

CLOSE TO HOME



*Where workplace
injury and death
can strike.*

*Why using your
rights matters.*

UNITED STEELWORKERS
USW
MÉTALLOS

**Workers Health
& Safety Centre**

Health and safety concerns — a world away?

The world watched in horror after the eight-storey Rana Plaza building, which housed five garment factories near Bangladesh's capital, collapsed and killed 1,127 workers. Another 300 workers were never found or identified. The April 24, 2013 disaster is one of the deadliest in the garment industry's history.

Investigations found that Rana Plaza was a disaster in waiting. The day before the tragedy, cracks appeared in the building, the structure shaking enough that many workers fled. An engineer who inspected the building warned that it was unsafe. Factory bosses ignored the warning and ordered staff back to work the next

morning. As a generator was started, the building shook, buckled and collapsed trapping or killing the workers inside.

Many companies who manufacture goods overseas are now pressuring the Bangladeshi government to improve working conditions for these workers. Meantime, many other activists are pressuring companies to take responsibility for the poor working conditions. While North Americans work to win rights and better conditions for these workers, we can't forget that workplace health and safety tragedies hit close to home too.

Health and safety concerns — closer than we think.

A year before the Bangladeshi disaster, part of the rooftop garage of an Elliot Lake, Ontario shopping mall caved in, killing two people and injuring several others. Lucie Aylwin was working at the mall's second floor lottery kiosk, across from the food court, when a giant concrete slab plummeted from the parking lot above,

smashing the kiosk and slicing through the second floor. Aylwin survived the initial collapse but later died when emergency workers, whose lives were also at risk, could not rescue her in time. Like the tragedy in Bangladesh, faulty construction and unheeded warning signs are the suspected causes of the cave-in.

It can happen to you too!

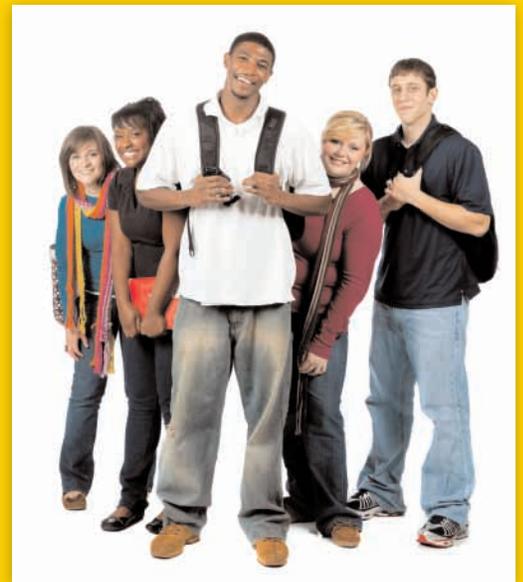
Stephen Nicholson, a 19-year-old from Winnipeg, Manitoba, suffered third-degree burns to 85 per cent of his body, from an explosion inside a paint booth exhaust vent. His employer was prosecuted under the province's health and safety laws.

Nick Perry, a 19-year-old from Victoria, British Columbia, endured 13 ½ hours of surgery to reconstruct his spine and graft his ribs into his back after being hit by a load of lumber at the lumberyard where he was a forklift truck operator. The 1,200 kilogram load slid off the forks of the truck when Nick attempted to adjust it.

Brigitte Serre, a 17-year-old from Montreal, Quebec was found slain in a back room of a gas station where she had worked alone on her first overnight shift. One of the murder suspects was a former employee who knew Brigitte.

Terri Lynn Stewart, a 19-year-old from Moncton, New Brunswick was flagging traffic on a construction site. She had successfully stopped traffic when a vehicle "rear-ended" another, causing the stopped vehicle to hit and kill her.

These incidents are not uncommon and these jobs are not unfamiliar to many young workers. Uncontrolled hazards can injure or kill you in all types of workplaces — in offices, stores and fast-food restaurants, in a manufacturing plant, a mine or logging camp. Many hazardous exposures you experience today can also affect your health in years to come.



SO WE CAN'T BE COMPLACENT...
WE NEED TO EXERCISE HARD WON RIGHTS...
TO PREVENT WORKPLACE TRAGEDIES CLOSE TO HOME.

Unlike workers in other jurisdictions, Canadians have hard-won health and safety laws and worker rights designed to help ensure we return home healthy and whole. As the old saying goes though, we need to 'use them or lose them'.

It's the Law

Federal, provincial and territorial occupational health and safety laws set out several legal rights and responsibilities for workers, their representatives and employers. However, employers have the ultimate responsibility to take every precaution reasonable to ensure the workplace is healthy and safe.

Each and every worker in Canada has three basic rights.

THE RIGHT TO KNOW: As a worker, you have the legal right to know about all hazards and dangers in your workplace and how they can affect you, including unsafe machinery or hazardous working conditions (like a greasy, slippery floor). An important way to exercise your right to know is through **WHMIS** (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System). This Canada-wide system provides information to users of hazardous materials by means of: warning labels on containers, Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), and worker training on how to use this information.

