMONY ATTENDED BY THOUSANDS

In a moving ceremony attended by paramedics, firefighters, police officers and other emergency personnel from all over North America, the community of Tofino, British Columbia, said goodbye to Jo-Ann Fuller and Ivan Polivka, two paramedics who were killed in a road accident in the line of duty on October 19.

The ceremony began with a sombre procession with two ambulances dressed in black fabric carrying members of the Fuller and Polivka families, followed by more than 1,000 emergency personnel from across Canada and the United States, including hundreds of B.C. ambulance paramedics.

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B.C. paramedics march in the memorial service procession for Jo-Ann Fuller and Ivan Polivka.

CUPE MEMBER DIES IN STORM

A powerline technician for Westario Power Inc. and member of CUPE 255 was killed on the job in Port Elgin, Ontario on September 21, 2010. Brodie Schwartz, 25, was electrocuted while working on a transformer that was damaged following a storm that passed through the area.

An investigation into his death is ongoing. CUPE 255

and CUPE National are following the investigation closely.

CUPE National President Paul Moist issued a statement on behalf of the union. "Our hearts are full of grief at the fact this young man is leaving a wife and a young daughter behind. No one should be at risk of losing their life because they show up for work," said Moist. "Reducing risks for workers is our constant

battle. We will honour the memory of our CUPE 255 brother with renewed efforts to make our work safer."

Schwartz was born in Kitchener and lived near the town of Elmwood, about 50 kilometres southeast of Port Elgin.

PARAMEDICS (CONT.)

Hundreds of Tofino residents lined the streets and silently watched the procession go by.

CUPE national president Paul Moist marched in the procession, along with CUPE 873 president John Strohmaier, CUPE BC president Barry O'Neill, secretary-treasurer Mark Hancock and general vice-president Paul Faoro.

"I know I speak for every CUPE member across the country when I say our hearts go out to the Fuller and Polivka families," said Moist. "This is the first time I have been to Tofino, but it took almost no time at all here to see how close a community it is, and to see how important Jo-Ann and Ivan were to so many."

CUPE was also represented by regional director Robin Jones, a former paramedic himself. Hospital Employees' Union president Ken Robinson attended to show solidarity with the families, the community and paramedics.

John Strohmaier, president of the Ambulance Paramedics of BC, CUPE 873, gave a moving tribute to Fuller and Polivka, referring often to the more than 37 years' experience between the two.

Strohmaier also reflected on the sad fact that in his 10 years as president of the paramedics' union this was the third memorial for paramedics killed on the job. "Never again," he said. "We must ensure we never have to say goodbye to someone like this again."

An investigation to determine the cause of the accident is ongoing.

PRIVATE COMPANY FACING CRIMINAL NEGLIGENCE CHARGES FOLLOWING CITY WORKER FATALITY



A private company is facing criminal charges over an incident that caused the death of a CUPE member.

Millennium Crane Rentals Ltd., the crane operator and the crane owner each face charges of criminal negligence causing death. Court dates were scheduled in Sault Ste. Marie for January 24.

According to the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, this is one of just four cases in which a company has been charged under the Criminal Code since Bill C-45 became law in 2004.

The bill sets out rules on criminal liability for organizations and their representatives. It establishes that everyone with authority to direct another person's work has a responsibility, within reason, to prevent bodily harm to those they direct.

"We're pleased to see the Sault Ste. Marie police and the Ministry of Labour have taken the time to thoroughly investigate the incident, and we'll be paying

close attention to this case" said CUPE National President Paul Moist.

"We're hopeful that regardless of the outcome, employers will get the message that all levels of management bear a responsibility in making sure workers are protected on the jobsite, so that we can avoid terrible tragedies like this."

The criminal charges stem from the April 16, 2009 death of municipal worker James Vecchio, who was crushed when a crane fell into an excavated hole he was working in at the Fifth Line Landfill.

Reports in the Sault Star suggest that the crane, which was loading concrete into the hole where Vecchio and another municipal employee were doing sewer work, was repositioning and backed up too far, falling into the hole and pinning Vecchio.

Vecchio, a 34-year-old father of two, was rushed to hospital after firefighters extracted him, but he was pronounced dead at the hospital. The other worker was unharmed.

Millennium Crane Rentals, which was under contract with the city, also faces five charges under the Occupational Health and Safety Act related to the condition of the crane and the qualifications of the operator. A court date for those charges was set for January 10.

BAN ASBESTOS CANADA OFFERS SUPPORT TO ASIA SOLIDARITY DELEGATION



The Canadian Union of Public Employees joined several other unions in issuing this statement calling for a ban on Canadian exports of asbestos.

A delegation from Asia representing asbestos victims, trade unions and health organizations was in Ottawa December 9 calling for the ban of all Canadian exports of asbestos.

Ban Asbestos Canada and its supporting organizations which represent workers from across Canada, stands in full solidarity with our sisters and brothers from the Asia Solidarity Delegation to Canada.

We call on the Canadian government to end all exports of asbestos to south Asia, Mexico, and the global south. We condemn efforts to expand and reopen the Jeffrey mine in Quebec. Tonnes of exported Quebec asbestos will kill tens of thousands of workers around the world.

