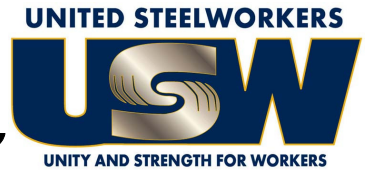


SafeTalk



2010—A Fatality Free Year For USW Wood Workers

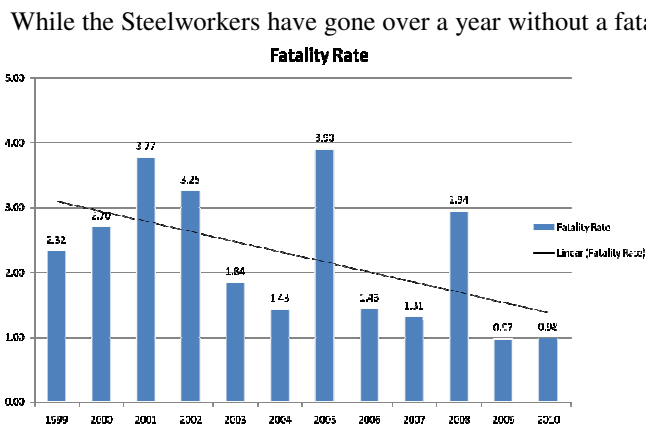


USW Wood Council Chair Bob Matters said; “safety has been at the forefront of everything we do”.

It finally looks like all the hard work that many of us are putting into forest-sector health and safety is starting to pay off. For instance, not one United Steelworkers member working in the forest industry in Canada was killed during 2010 (see graph right).

Steelworkers Wood Council chair Bob Matters can’t remember a year when there were no Steelworker (or before that, IWA) member killed on the job in the forest sector.

In fact, says Matters, “we’re approaching two years without a fatality. And if we can go two years then why can’t we go 20?” He adds: “since the disastrous year 2005 when eleven forest industry Steelworker members were killed across Canada, safety has been at the forefront of everything we do.”



esting Fatalities per 10 million cubic metres of wood harvested
2010 harvest is based on projected volume of 61 million cubic metres

Information Provided courtesy of WorkSafeBC and MoFR

Coming Events

Feb. 7-9 Saskatchewan Safety Council Seminar, Regina Sask.

Feb. 28 International RSI Awareness Day

April 17-20 USW National HS&E Conference, Vancouver BC

Steelworker Arrested by Mexican Border Guards

On Jan. 24, a customs officer stopped USW Sub-District Director Manny Armenta’s car, which is leased by the union, accusing him of driving a stolen vehicle. He presented documentation, but to no avail. Armenta was arrested, detained overnight and released early Jan. 25 after posting a bond of 80,000 pesos (about \$7,750).

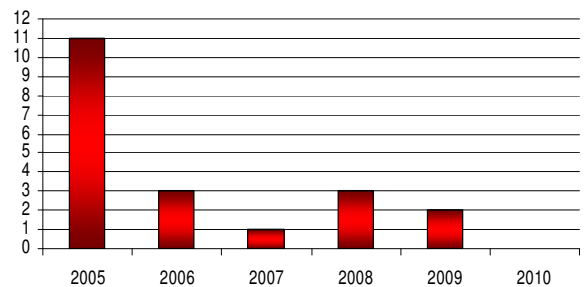
The car was impounded and has not been returned. His wallet was taken from him in the arrest, but later returned, minus \$700 in cash, according to the union.

The USW is helping the members of Los Mineros, who have been on strike since July 2007 at Grupo Mexico’s Cananea mine, address dangerous safety conditions.

USW President Leo Gerard said in a statement:

“This outrageous treatment by Mexican federal authorities shows the extent of the government’s corruption. We demand that these bogus charges be dropped with the immediate return of the union property along with what belongs to Manny.”

USW Canadian Forest Industry Members Fatalities 2005-2010



While the Steelworkers have gone over a year without a fatality we are also seeing some pretty encouraging numbers from the rest of the BC forest industry. For instance there have been six fatalities in each of the last two years, a far cry from five years ago when 43 forest workers were killed in the BC forest industry alone. While it’s true the amount of activity has declined in recent years, we’ve noticed that the fatality ratio to annual cut has also been reduced substantially (see graph left).

Matters added; “In recent contract negotiations, health and safety issues have been near the top of our list”, adding that “we are giving our health and safety committees more support than ever before.” As Matters says, why not 20 years without a fatal accident? Maybe better yet, why not totally eliminate serious injuries and fatalities in the forest industry?

So in moving forward when we come across a hazardous condition, we must make every attempt to eliminate it if possible and if not control it in the safest possible way. And let’s all think about what hazards are in our workplaces and work to eliminate them every day.

