



Newsletter

WCB's revised needlestick regulation 'a step forward'

HEU continues campaign for stronger protections

A new regulation on needlestick injuries may provide more protection for health care workers across B.C.

In its amended regulation, WorkSafeBC – formerly the Workers' Compensation Board – agreed that health care workers must have access to safety-engineered needles – retractable or self-sheathing needles – or needleless devices to protect staff from unnecessary injuries.

“The new regulation compels employers to use the safest technology available rather than leaving it up to the employer's discretion, which often means implementing cost-saving measures rather than providing the best methods of protection,” says Ana Rahmat, HEU's health and safety representative.

The new regulation – effective January 2007 – will be phased in over a one-year period.

In a year-long campaign, HEU and other unions have demanded amendments for WCB's sharps regulation to include all needles and medical sharps devices.

“While the revised regulation requires employers to use the safest devices, it is still limited to hollow-bore needles which fails to extend protection to all procedures using needles and sharps,” says Rahmat.

“This means front-line workers are still vulnerable to sharps injuries and at risk of exposure to blood-borne diseases such as hepatitis or HIV.”

HEU will continue to advocate for stronger regulations that provide full protection to health care workers. Public hearings on this issue are expected to occur this fall. Check the HEU website for updates.

September 14, 2006