We call on Premier Charest of Quebec to reject the asbestos industry demands for \$58 million of Quebec taxpayer funds to expand their deadly trade.

Support for such a project is indefensible and flies in the face of Quebecers' sense of social justice and environmental sustainability.

We urge you instead to commit these public funds towards economic development and transition the affected mining communities of Quebec.

On behalf of Ban Asbestos Canada,

Anthony Pizzino,
Canadian Union of Public Employees

Laura Lozanski,
Canadian Association of University Teachers

Larry Stoffman,
United Food and Commercial Workers Canada

Sari Sairanen,
Canadian Auto Workers

Wayne Peppard,
British Columbia & Yukon Building and Construction Trades Council

Dennis St. Jean,
Public Service Alliance of Canada

H&S CONFERENCE DELEGATES FOCUS ON RESPECTFUL WORKPLACES

Delegates focused on the theme "Respectful Workplaces – we all have a role in health and safety" at CUPE BC's Occupational Health and Safety Conference held from October 14 to 16 in Vancouver.

Mike Jackson, chair of the B.C. H&S committee introduced panelists and welcomed delegates to the opening plenary session and First Nations Elder Rose Point of the Musqueam Nation shared a blessing. CUPE BC president Barry O'Neill told delegates that although we have made gains in health and safety at the workplace, we need a Code of Practice

to ensure that all workers enjoy their right to come home safely at the end of the day.

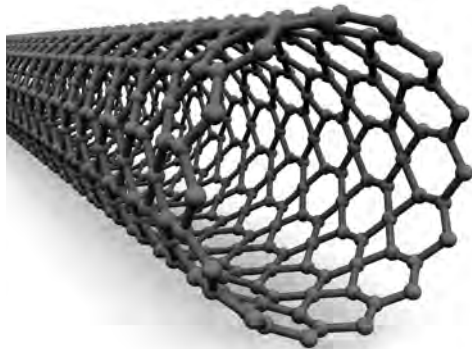
"We've achieved joint occupational health and safety committees through law. But that's the very start," said O'Neill. "We can make a difference. If you go to an employer and say something isn't safe, you never know – you could have saved a life."

The first day featured a presentation titled "The bully, the bullied and the bystander," covering how bullying dehumanizes the target.

Day two featured a panel discussion on three different aspects of bullying: how different forms of bullying and harassment in the workplace can lead to serious misconduct and discipline, criminal aspects of bullying, and a comparison of bullying and conflict.

For the remainder of the conference, delegates participated in two of six workshops offered. The four-hour long workshops were Harassment and Compensation; Workplace Violence; Recognizing Mental Illness in the Workplace; Taking Back our Joint Committees; Occupational Diseases; and Ergonomics.

YOU ASKED US... H&S ISSUES WITH NANOTECHNOLOGY



An artistic rendering of a carbon nanotube, measuring 0.000000001m.

What is nanotechnology?

Nanotechnology is the development of structures at the 'nano' scale. A nanometer is 0.000000001m (human hair is 0.0001m). Nanotechnology can be found in a large number of industrial and consumer items that may be creeping into our workplace.

Nanoparticles are now used in everything from cosmetics and sunscreen to paint and even vitamins. Other nanotechnologies can be found in cleaners, food packaging, clothing, sprays, and even pool chemicals. The technology will likely soon affect the production of almost everything you come into contact with.

How common is it?

Nanotechnology is in its infancy, but it is evolving rapidly. There are currently over 50 scientific research journals dedicated to the topic, and over 800 nano-enhanced products on the market already. There were \$50 billion dollars worth of nanotech products sold in 2006. Research into new opportunities for optics, electronics, medical imaging and treatment technologies as well as

production of advanced materials with new and unique properties are well under way.

So what's the problem?

Many substances act differently when they are produced as nanomaterials. What is normally safe for humans could cause significant health impacts when manufactured on the nano-scale. For example, normal silver is well-understood in modern science. We generally know when and where it's safe and appropriate to use. But nano-sized silver particles are a different story. They inhibit the growth of bacteria. That's a great quality for making odour-resistant socks and other products, but there are legitimate concerns about nanosilver inhibiting the production of good bacteria as well. Plus, because nanoparticles are so small it's hard to know where they could wind up. Put simply, the medical effects of inhaling or ingesting different kinds of nanoparticles are not yet understood.

The biggest concern for workers is that the rapid advancement of nanotechnologies has outpaced government's ability to

control and regulate it. There are no regulations to protect workers exposed to potentially harmful byproducts of production. There are no controls for nanopollution, caused by the breakdown of products containing nanoparticles in our landfills. Currently, less than five per cent of the research funds going into nanotechnology are used to determine the impact of nanoparticles on the health of humans, animals and the environment.

What should be done?

CUPE is calling on both government and industry to establish a clear, top-down research strategy for new nanotechnology-enhanced products. The creation of a federal advisory committee that allows transparent input from labour groups and publicly funded research would help determine what environmental and health impacts are caused by new nano-sized particles. Companies must set a base level of research funds dedicated to the health and safety of the products being developed. They need to be held legally responsible if their new products harm workers, end-users or the environment.

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