



Occupational health and safety needs you

November 24, 2014

HSA REPORT, DECEMBER 2014

By David Durning, HSA Senior OHS Officer

- Are you concerned about health and safety in your workplace?
- Do you want to be directly involved in making your workplace safer for you and your co-workers?
- Do you want to participate in union and employer sponsored training to learn about making your workplace safer?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, there may be opportunities for you to join your site's joint health and safety committee. We're always on the lookout for HSA members interested in taking action on workplace health and safety.

Joint occupational health and safety (JOHS) committees are made up of employer and union representatives and cover all workplace areas and departments. HSA is involved in more than 300 such committees with members acting either as representatives or alternates. Most sites typically have one JOHS committee, but larger facilities may have several to ensure all areas of the workplace are covered. With so many committees, there are often spots to fill and we could use your help.

Under the B.C. Workers' Compensation Act, JOHS committees have the mandate to identify and resolve workplace health and safety problems. Although your employer is ultimately responsible for ensuring workplace safety, the JOHS committee makes recommendations to the employer for corrective actions when gaps are identified. If there is uncertainty in how to resolve issues, the JOHS committee may call upon WorkSafeBC inspectors to help out. The unions' labour relations officers and OHS officer are also available to assist committees in resolving issues.

Besides regular monthly meetings of the JOHS committee, representatives are involved in:

- ensuring regular workplace hazard inspections are carried out;
- making sure that accidents and injuries are properly reported and investigated;
- investigating health and safety complaints or refusals to work due to real or perceived hazards.

As a union representative on a joint health and safety committee, it's necessary to have the knowledge required to carry out duties effectively. In addition to training provided by the employer, HSA regularly sponsors training sessions for OHS stewards and JOHS committee representatives.

One-day basic OHS courses are scheduled for February 23, March 2, 16 and 30, 2015. All of these will be held in the new HSA office and training centre at 180 East Columbia Street in New Westminster.

Other basic and advanced OHS courses will be scheduled throughout the year. Self-registration is available through the HSA website or you may call Karin at 604-439-0994 for more information about training opportunities.

Health care workplaces contain many hazards. Through the dedicated efforts of joint occupational health and safety committee representatives, we are better equipped to analyze factors that contribute to injuries and disabling diseases and to ensure our employers comply with their legal requirements to provide a safe workplace.

If you are interested in becoming part of the health and safety team in your workplace - either as a JOHS committee representative or as an alternate - please indicate your interest to your chief steward, your HSA

labour relations office or to David Durning, HSA's senior OHS labour relations officer, at ddurning@hsabc.org or 604-439-0994/1-800-663-2017. After January 5 call 604-517-0994.

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