MINUTES OF THE JOINT OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE (JOHSC) MEETING

Wednesday, February 7, 2007

2:00 p.m.
Inco Innovation Centre, Room IIC-1004

MINUTES

Present: Neil Bishop, Greg French, Robert Gendron, Sandra LeFort, Ramachandran Venkatesen, Hélène Volkoff

Apologies: Craig Boyd

1. The agenda was approved as submitted.

2. Dr. Sandy LeFort, Director of the School of Nursing, was welcomed as the Committee's newest member. Dr. LeFort has completed the Occupational Health & Safety Certification Training offered by the NL Employers’ Council. She replaces Dr. Robert Davis (Chemistry) who resigned his position on the Committee in October 2006.

3. Update on “For Action” Items from October 12, 2006 Meeting:

   a) Report and Comments on the Safety Inspection Within the Chemistry Dept:
   H. Volkoff and G. French were invited to participate as observers in a safety inspection conducted by the Chemistry Department on October 25, 2006. The inspection consisted of an examination of the structures, machinery, equipment, and places of employment in the basement and on the fourth floor of the Chemistry-Physics building. Inspections of the various floors are conducted on a rotating basis. The department is diligent in maintaining safe practices.

   A discussion then took place on the role of the Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee. G. French noted there are a number of safety committees across Memorial University and that the Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee was formed in order to comply with the MUN/MUNFA Collective Agreement. It was argued by several members of the committee that from a health and safety perspective, all committees and all MUN employees should be examining occupational health and safety issues and sharing information.

   A discussion followed concerning whether the various academic units and faculties each had their own safety committee, or whether there was a safety committee for each building. H. Volkoff noted that there are at least two safety committees for the Science building. R. Gendron added that the Faculty of Medicine was composed of a large number of groups, e.g. the Health Care Corporation, Basic Medical Sciences, Pharmacy, etc. and that no definite safety
committee was in place for these units. Dr. Gendron reported having spoken with Ed Evelly (Director of Medical Laboratories and also a member of The Site Health Sciences Complex Workplace Health and Safety Committee) about the possibility of instituting a rotational inspection process in the Faculty of Medicine. Dr Gendron also offered to sit on a safety committee in Medicine.

b) Update on Dr. Steve Carr’s Complaint – Department of Biology Laboratory - This item will be discussed with Mr. Craig Boyd, when the co-chairs meet with him in the near future.

c) Update: Possible JOHSC webpage link with Facilities Management Website – H. Volkoff and G. French will meet with C. Boyd in the near future and will discuss this item with him.

d) Update on Letters to Administrative Heads – Several responses (written, as well as telephone responses) were received from administrative heads. These included:

- A response from the Department of History included an expression of concern around the electrical system in the Arts and Administration building in general, and specifically the History Department.
- A response from the School of Music, which did not address the committee’s questions but clearly expressed discontent towards the committee

A discussion then took place concerning the wording of the letters, and whether they conveyed what was intended. S. LeFort pointed out that, upon receiving a copy of the letter in her role as Director of the School of Nursing, she wondered what she was supposed to do with it, and thought the letter should be clearer about what the expectations were. S. LeFort also noted that it is not always clear how occupational health and safety is organized within the University and that one of the reasons for the low response rate was probably because the administrative heads did not know how to respond to the letter or to obtain the information requested. She suggested that a short question-and-answer format might have received more response. It would also be helpful if administrative heads understood the key elements of a health and safety environment.

R. Gendron suggested a statement at the end of the letter, saying the Committee would be willing to help the administrative head set something up for their department, if they do not have anything in place.

S. LeFort asked whether this Committee gets complaints about health and safety issues from faculty members. H. Volkoff confirmed that this does happen, and the complaints are discussed at the Committee level and then sent to Facilities Management.

R. Gendron suggested a starting point would be having each unit and department have someone assigned as a “safety contact officer”. This person would be the contact between health and safety issues within their particular department, and the JOHSC.
The Committee will acknowledge receipt of the written responses received to date, and will follow-up with those who have expressed specific concerns about their units or departments.

H. Volkoff will draft a letter to the Director of the School of Music in order to try to arrange a meeting with him, either to meet with the full Committee or a couple of committee members. The draft letter will be circulated to the Committee. The Committee felt that a face-to-face meeting should be arranged with the director in order to clarify the intent of the October letter.

4. University’s Policy re: Unauthorized Personnel Requesting/Removing Alcohol from Laboratories
   The Committee received a report that an unauthorized person was removing alcohol from the laboratories in the Faculty of Medicine. This individual might be an ex-employee who still has access to the laboratory. H. Volkoff e-mailed Laura Lozanski, the occupational health and safety officer at the Canadian Association of University Teachers. Ms. Lozanski replied by describing basic policies and guidelines. H. Volkoff reviewed MUN’s policies, but could not find anything specifically adapted to this particular issue. She will discuss this issue with C. Boyd.

S. LeFort noted that, if we are to have a culture of occupational health and safety at MUN, then there should be pan-university safety training for employees and students. H. Volkoff added that while she did participate in training via the Biology Department, this training was voluntary. She will ask the Biology Department if mandatory safety training is in place for that department.

S. LeFort offered to ask the Vice-President (Academic) to add the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee to the next Deans and Directors meeting agenda.

R. Gendron indicated he would like to be included in the meeting that will be scheduled with C. Boyd.

5. New Business
   No new business was identified.

6. Next Meeting
   The next meeting of the JOHSC should be held late April or early May. C. King will email the Committee members and get their schedules.

7. Adjournment
   The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.
**Action Items**

A. C. King will contact C. Boyd in order to set up a meeting between him and representatives from the JOHSC (H. Volkoff, G. French and R. Gendron).

B. The following items will be discussed with Mr. Boyd:
   i) Complaint from Dr. Steve Carr (Biology) regarding excessively high temperatures in the Biology laboratories during summer months;
   ii) The possibility of having a JOHSC webpage link with the Facilities Management webpage;
   iii) Memorial University’s policies concerning alcohol access in the University’s laboratories

C. The Committee will acknowledge receipt of written responses from the administrative heads re: the October letters from the JOHSC.

D. The Committee will follow-up with those administrative heads who identified concerns for their units or department.

E. H. Volkoff will draft a letter to the Director of the School of Music and will request a meeting with him, in order to clarify the intent of the letter sent in October. The draft letter will be circulated to Committee members.

F. H. Volkoff will ask the Biology Department if there is any safety training that is mandatory for that department.

G. S. LeFort will ask the Vice-President (Academic) to add the JOHSC as an agenda item for a future Deans and Directors meeting.