



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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VIHA's cleaning contractor fails second round of WCB health and safety inspections

WorkSafeBC (WCB) has re-issued five orders against Compass Group, after follow-up inspections at Nanaimo Regional General Hospital (NRGH) revealed the British corporation failed to comply with earlier citations.

According to the WCB report, Compass continues to perform incomplete accident investigations, has failed to offer necessary health and safety training, and is not providing adequate personal protective equipment for workers exposed to corrosive cleaning chemicals or other hazards.

HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy says these latest citations present irrefutable evidence that the health authority needs to take active responsibility for their contractor's health and safety record.

"How many more times will Compass be reprimanded before VIHA steps in to protect health care workers and patients?" says Darcy. "This latest round of orders makes it clear that VIHA cannot absolve itself of responsibility to operate safe, clean hospitals for patients, visitors and workers.

"In an era of superbugs, these poor health and safety practices put everyone who uses our hospitals at risk."

The WCB orders were issued on April 8 for violations at NRGH. The findings include:

- Failure to provide health and safety training to members of the occupational health and safety committee, as well as at least one manager who had been in the position for close to a year.
- Failure to include worker representatives in accident investigations. The inspector also noted in one case that the manager did not investigate the cause of a chemical accident.
- Failure to provide appropriate protective equipment such as respirators, goggles, chemical gloves and boots, and/or failure to ensure that this equipment is correctly used, cleaned, inspected, maintained and repaired.
- Failure to ensure that portable eyewash stations are available on cleaning carts in an environment where housekeepers regularly use high-risk corrosive chemicals.
- Failure to investigate ongoing concerns related to the safe use of Virox 5 and other cleaning chemicals, including the effectiveness of personal protective equipment and appropriate ventilation.

WCB had issued 16 separate orders against VIHA's contractor over six months in 2008, for contravening health and safety laws.

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*The orders can be found in electronic format attached to this release at www.heu.org.
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