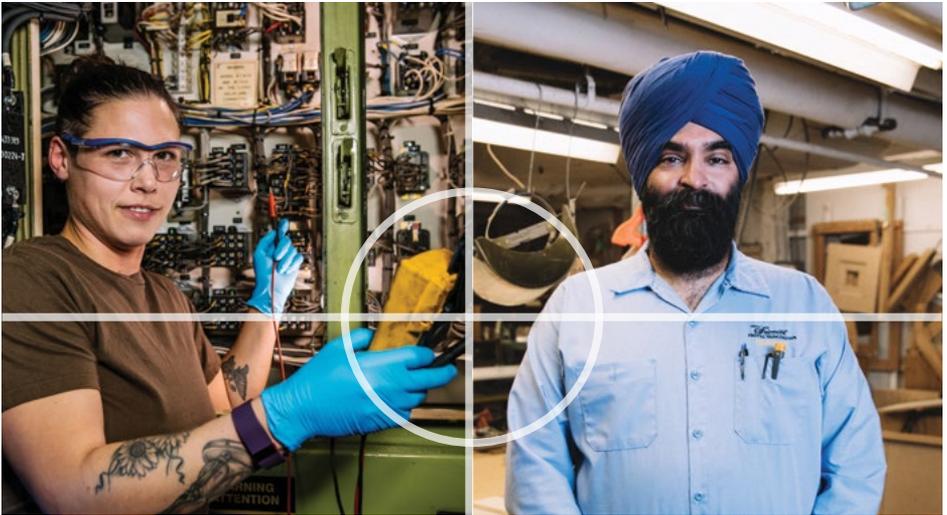


Occupational Cancer

FIGHTING BACK MAKES A DIFFERENCE



Message from Unifor leaders

In this booklet you will find information on how you, as a Unifor activist, can help to make your workplace safer and free from cancer-causing agents. Cancer isn't just a workplace issue. Contaminants don't stay contained at job sites, the poisonous substances end up in our communities through particles on our clothing, in our water and in the air through gases and more.

We encourage all Unifor activists – and all workers – to learn more about and better understand the dangers and causes of this killer disease.

Decades of experience has shown that in many instances, cancer can be prevented if we work together and use the strength of our union to eliminate carcinogens from our workplaces and environment.

Please use the information that you find here in this booklet to make work, home and the community safer.

Thank you in advance for your efforts.



Jerry Dias
National President



Bob Orr
National
Secretary-Treasurer



Renaud Gagné
Quebec Director



Lana Payne
Atlantic Regional
Director



Naureen Rizvi
Ontario Regional
Director



Joie Warnock
Western Regional
Director

Unifor campaign to prevent cancer

Take these steps to make your workplace safer.

- 1** Identify cancer causing agents (carcinogens) in the workplace. This is principally the role of the health and safety activists. Once identified, be sure to advise your local union representative.
- 2** Insist that the employer remove the carcinogens and replace the materials/chemicals with less hazardous substances. At a minimum, the process or materials must be enclosed and priorities and timelines should be established. This is also the role of the health and safety activists.
- 3** Put in workers' compensation claims for all workers who are found to have cancer that might be related to work. This is the role of workers' compensation activists.
- 4** Ensure community support for workers' health and safety by making sure that the public is aware of air emissions and hazardous waste from workplaces that may cause cancer. Engage the Unifor national or regional office in your area to assist with public campaigns and community outreach. While this may be the primary focus of environmental activists, every member of the union can be involved.



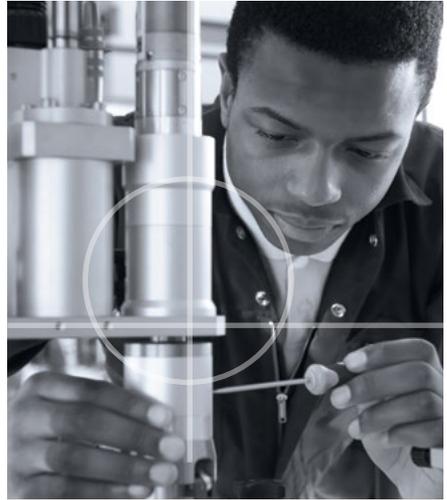
Cancer can be prevented... in spite of rising rates

Have you had a family member, friend or co-worker develop or die of cancer?

Cancer is a common disease and it is becoming increasingly more so. Unfortunately, this is not just because people are living longer or because it is more readily diagnosed.

