

TOMPKINS/CORTLAND LABOR COALITION

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HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRAM

ANNUAL REPORT, 1991-92

Over 2,000 workers benefitted directly during 1991-92 from the Tompkins/Cortland Labor Coalition's health and safety program; many others benefitted indirectly.

These workers included:

1,450 who regularly received our quarterly newsletter, FYI, A Health and Safety Newsletter for Office Workers;

87 who participated in any of our five training sessions (Clean room health and safety issues; conducting surveys; health hazards for women workers; health hazards in the schools; dealing with the Workers' Compensation System);

60 in three unions and one non-union workplace who participated in one of four back injury prevention clinics;

200 who received our informational flyer on workplace fire safety;

the members of three unions that we assisted with the functioning of their union health and safety committees, including one (UAW 1326, Pall Trinity) that we helped to achieve safer conditions in their Clean Room.

workers at Uris Hall, Cornell (non-union); the Cornell Veterinary College (non-union); Boynton Middle School (Ithaca Teachers Association); and the Cortland County Office Building (CSEA 812 and the Cortland Nurses Association) who made progress in improving their air quality conditions partly due to our assistance;

1,000 service and maintenance members of UAW 2300 at Cornell University who were awarded a \$30,000 health and safety grant with our assistance;

75 workers who participated in our Workers Memorial Day commemoration service and rally

132 workers and unions who received information or referrals following their request for assistance (a 73 percent increase in requests for assistance from the previous year).

16 workers who attended a twelve week, credit course on Workplace Health and Safety Hazards taught by TCLC health/safety trainers at Tompkins Cortland Community College as part of the Labor Studies Program there.

BOCES Employees Association
BOCES Teachers Association
Bricklayers Local 17
Carpenters Local 603
Civil Service Employees Association Local 561
Civil Service Employees Association Local 605
Civil Service Employees Association Local 849
Civil Service Employees Association Local 855
Cornell Security Employees Union
Cortland United Teachers
Electrical Workers Local 43
Electrical Workers Local 79
Electrical Workers Local 241
Electrical Workers Local 961
Fire Fighters Local 1737
Fire Fighters Local 2737
Ithaca Paraprofessionals Association
Ithaca School District Employees Association
Ithaca Teachers Association
Laborers Local 589
Machinists Local 1607
Machinists Local 1608
Musicians Local 132
National Writers Union
Operating Engineers Local 71 & 71A
Operating Engineers Local 545
Painters Local 178
Plumbers Local 267
Postal Workers Local 1151
Public Employees Federation Local 251
Service Employees Local 200A
Sheetmetal Workers Local 112
TCCC Faculty Association
Teamsters Local 65
United Auto Workers Local 802
United Auto Workers Local 1326
United Auto Workers Local 1774
United Auto Workers Local 2300
United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1
United Steel Workers of America Local 12460
United University Professions

Back Injury Prevention Clinics

Back injury prevention clinics were organized with CSEA Local 605, the Ithaca City School District Employees Association, Tompkins Employees Day Care and the Ithaca Paid Firefighters Local 737. In each case, a walkthrough inspection took place prior to the training; where appropriate a report with recommendations for change was prepared for the union; a back clinic was conducted. In each of the cases, the clinic took place on paid company time. A brief summary of each follows.

CSEA Local 605. This clinic was for power plant employees at SUNY-Cortland; eleven attended the clinic.

Ithaca City School District Employees (NEA). Clinic was for food service workers attached to the Ithaca City School District; fifteen attended. An inspection prior to the training provided the basis for the clinic as well as for recommendations to the Union.

Tompkins Employees Day Care. The clinic was arranged initially through the Day Care Council of Tompkins County. Twelve employees attended.

Ithaca Paid Firefighters Local 737. An inspection took place at the Central Fire Station, followed at a later date by four 90-minute training sessions, each attended by 10-15 firefighters. One innovative feature of the clinic: the inspection was videotaped and edited, and then used as a very effective adjunct to the training sessions.

FYI

Four issues of FYI, a Health and Safety Newsletter for Office Workers were published. Topics covered included: repetitive strain injury problems at SUNY-Cortland; stress and office workers; carpeting; VDTs - a summary wall chart; office humidity; overwork; toners; chair height and design; and fire safety. Each issue contained the regular "Did You Know" feature.

By the June 1992 issue, circulation had risen to 1,450, approximately 700 copies to unionized office workers and 750 to non-unionized workers.

Training Workshops and Conferences

UAW 1326 (Pall Trinity, August). Nine workers attended this training workshop dealing with getting action on health and safety issues.

Health and Safety for Women Workers (May). Seven women from five area unions attended this workshop, which was part of the Central NY Women's Trade Union Leadership Conference. Training focused on identifying exposure problems, getting action to resolve problems, forming health and safety committees and contract language. Each participant received a packet of information.

Health Hazards in Our Schools (May). Thirty teachers, support staff and parents from 18 area schools and unions, attended this major training conference. TCLC health/safety trainers were joined by Greg Siwinski, Industrial Hygienist with the CNY Occupational Health Clinical Center, as presenters. The main focus was on causes and effects of poor indoor air quality, and ways to investigate and correct it. Each participant received a packet of information.

Workers Compensation Training Workshop (June). Thirty-nine people, from eighteen trade unions, eight non-union workplaces, and one COSH group attended. Both public and private sector workplaces were well represented. Presenter was Tony Gaenslen, a local attorney. A 45 minute overview of the system was followed by 90 minutes of questions.

Workers Memorial Day

We held a number of activities to commemorate Workers Memorial Day this year. Our memorial service and OSHA reform rally was attended by 75 people, and included representatives from at least fifteen local unions. The service was dedicated to the 25 Hamlet fire victims. A moment of silence was publicly observed at 2 pm April 28 in Ithaca, Schuyler County and at SUNY-Cortland. In Ithaca it was signalled by the sounding of the City's fire horns in the traditional "Death Bell," the Box 5-5-5-5 signal normally used for the death of a firefighter. Four local jurisdictions - the cities of Ithaca and Cortland, Schuyler County, and Tompkins County - approved Workers Memorial Day proclamations.

Finally labor delegations met in separate hour-long meetings with the District Attorneys of Tompkins, Cortland and Schuyler Counties, to press the issue of local criminal prosecution of employers in cases in which their negligence or willful violation of safety rules leads to a serious workplace injury, illness or death.

Health and Safety Committees

An ongoing focus of the Coalition's health and safety program is to assist member unions in establishing and/or strengthening Union Health and Safety Committees. Where possible, we also assist groups of workers in non-unionized workplaces.

During the year we worked with the following: CSEA 812

(Cortland County office building); workers at Cornell Veterinary College; UAW 1326 (Pall Trinity); UAW 1774 (Brewer Titchener); and UAW 2300 (Cornell).

CSEA 812. We assisted workers attempting to deal with an indoor air quality problem. This involved a number of meetings with these workers, helping with a health survey, getting the building committee going, and developing strategies to get management action.

UAW 1326, UAW 1774, UAW 2300. Our work with these union health and safety committees was less intensive than in the past. Only one now has a well functioning committee, though individuals in each of these unions are doing effective work.

Information and Referral

During the course of the year we dealt with 132 unsolicited requests for information, ranging from workers compensation issues to concerns about specific chemicals in the workplace. This is a 73 percent increase in requests for information compared to the previous year (76 requests dealt with). We also now have an improved system in place for recording our activities in this area.

The Working Press continued to be used regularly as a mechanism of community information and outreach; there were usually two health and safety articles in each issue.