



New WorkSafeBC regulations important for HEU members

Working alone, disclosure of potentially violent clients addressed in regulation changes

Working alone and combating violence in the workplace are concerns for many workers in British Columbia, and definitely for HEU members. It's important that health and community social services workers – and their employers – know about changes to WorkSafeBC regulations governing these areas so that our workplaces can be made safer.

“Working alone” will be safer with regulation changes

Motivated by the killing of Maple Ridge gas attendant Grant Depatie in 2005, there are new regulations protecting employees who work alone or in isolation – and these pertain to all B.C. workers and all sectors.

Now, new language defines “to work alone or in isolation” as working in circumstances where assistance would not be readily available to the worker in case of emergency or in case the worker is injured or in ill health.

For HEU members who work alone, the combination of the new and current regulations means that the employer, after taking every practicable step to minimize risks(s), must tell the worker what hazards remain. And the employer must develop a written procedure in consultation with the worker and the Joint Occupational Health and Safety (JOHS) committee.

While this will not eliminate working alone, particularly in the community health and community social services sectors, we can use these changes to encourage employers to minimize the practice.

Workers will be better informed about potentially violent situations

Health care workers know that the facilities where they work are among the most dangerous job sites in the province, especially when it comes to incidents of abuse and violence.

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Under a new regulation, disclosure of workplace hazards, including potential violence, is now mandatory. In health care, that means that if a patient, resident or client is potentially abusive or violent, the employer must tell the worker. For HEU members, disclosure will enable them to care for and support their patients, residents and clients while looking after themselves, too.

There are several other WorkSafeBC regulation changes dealing with “new” and “young” workers, chemical and biological agents, and fume hoods in laboratories that went into effect on or before February 1, 2008.

To read more about all the changes, check out the WorkSafeBC website at www.worksafebc.ca.

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