The disease kills more people today than before because we are exposed to more substances that cause cancer. Since World War II, there has been an increase of manufactured substances used in our workplaces, homes and our environment that are linked to cancer. Today, the Canadian Cancer Society estimates that nearly 1 in 2 residents are expected to develop cancer.

Billions of dollars have gone into the fight against cancer. But nearly all of the funding goes into the area of treatment and genetic research. There are few funds allocated for prevention programs. This approach has not resulted in a reduction in the overall cancer rates. Tragically, only a few types of cancer have become more survivable.



- Cancer rates have reached epidemic proportions where it is now estimated that 1 in every 2 Canadians will develop some form of cancer in their lifetime.
- Cancer affects different parts of the workforce differently. Working-class people, particularly industrial workers, are more often affected.
- Most cancers could be prevented if there was the will by governments, employers and corporations to control exposures to cancer-causing substances.

The working-class toll of cancer

Scientific evidence demonstrates that industrial workers are disproportionately affected by cancer.

Breast cancer is one notable example. Breast cancer is the third most common cancer in Canada, accounting for 13 per cent of all cancers and 25 per cent of cancers among women, despite greater awareness around lifestyle factors, such as reducing alcohol intake, not smoking, healthy eating and exercise.

The real problem is not being addressed - which is we are introducing toxic elements into our bodies. Human beings cannot process the chemicals, radiation or mineral fibres that we ingest on the job and from the environment.



Occupations with higher risk for exposure

aluminum smelter workers

asbestos workers

auto workers

chemical workers

diesel truck drivers

dry cleaners

electrical workers

farmers

firefighters

hair stylists

iron workers

lab technicians

mechanics

metal workers

miners

paint sprayers

pathologists

pharmaceutical workers

plastics and rubber workers

pulp and paper workers

steel workers

textile workers

wood workers

and many others.



Workers in carcinogen-laden industries are contracting cancer at rates well beyond those experienced by the general population.

Workers in certain carcinogen-laden industries are contracting cancer at rates well beyond those experienced by the general population. At least 60 different occupations have been identified as posing an increased cancer risk (*see box on page 5*).

For example, studies show that the auto industry is also producing laryngeal, stomach and colorectal cancers along with vehicles. The steel industry is producing lung cancer along with its metal products. Miners experience respiratory cancers at rates many times higher than the levels in the general population. Electrical workers are suffering increased rates of brain cancer and leukemia. Aluminum smelter workers are contracting bladder cancer. Dry cleaners have elevated rates of digestive tract cancers. Women in the plastics and rubber industry are at greater risk of uterine and possibly breast cancer. These are just the cancers related to industries in which we are now aware of the risks. There could be many more occupations with increased risk that have not yet been determined.

Workers as unwilling test subjects

It is unthinkable that the safety of a substance would be tested by placing people in a laboratory and exposing them to toxic substances. Yet, this is essentially what has happened and continues to happen in workplaces from coast to coast to coast. Too often, chemicals are introduced without knowledge of the long-term consequences for workers or the environment.

The estimates of what percentage of cancer is caused by work vary. Occupational exposures are responsible for approximately two to 10 per cent of all newly diagnosed cancer cases. Many believe that percentage is much higher but remains largely hidden by the absence of further investigation. Even if advocates accept the estimate of 10 per cent, that would translate to nearly 17 deaths every single day of workers in Canada who died prematurely from on the job exposures.

Cancer - is it your fault?

This raises serious moral, ethical and liability issues around how industry and employers are negligent on ensuring the right to basic safety at work. Employers, industry and government are not taking action or ensuring compliance to keep workplaces safe. This is why Unifor works to negotiate strong health and safety language and hold employers accountable to the collective

agreement and the laws that protect workers from harmful chemicals and processes.

As trade unionists, we must always be advocating for stronger health and safety standards that protect everyone - whether the worker belongs to a union or not.

Workplace and environmental cancer prevention

There is some good news. The World Health Organization estimates that at least 80 per cent of all cancers are related to our physical environment - these are things that we can control. This leaves only 20 per cent over which people have little control such as those cancers and conditions that are hereditary. It also means that the vast majority of cancers are preventable. With the scientific and political will, cancer could join polio or smallpox as a disease of the past.





