



### Work is Hazardous to your Health: WorkSafeBC Historical Video Series

#### Audience:

Secondary Students  
Union Orientation

**Activity Summary:** A synopsis of the WorkSafeBC historical video series and suggested activity guide to accompany the video materials.

### WorkSafeBC Historical Video Series

Both the WorkSafeBC and the British Columbia Labour Heritage Centre websites connect viewers to videos on Youtube, as well as a DVD, about working people in the province. Below is a synopsis of the WorkSafeBC videos which are geared to experienced workers. Questions to guide discussion follow the synopsis. Note Part D is more suitable to younger and inexperienced workers. The videos may be found at:

<http://www.labourheritagecentre.ca/historyhealthsafetybc>

1. **Lloyd O'Brien** The main theme is voluntarism. Individuals, not governments, took first steps to secure the well-being of British Columbians. Until the establishment of a provincial ambulance service in 1974, community ambulance services relied on volunteers such as O'Brien.
2. **Al Lundgren** The video outlines deplorable working conditions and lack of safety in the woods until the establishment of health and safety standards in the forest industry, especially the Faller Trainer Program. Hazards beyond falling are suggested by photographs but remain unspecified. Individuals interested in this topic might research more specific hazards of the industry. Between 1960 and 1980 there was a 100% statistical probability you would be injured or killed (1500 workers suffered permanent disability or death in those two decades). A theme in this and the other videos in this series is the idea that, historically, "production" trumped "safety" in industrial settings.
3. **Jack Munro** Film provides the occupational biography of history of this famous IWA president who among other fights championed worker safety and not merely production as laudable workplace goals.
4. **Verna Ledger** Film features Ledger's early work in an interior plywood mill with few safety standards through to her work as IWA safety director for Western Canada and then Canada. "Verna was tough" and gained the respect of men in what was a male dominated occupation according to Jack Munro, IWA president. The video documents Ledger's expanding consciousness regarding worker safety – and her realization she had to do her part in improving mill safety. Industry was slow in assuming health and safety was actually in their interests as responsible employers.

5. **Bentall Tragedy** Film outlines the tragedy faced by four families when four men are killed in a flyform construction accident on the Bentall Tower in 1981. An inquest revealed errors in the flyform requirements had indeed been reported up the company's chain of command. The lack of communication had occurred in one of the strongest unionized construction companies with a great safety record. The incident led to a province wide construction industry safety inquiry.
6. **Ironworkers Memorial Bridge** On June 17, 1958, nineteen workers including two engineers died in the collapse of a bridge being built across the Second Narrows of Burrard Inlet. The cause of this industrial accident was attributed to an engineering error, and not a lack of safety standards or procedures. Film illustrates the inherent dangers in occupations. The bridge was rededicated as the Ironworkers Memorial Bridge in honour of the workers in 1994.
7. **History of Asbestos in B.C.** Video outlines growing evidence of the hazards of asbestos exposure, including Mesothelioma, from the late 1940s through the 1970s. Videos provides a classic example of "corporate greed." Despite known hazards, the asbestos industry operated throughout the period with "sheer self interest" in a "free-for-all" business environment offering little worker protection. The legacy of asbestos mining is "fraught with loss" and the human costs are poignantly illustrated by the premature death of David Ford, a Powell River mill electrician exposed to asbestos at his workplace. Video outlines historical changes in the industry as a result of 1978 BC Industrial Health and Safety Regulations as well as the 1998 Occupational Health Safety Regulations (the Manual of Standard Practice) outlining protocols for safe asbestos removal and handling.

## **Activity : Questions to Guide Discussion.**

Facilitators should consult the synopsis of WorkSafeBC videos (above) and choose films that best suit needs and interests of participants. The following questions are organized in four sections A-D to help guide learners before, during, and after viewing the films. Section D offers individuals, especially young and new workers, a hands-on opportunity to investigate the WorkSafeBC website.

### **PART A. Pre-Viewing Brainstorm/Discussion**

1. What are some dangerous conditions you have seen at work?
  
2. What safety laws apply at your workplace?
  
3. As a group, brainstorm what you know about the role each of the following plays in improving workplace health and safety protections:
  - Health and safety committee
  
  - Collective agreement
  
  - New worker orientation
  
4. How did we get laws and regulations to protect workers on the job?
  
5. Who has the most responsibility for ensuring a safe workplace: individual workers, employers, or government?

### **PART B. Things to consider during each film:**

- What was the health and safety problem identified in the film?
  
- What was needed to improve the situation?
  
- How do health and safety conditions in the film compare to your own?

- Beside the worker, who else was affected by workplace injury or fatality?
- What inspired individuals or groups to take action?
- What made it difficult to take action for health and safety?

**PART C. POST VIEWING**

1. Have health and safety conditions improved for workers? Explain with an example.
2. What are some important factors that brought health and safety to the workplace?
3. Verna Ledger states, “Work is dangerous to your Health.” Copy the following chart on the board, or in your notebook. Individually, and then as a group, make a list of some of those hazards.

<b>Job</b>	<b>Hazards discussed in videos</b>	<b>Hazards not discussed in videos</b>
Forestry		
Lumber Mill		
Construction		

4. “Voluntarism” may be defined as “non-coerced and unpaid donation of one’s time and energy.” Historically, voluntarism helped establish laws around health and safety on the job. Give an example of voluntarism from each of the videos you have seen.
5. List and explain factors which keep workers from speaking out about workplace health and safety today?
6. What improvements would you like to see in health and safety in your own workplace?

## **PART D. Key and Practical Applications for Teachers and High School Students**

1. As a class brainstorm dangerous workplaces or occupations not covered by these videos. A partial list is provided below to get you started. Then individually or in small groups select one workplace or occupation and research their typical hazards. In turn, discuss your results with the larger group. Remember hazards may not always be physical. (Suggestions include: restaurant – kitchen and serving; retail including stocking and cashier; Mines including mining, processing; fisheries; factory work; farmwork).
  
2. An introduction to WorkSafeBC. Introduce participants to the [www.WorkSafeBC.com](http://www.WorkSafeBC.com) website. Click on “Sitemap” at top of screen. Scroll through the options. Among other important information you should review the following concepts:
  - a. Under “Claims”>“Workers. What to do when you’re injured:”
    - workers **MUST** report any injuries sustained at work; in fact, it is against the law for anyone to attempt to dissuade a worker from reporting the injury.
    - all costs incurred because of the injury including transport to a hospital will be borne by the employer
  - b. Under “Claims”> “Claim Process:”
    - outline of comprehensive compensation workers may receive
  - c. Under “Claims”>“Workers Compensation and Injury Lawsuits FAQ:”
    - Worker compensation in “no-fault” meaning that workers will be compensated regardless of who is at fault, employers or employees themselves.
    - Workers will be compensated for injuries but they cannot sue employers or anyone including other workers who are part of the BC workers organization.