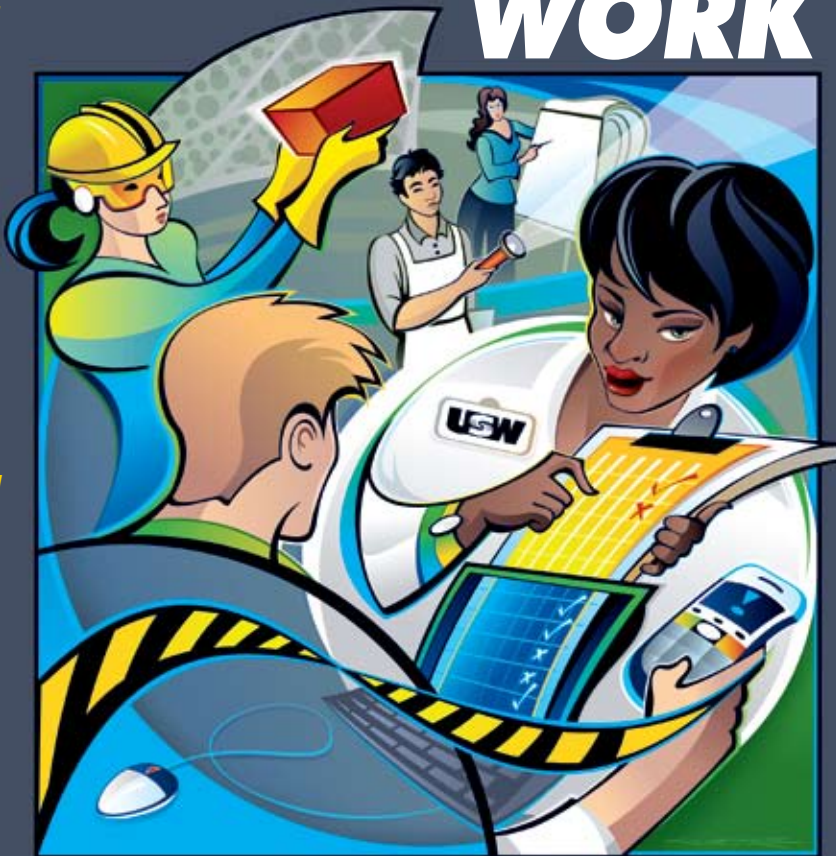


*Your job  
— if it feels unsafe,  
it likely is.*

# MAKING IT WORK

*A healthy and  
safe workplace  
is your right.  
Together,  
we can make work,  
work for you.*



UNITED STEELWORKERS  
**USW**  
MÉTALLOS

Workers Health  
& Safety Centre

## 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 for every working day of the year. Thousands of others die from diseases caused by exposures to toxic substances in their workplaces. Thousands 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 which takes place in communities across North America and indeed the world.

We also understand the potential power of youth to help make a world of difference. This is why each and 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.

UNITED STEELWORKERS  
**USW**  
MÉTALLOS

Workers Health  
& Safety Centre

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# ***It could happen to you ...***

## **LIFE-ALTERING**

**Lisa Boone**, a 19-year-old from Oakville, Ontario, suffered a large gash on her arm as a result of slipping on a water-coated floor in a restaurant kitchen where she was employed. After several stitches and an initial healing period, it became clear she would require plastic surgery. Still, Lisa counts herself lucky, "I have been so much more fortunate than most other injured workers."

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

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

## **LIFE-ENDING**

**Brigitte Serre**, a 17-year-old from Montreal, Quebec was found slain in a back room of a gas station where she was working alone on her first overnight shift. One of the suspects in the murder 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 was "rear-ended" by another vehicle, causing the stopped vehicle to hit and kill her.

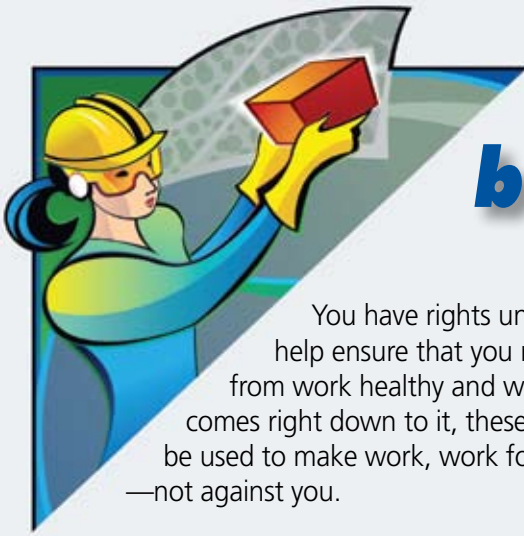
**Bob Wilson** was 17 and 18 years-old when he worked two summers stripping asbestos-covered boilers at a rubber plant in Kitchener, Ontario. Thirty years later he was diagnosed with mesothelioma (a rare cancer caused by exposure to asbestos fibres) and died two weeks after his 51<sup>st</sup> birthday.



## **Workplace hazards threaten your safety and health**

What happened to these young workers is not uncommon. Many young workers find themselves in similar situations. 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.

**For more stories of workplace tragedies visit [www.youngworkerquilt.ca](http://www.youngworkerquilt.ca).**



## But it doesn't have to be this way...

You have rights under the law to help ensure that you return home from work healthy and whole. When it comes right down to it, these rights can be used to make work, work for you—not against you.

### 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, it is the employer who has the ultimate responsibility to take every precaution reasonable to ensure the workplace is healthy and safe.

### YOU'VE GOT RIGHTS

Each and every worker in Canada has three basic rights.

1) **The Right to Know:** As a worker, you have the legal right to know about all hazards and dangers in your workplace and how these hazards can affect you, including unsafe machinery, or hazardous working conditions (like a greasy, slippery floor). But one of the more important ways your right to know is ensured 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.

Under WHMIS there are eight classes of hazards. They are: compressed gas; flammable and combustible material; oxidizing material; material causing immediate and serious toxic effects; materials causing other toxic effects; biohazardous infectious material; corrosive material; and dangerously reactive material. Each of the classes is represented by its own hazard symbol. As a worker you must receive training that includes procedures for safe handling, storage and disposal of the hazardous materials used or produced in the workplace and emergency procedures you should follow for all situations involving hazardous materials.

2) **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 period of time.

You don't have to be a member of the joint health and safety committee though in order to exercise your right to participate. There are so 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.

3) **The Right to Refuse:** Perhaps the most important way you can make health and safety work for you is the right you have as a worker to refuse unsafe work you believe could endanger you. According to the law you cannot be fired for refusing unsafe work, but if you refuse to work, there are specific procedures you must follow. 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 situations. Workers in Quebec, Saskatchewan and Manitoba have also won legal protection from psychological harassment. While workers in British Columbia and Manitoba have won legal protection against working alone, albeit Manitoba's is more limited only prohibiting workers under 18 from working between 11 pm and 6 am.

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

# Starting a new job? Let's make work, work for you.

## 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 need to know among other things, what type (if any) supervision you will get on the job. According to the law employers must appoint competent people as supervisors. Competent people are trained in the work, knowledgeable about potential or actual dangers in the workplace, and familiar with the law. Like employers, supervisors must take "every reasonable precaution" to protect the health and safety of workers.

## "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.

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

## 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.
- **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):** You can 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](http://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](http://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](http://www.canoshweb.org).