We need to know more

Scientists and researchers have studied only a tiny fraction of the chemicals in our workplaces to identify cancer-causing agents. Clearly, more research is required. A better understanding of the occupational links to cancer will shed light on the overall impact of cancer-causing agents in our environment.

- In 2007, it was projected that 159,900 Canadians would develop cancer and 72,700 would die of the disease.
- In 2017, it is projected that 206,200 Canadians will develop cancer, and 80,800 will die of the disease.
- That is an increase of 46,300 incidences and an increase in deaths of 8,100 in just 10 years.
- In 2010 cancer was designated the leading cause of death for Canadians, which continues today.

The very same chemicals that exist at work are being introduced into our air, water and food supply – and that is cause for grave concern today and in the future.

One practical method for making the link between exposures and cancer is to implement a data collection program for cancer patients. Provincial cancer treatment centres must be persuaded to record information about the occupational histories of cancer patients. The medical profession has an important prevention role to play here, instead of focusing almost exclusively on treatment.

Carcinogen: something that causes cancer

Many cancer-causing substances leave the workplace in a variety of ways and cause disease in the surrounding area. These carcinogens can leave the workplace on contaminated work clothes or through air emissions, increasing the risk of cancer to family members or the local community. Ground water, streams, rivers, lakes and oceans can become contaminated with waste from various industries, increasing carcinogens in the general environment.

By eliminating carcinogenic substances from the workplace, large steps are also taken to reduce their release into the environment.

How does cancer happen?

Cancer is a disease that involves uncontrolled cell growth. Under normal circumstances, cells in the body grow and multiply at a predictable rate. The rate at which they grow generally matches the rate at which they die.

Cancer is a condition in which a group of cells begin to grow and

divide continuously, resulting in a tumour. The tumour then invades and destroys neighbouring tissues. Some of these cells may even travel to other parts of the body, a process called metastasis, causing even more damage. When major organs are involved, such as the lungs or liver, the tissue destruction and loss of organ function will eventually cause death.

Changing our environment

There are still many questions that must be answered. But we need not wait to take decisive action.

Reductions in the allowable occupational exposure limits (upper legal limit on concentration of carcinogens) are urgently necessary. In many cases, existing limits have been proven to be far too high to protect health and safety on the job. There must be zero tolerance for exposure to carcinogens. Government must compel industry to substitute non-toxic substances in place of carcinogens through stringent regulations and tough enforcement.



You can't change your parents, but you can change your workplace – for the better

If you are exposed to a carcinogen, does it mean you will automatically get cancer?

Not necessarily. Being exposed to a chemical or process that is carcinogenic does not automatically mean that a person will develop cancer. Other factors, such as how you are exposed, how much you were exposed to and for how long are as important in determining if a chemical will cause cancer.

How much exposure does it take to develop cancer?

There is no set amount of exposure that determines whether or not an individual will develop cancer. The risk of cancer increases when cellular DNA becomes damaged. Research shows



that the risk of developing cancer really begins to increase when the body's natural defense mechanisms are unable to repair the damage. This can happen over a short or long period of time.

The most important factor is the cumulative dose of exposure to toxins, which is the amount that accumulates in the body over time. It can be thought of as a dose which ultimately leads to the development of cancer.

The greater the exposure, the higher the risk.

The most common cancers in Canada

Women	Men
Lung	Lung
Breast	Prostate
Colorectal	Colorectal

The best ways to reduce the chance of developing cancer

Cancer has become one of the leading causes of death for the general population. The scientific community has been searching for ways to treat and eventually cure the potentially lethal disease.

What is known about the disease is that the most effective way to fight cancer is to prevent it. While some cancers may result from several factors combined (genetics, diet, environment, workplace) the reduction of workplace exposures is the most important factor to change.

The best way to prevent the disease is to eliminate exposure to the substances that cause it. For example, one of the best ways to prevent lung cancer is to not smoke. Since most occupations involve exposures to various chemicals and mixtures, the same concept can be applied to the workplace.

If carcinogenic substances are identified, then workers and management can and must play a crucial role in preventing occupational cancer. By identifying substances in the workplace, the toxins can be eliminated and substituted with less harmful substances and processes. In some situations, the use of a specific substance is thought to be necessary to meet product requirements, but in



most cases with more investigation, there are other solutions to produce the same results. In the event that neither elimination or substitution is possible using current technologies, efforts must be directed towards developing those technologies.