HAZARD ALERT

Injury Type : Neck sprain/strain (worker); undetermined injuries (2 non-workers)

Core Activity : Log hauling

As a loaded logging truck rounded a corner, it rolled onto its side and spilled its load. An oncoming passenger vehicle swerved into the ditch to avoid the truck. The truck subsequently slid into the ditch and struck the passenger vehicle. The worker and two passengers of the other vehicle (non-workers) were injured.

Injury Type : Exposure to ammonia (4 workers)

Core Activity : Concrete manufacture

An ammonia release occurred when ice-melting pellets (ammonium sulfate) were distributed on snow-covered walkways and contacted residual cement dust (alkaline). Four workers were treated for exposure to ammonia.

Injury Type : Fatal

Core Activity : Concrete delivery

A concrete mix truck failed to negotiate a right-hand corner. The vehicle flipped over and came to rest off the shoulder of the highway. The driver died of his injuries.

Injury Type : Exposure to mercury (39 workers)

Core Activity : Vessel repair and maintenance

For five days, 39 workers worked on a process vessel and ancillary equipment for removal of mercury in zinc-feed process material. Thirteen of the workers were subsequently found to have elevated levels of mercury in their blood.

Injury Type : Neck pain

Core Activity : Sawmill

A young worker was pushing a bandsaw cart on an elevated walkway when the cart struck a clipboard lying on the walkway, dislodging a bandsaw guide (7.5 pounds). The bandsaw guide fell 5 feet and struck the head of a young worker whose workstation was directly below the walkway. The young worker was wearing a hard hat.

Injury Type : Back and shoulder bruising and pain

Core Activity : Mill site expansion

While tightening drive belts on a newly installed sawmill debarker, a worker stepped onto a girder on the side of the unfinished building to gain more leverage. The girder released from the structure, and the worker fell 12 feet, to a conveyor trough below. The worker was not using fall protection at the time of the incident.

Injury Type : Broken leg, hip pain, soft-tissue injuries

Core Activity : Coal transportation

A highway maintenance snow plow was clearing snow on a public highway when it sideswiped a coal truck that had spun out and was parked on a hill. The plow hit the side of the coal truck as its driver was entering the cab.

Tories reckless with worker safety: Notley

NDP labour critic Rachel Notley is calling out the Alberta Tories for allowing a culture of lax workplace safety in the wake of a serious injury explosion at a CNRL oilsands upgrader.

"With this government, collecting royalties and party donations comes before worker and public safety," said Notley. "Proper regulation prevents accidents. We don't have that in Alberta.

"Premier Stelmach and his Tories treat industry like we're living in the wild, wild west of 100 years ago. We have at least three workers hurt – the latest to be hurt at that CNRL worksite. The Tories consistently refuse to enforce safety standards within the oil industry."

Notley notes that CNRL is already facing numerous charges regarding incidents on the site. There have been at least three deaths at the same upgrader site. Alberta's Auditor General has slammed the province for lax prosecution. Alberta standards are among the lowest in Canada and it's rate of prosecution is lagging behind other provinces.

In a related story Alberta's low prosecution rate for workplace incidents is drawing criticism.

New figures show significantly fewer cases were taken to court last year than in Saskatchewan, with a workforce one-quarter the size of Alberta's.

Alberta wrapped up prosecutions on 11 workplace safety cases in 2010. Saskatchewan, meanwhile, has completed 47 cases since its fiscal year began nine months ago.

Connie Field, whose 28-year-old son Jake was electrocuted at a southern Alberta job site in 2006, said the gap between the two provinces is unacceptable.

"Justice is not being done," said Field, who remains frustrated that occupational charges weren't laid in her son's death despite a government probe pointing to safety problems.

"The only way they're going to change is to hit them hard, which is the pocketbook."

Alberta Employment statistics released recently show worker deaths last year were ahead of the previous year's pace. With two months left to count, 111 employees died in 2010, compared with 85 during the same stretch in 2009.

Saskatchewan to review Workers' Compensation Act

A committee of review has been appointed to consult with workers and employers and make suggestions for improving the workers' compensation program in Saskatchewan.

According to Labour Relations and Workplace Safety Minister Don Morgan. "This review process provides an opportunity for people to share their experiences and make recommendations to keep the Workers' Compensation Act current, fair, responsive and aligned with the overall goal of ensuring workplace safety for Saskatchewan workers."

Dr. Roslyn Kunin, a former chair and long serving board member of WorkSafe BC, will chair the committee. The committee is made up of equal representation from employers and organized employees. This year's members, who come from the mining, manufacturing, construction and health care sectors, are: Kaylynn Schroeder, Dale Lindemann, Craig McAuley, Shelly McFadden, Marg Romanow and Lori Sali.

Public hearings will begin in early 2011. A final report is expected within the year. For information on how to make a submission, go to www.lrws.gov.sk.ca/workers-compensation-act-review.