
HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT

This year our VSTA Health & Safety Committee met once every two months to discuss important site-based issues. Prior to the meeting, I had the opportunity to co-chair the district H&S meeting where district issues were discussed and information was relayed to us by district Health & Safety officers. At all meetings, VSTA H&S reps brought school issues which varied from compromised building envelopes at Magee, clay silica issues at P.W., to unhealthy portable structures at Van Tech. One of our biggest issues this year was dealing with the H1N1 outbreak which provided us with a lot of questions from staff who were concerned about their health being compromised, along with their students. Correct information was relayed to staff from district H&S committee to our committee which helped to answer questions about H1N1. I also was able to get more information about H1N1 by attending the fall zone meetings sponsored by the BCTF. Here we also received information about Joint Health and Safety Committee Terms of Reference. This document outlined the proper procedures for committee members to follow. It includes information about the duties and purpose of the committee. We also received, and I passed on to the committee, a document which outlines the procedures to follow in the event of an injury to a worker. The most important document that we received, and I made a point of giving this copy to all Executive, VSTA Council members, as well as the VSTA H&S committee was the Violence Prevention and the right to know document. This outlines OH&SR 8.5 which requires the employer to inform all workers of the nature and the extent of the risk of violence. This was important in light of the fact of the increase in violent incidents in the Board. It was also important to have this information when we found out about the incident involving a student in the VSB. Following disclosure of this situation, our Vice President Shaun van der Hoop filed a grievance in an attempt to rectify a perceived shortcoming with reporting to staff about a violent student who had been transferred to another school. Measles was also reported in a number of schools in the VSB. Information was passed on through district H&S by John Carsley as to the procedures that staff and students should follow. Finally it was reported at Council by a teacher at VLN that there were certain shortcomings at the VLN offices. A letter was written to the District H&S Officer as to the issues at the VLN offices, and it was requested that some action be taken to rectify the problems.

This year we did not receive our dump of snow that we got the previous year. Our committee worked towards making suggestions at the district level to help all stakeholders make our schools safer on these difficult days for all VSB employees, students and parents. I look forward to serving as District VSTA H&S Chair for 2010-2011 year.

Louis Jefferson, Chairperson
VSTA Health & Safety Committee