Plans for eliminating carcinogens over time must be developed. In the meantime, exposures to carcinogens in the workplace must be reduced to an absolute minimum by completely enclosing processes and using strict engineering controls such as local exhaust ventilation. A reliance on personal protective equipment such as gloves, aprons and respiratory protection should only be used as a last resort.

A safe practice is to subscribe to the ALARA principle, which states that exposures should be kept 'As Low As Reasonably Achievable.' For known human carcinogens such as arsenic, asbestos, beryllium, cadmium, chromium, diesel exhaust, nickel and silica, this means eliminating, to the fullest extent possible, all exposures to the carcinogen and for suspected carcinogens, controlling exposures to levels as low as possible.

Eliminating workplace carcinogens

Safety Data Sheets

Health and safety committee members and union representatives can help by ensuring the Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for the chemicals in your workplace are up to date. The Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) 2015 - Global Harmonized System require the sheets to be updated within 90 days of the supplier being aware of the new information. Every SDS must provide a date of

last revision. It is the employer's responsibility to keep and maintain the SDS and workers should hold their employers to this obligation. Health and safety is your right!

Read carefully

Read the Safety Data Sheets thoroughly to see if the materials contain any carcinogens. If it's unclear, ask someone.





Eliminate the carcinogens

Union representatives should advocate for safety by requesting that the employer eliminate the carcinogen by substituting the carcinogen with a less hazardous substance. To assert this demand, workers and union representatives can do the following:

- Raise the issue in the joint union-management health and safety committee meetings.
- Raise it at the bargaining table by negotiating the elimination of carcinogens.
- Raise it with government inspectors to insist orders be written for the elimination of carcinogens.
- Refuse to work with carcinogens. All workers have the right to refuse unsafe work.

Drawing the line on cancer

Unifor encourages activists to take a leading role in fighting for cancer prevention through the elimination

of cancer-causing chemicals in our workplaces, our communities and our homes, supported by strong, progressive legislation. Demand an end to the carnage of cancer.

Follow these steps if you spot carcinogens

Inform your union representative (where applicable)

Document your findings

Eliminate

Substitute

Minimize

Enclose

Exhaust

Personal Protective Equipment (only as a last resort)

The origin of the Bud Jimmerfield Award



Each year at Unifor's Canadian Council, the Bud Jimmerfield Award is presented to an activist who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in the area of health and safety or workers' compensation. It is in honour Bud Jimmerfield who was an ardent workplace advocate, right until the very end of his life.

At the December 1997 meeting of the CAW Council (one of Unifor's predecessor unions), then Local 89 President Bud Jimmerfield delivered a moving address. At the time, Bud only had a few months to live. He was joined by his wife Diane and their eight children, as he urged members not to mourn his imminent death, but to fight for the living.

He asked all gathered there to do their best to prevent future occupational diseases, death and injuries. Bud himself was a tireless health, safety, environment and workers' compensation advocate. Bud died a month later at 49 years old.

Bud was a machinist who had worked in the plant for 31 years and was exposed to metalworking fluids every day on the job. In 1996, he was diagnosed with cancer of the esophagus. By December 1997, it was clear that Bud was dying of cancer as a result of his exposure to workplace carcinogens.

The Workplace Safety Insurance Board (Workers' Compensation Board) in Ontario issued a precedent setting workers' compensation decision in an appeal on behalf of Bud Jimmerfield and his family. Initially, the board had denied his claim for cancer caused by exposure to metalworking fluids. When the board first refused to recognize the relationship between metalworking fluids and gastroesophageal cancer, the union applied political pressure and launched the appeal.

An appeals resolution officer later ruled that his cancer arose from workplace exposure, supporting Bud's case.

Nominees must have shown leadership in helping fellow workers as well as participated in activities beyond their workplace and must be nominated by their local union.

For more information on the Bud Jimmerfield Award or to find out how to nominate a fellow activist, please visit: unifor.org/healthandsafety.

Making workplaces safer

Union health and safety representatives play a vital role in making workplaces safer for current and future workers. Workers' compensation activists help workers get the benefits and justice that they deserve, if they do fall ill as a result of workplace toxins or are injured on the job.

Are you interested in getting more involved in the union? Consider becoming a health and safety or workers' compensation advocate!

Unifor offers regular training and skills-building opportunities for workplace advocates.

For more information, please contact:

Unifor Health, Safety and Environment Department

205 Placer Court
Toronto, ON
M2H 3H9

1-800-268-5763

healthandsafety@unifor.org



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