
Occupational toxicology in BC – March 2018

The BC Day of Mourning with 40 ceremonies marking deaths related to work

How many cases died of work related toxic exposure in BC in 2017?

- 158 work-related deaths accepted by WorkSafeBC in BC in 2017.
- Among them 87 (55%) were due to occupational diseases, largely from exposure to asbestos [--- mesothelioma] decades ago, and 71 (45%) resulted from traumatic injury, including 28 from motor-vehicle incidents.¹
- Deaths from occupational diseases are on rise (33% increase from 1996 and 2017). In the same period, overall work-related deaths decreased by 30 per cent since.¹

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- The *Canadian Labour Congress* created and held the first National Day of Mourning ceremony on April 28, 1984, making Canada the first country to formally commemorate workers killed in the workplace.² It was officially designated as a national observance in 1991.³

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How many ceremonies have been planned in BC?

- Hundreds of people gathered, 40 B.C. communities organized, and in Vancouver, the Olympic cauldron at Jack Poole Plaza was lit.³



Photo adopted from Global News³

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Process safety initiative

What is the “process safety initiative”?

- WorkSafeBC’s process safety focuses on preventing catastrophic outcomes, such as fires, explosions, and exposure to hazardous substances,
- It involves the prevention of leaks, spills, equipment malfunctions, corrosion, component failures, and upset conditions with serious risks to the health and safety of workers (and, sometimes, the public).⁴

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B.C. must learn from asbestos-related deaths for regulation of nano-particles, e-cigarettes

- Twenty years after heavy restrictions on exposure to asbestos, BC is still reeling from its negative health impacts.⁵
- The delay in regulation for asbestos exposure should be a warning to regulators to accelerate regulating exposure to toxic substances, most notably engineered nanoparticles, according to Dr. Christopher Carlsten

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Airborne carcinogenic chemicals at Kits pool

What happened?⁶

- Potentially dangerous chemicals were released into the air from pool renovation work.
- People walking near Vancouver’s Kits pool in March may have noticed a strong smell.

What was the causing chemical?

- Polyester resins (organic solvents) were being sprayed in the pool under scaffolding and a tarp with inadequate ventilation.
- This lead to an objectionable odor (styrene and methyl ethyl ketone)

What could be their health effects?

- Irritation to the skin and eyes
- Long-term exposure could be carcinogenic

Apparently no health effect was reported from the workers or the public.⁶

[\(Read more\)](#)

References

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- 2 KamloopsThisWeek-2018-04-30. Photo Gallery on Kamloops This Week. 2018 Day of Mourning. <http://www.kamloopsthisweek.com/community/2018-day-of-mourning-1.23285978> (May 25, 2018).
- 3 GlobalNews-2018-04-28. Olympic cauldron lit for Day of Mourning for workers killed on the job. <https://globalnews.ca/news/4174861/day-of-mourning-bc/> (May 24, 2018).
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- 5 TheStarVancouver-2018-04-30. B.C. must learn from asbestos-related deaths for regulation of nano-particles, e-cigarettes: expert. <https://www.thestar.com/vancouver/2018/04/30/bc-must-learn-from-asbestos-related-deaths-for-regulation-of-nano-particles-e-cigarettes-expert.html> (May 23, 2018).
- 6 News1130-2018-04-29. "Objectionable odour" signaled airborne carcinogenic chemicals at Kits pool, says WorkSafe BC. <http://www.news1130.com/2018/04/29/objectionable-odour-signal-airborne-carcinogenic-chemicals-kits-pool-says-worksafe-bc/> (May 25, 2018).