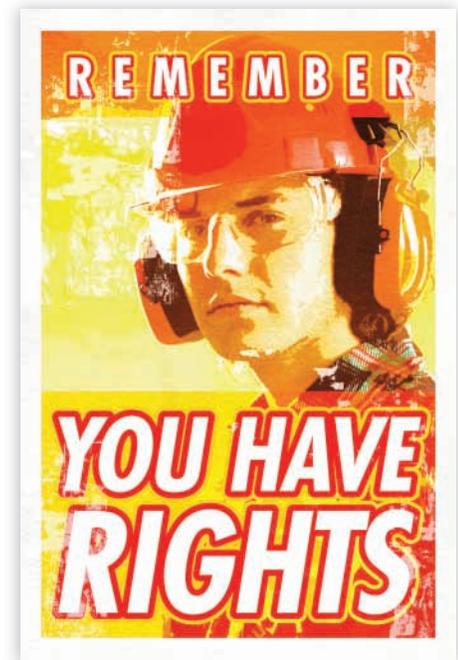
WHMIS sets out six classes of chemicals: compressed gas; flammable and combustible material; oxidizing material; poisonous and infectious material; corrosive material; and dangerously reactive material. Each class has an identifying hazard symbol. As a worker you must be trained on procedures for safe handling, storage and disposal of the hazardous materials used or made in the workplace and emergency procedures to follow for all situations involving hazardous materials.

THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE: Workers chosen by other workers, or where there is a union in the workplace by their union, have the right to participate as a worker member of the joint health and safety committee (JHSC) or worker health and safety representative. The joint committee is made up of an equal number of worker and employer representatives. They have the right to inspect the workplace, identify hazards and make recommendations to the employer about training and control measures to name a few. By law, the employer must respond to the joint committee's recommendations within a specified time.

You don't have to be a member of the joint health and safety committee to exercise your right to participate. There are many ways to help. You can create awareness by helping to organize a Day of Mourning ceremony or Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) Awareness Day event in your school, workplace or community. You can also submit health and safety suggestions to the joint committee. The choice is yours. Just remember participation is a good form of exercise.

THE RIGHT TO REFUSE: Perhaps the most important tool to ensure your health and safety is your worker right to refuse unsafe work you believe could endanger you. By law, you cannot be fired for refusing unsafe work, but if you refuse to work, you must follow specific procedures. These procedures can be found on special "work refusal" cards provided by the Steelworkers union or by visiting the websites of the Steelworkers, Workers Health & Safety Centre or Ministry of Labour in your province or territory.

In several Canadian jurisdictions, the right to refuse includes workplace violence. Workers in Quebec, Saskatchewan and Manitoba also have legal protection from psychological harassment.



Rights are important. But sometimes they aren't enough.

STARTING A NEW JOB?

Ensuring proper supervision

When you start a new job you need to ask about more than just the hours of work and rate of pay. You also need to know what supervision you will get on the job. By law, employers must appoint competent people as supervisors who must be trained in the work, knowledgeable about potential or actual workplace dangers and familiar with the law. Like employers, supervisors must take every reasonable precaution to protect worker health and safety.

**“When can you start?” ...
“As soon as you train me.”**

You also need to ask your new employer the following:

- *What are the hazards on the job?*
- *How will you protect me from these hazards?*
- *What is your policy on workplace violence and harassment?*
- *Will I get training for the job I'm going to do?*
- *Will I get health and safety training?*
- *What do I do in an emergency?*
- *Who can I talk to about health and safety?*

If your prospective employer refuses to answer these questions, look for a job elsewhere. You deserve better.



Who can you talk to? Ask someone who cares.

If you have questions about health and safety in your workplace, talk to those who know:

YOUR PARENTS: Don't keep your worries to yourself. Let your family know if you think there is a dangerous situation. After all, they are likely more experienced than you are.

YOUR SUPERVISOR: Your supervisor has a duty to tell you about any potential hazards or dangerous situations in the workplace. Many employers want a safe and healthy workplace and will welcome your questions.

YOUR CO-OP TEACHER: If you're on a placement, your teacher needs to know about any health and safety problems you encounter.

YOUR UNION REPRESENTATIVE: If you work in a unionized workplace, talk to your union representative. He or she can tell you what to do next.

THE JOINT HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE (JHSC): Talk to a worker member of the joint health and safety committee or health and safety representative

about any questions or concerns you may have regarding your health and safety. They in turn will make recommendations to the employer.

UNITED STEELWORKERS UNION (USW):

The Steelworkers are the largest private sector union in North America. They can be found in many communities across Canada. Visit their website at www.usw.ca or call the National Office at **1-877-669-8792**.

WORKERS HEALTH & SAFETY CENTRE

(WHSC): The Workers Health & Safety Centre is a unique worker-inspired, worker-driven health and safety training and information organization. Visit their website at www.whsc.on.ca or call **416-441-1939** or toll free in Ontario at **1-888-869-7950**.

FEDERAL / PROVINCIAL / TERRITORIAL

GOVERNMENTS: Government representatives may also be able to help you. If necessary, you can make an anonymous complaint to those who govern health and safety in your province or territory. For a complete listing visit Canada's National Occupational Health and Safety website at www.canoshweb.org.

Also remember, once you're on the job, if it feels unsafe, talk about it! Silence can kill.

APRIL 28 - NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

WORKING TOGETHER, MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Young Canadian workers are not the only workers who suffer. In Canada, four workers are killed every working day of the year. Thousands more die from diseases caused by toxic workplace exposures. Many more are permanently disabled. Hundreds of thousands are temporarily unable to work because of workplace injuries.

To help raise public awareness of this suffering the Steelworkers Union joins the Workers Health & Safety Centre, other labour organizations, community groups and citizens to observe the National Day of Mourning in communities across North America and around the world.

We also believe in the potential power of youth to help make a world of difference. This is why every year we visit high schools across Canada (particularly throughout the month of April), to talk to students about hazards and rights on the job. Together, we are working to make work, work for you.



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