MINUTES OF THE MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY & MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND FACULTY ASSOCIATION JOINT OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE (JOHSC) MEETING

Thursday, January 10, 2008

11:00 a.m.
Inco Innovation Centre, Room IIC-1034

MINUTES

Present: Mr. Craig Boyd, Manager of Safety & Environmental Services; Dr. Robert Gendron, MUNFA Representative and Co-Chair; Dr. George Jenner, MUNFA Representative; Dr. Sandra LeFort, MUN Representative; Mr. Ian McKinnon, MUN Representative and Co-Chair; Dr. Barbara Neis, MUNFA Representative

Apologies: Dr. Ramachandran Venkatesan, MUN Representative

1. Approval of Agenda: The agenda was approved as submitted.

2. Welcome to Dr. George Jenner (Earth Sciences) and Dr. Barbara Neis (Sociology, SafetyNet) who have joined the Committee as MUNFA representatives. They replace Dr. Hélène Volkoff and Dr. Neil Bishop, who both resigned after the last meeting (May 2007). A note of thanks will be sent to Drs. Volkoff and Bishop.

3. Update on “For Action” Items from May 3 2007 Meeting:

   Action Items 1 & 2: Air conditioning units are now in place in the Biology lab where excessive temperatures were a problem. C. Boyd spoke to Don Peach of Facilities Management, and the air conditioning equipment will be kept in the lab. C. Boyd noted there are no plans to redesign the ventilation system in the Science building. R. Gendron asked if temperatures probes were placed in the lab. C. Boyd noted that Don Peach would have those records, if the Committee decides they want to consider tracking them.

   G. Jenner asked if equipment is in place to measure the temperatures on a regular basis. C. Boyd responded that there is no equipment in place to do this, but there is a way to measure the temperatures using the duct work. G. Jenner asked if this could be done in some of the known trouble areas, since this would at a minimum allow people to be informed and there would be a record in place so that individuals could choose to not work in that environment, if necessary. S. LeFort commented on the importance of a reasonable work environment. C. Boyd explained that the actual range of “acceptable standards” is surprisingly wide and offered to provide some information to the committee regarding work environment standards as per the Canadian Standards Agency. This is not legally binding, but does give an indication of what is considered reasonable.

   Action Item 3: Letters of acknowledgement were sent to those administrative heads who responded to a request for information concerning safety practices in their
respective units. All committee members in attendance at the last meeting (May 2007) signed the letters. S. LeFort was not in attendance, so the letters were sent to her for her signature.

**Action Items 4 & 5:** I. McKinnon provided the Committee with a newspaper article from the *Gazette*, titled “Smoke-free expands to building entrances on St. John’s campus”. A discussion took place around the issue of smoking in non-smoking areas, and it was generally agreed that smoking is a complicated issue, and one that involves culture change. C. Boyd added that scent-sensitivity is also part of this issue, and it is likewise difficult to enforce “scent-free” policies; the University does not have a policy in place on this issue.

**Action Items 6 – 8:** These items have all been addressed.

4. **New Business**

   C. Boyd is the Manager of Safety & Environmental Services at Memorial University. He distributed a Fact Sheet on the role of Occupational Health and Safety Committees, from the Workplace Health & Safety Compensation Commission (WHSCC). The WHSCC website ([www.whscc.nf.ca](http://www.whscc.nf.ca)) has a list of publications which the Committee may find useful. The distributed Fact Sheet denotes what the law says about the role of OH&S Committees.

   I. McKinnon asked if, in the event of a workplace health/safety complaint, it is necessary for the full committee to be involved, or is it acceptable to involve only a few members? C. Boyd responded that provided there is representation from both MUN and MUNFA, i.e. one representative from each, then those members can inform the rest of the committee.

   C. Boyd noted that recommendations are important; OH&S committees can play a major role in promoting health and safety in the workplace, and monitoring the OH&S program is a huge challenge. OH&S committees can help monitor the effectiveness of corrective action.

   S. LeFort added she has no idea of how many OH&S committees are in existence at Memorial, and asked about the real function of this particular committee versus the other OH&S committees. Since there are a number of committees in place, how is “monitoring” done?

   I. McKinnon responded that each work site (i.e. building) is supposed to have an OH&S Committee. Each union is supposed to have a joint union-administration committee, and some departments will also have their own OH&S committee.

   C. Boyd added that the model in existence at Memorial now is mainly a union-based model, e.g. MUNFA, CUPE, NAPE all have their own OH&S committees. The Faculty of Science also has an OH&S committee in place, as do various departments within the faculty (e.g. Earth Sciences). The Botanical Gardens and the Marine Institute have their own committees.

   G. Jenner noted that if Memorial is to have an overarching committee, the MUN-MUNFA representatives should at least get together with the other union committees. The
redundancy should be addressed. B. Neis suggested the co-chairs of each OH&S committee could meet – there isn’t necessarily a need to form another committee out of the meeting.

C. Boyd advised that there is a list of committees on the Safety & Environmental Services website http://www.mun.ca/facman/Safety/G-003_Health_Safety_Comm.pdf

He will invite the co-chairs from the various committees to attend a meeting, and that group may then decide to recommend a more formal structure for the overarching committee. It was suggested that the individual to receive the recommendations should be someone who can make decisions around finances.

S. LeFort expressed frustration at the lack of information and communication around the issue of OH&S committees and the need to clearly define who has responsibility for what.

G. Jenner suggested representatives from all OH&S committees on campus meet at least once a semester.

B. Neis suggested that a MUN OH&S committee with representation from all the sites would be beneficial.

A discussion took place concerning workplace inspections. This committee is not qualified to conduct workplace inspections. Former co-chairs Greg French and Hélène Volkoff participated in several inspections in the Faculty of Science last year, but they did not conduct the inspections.

C. Boyd added that the Safety Office does not have sufficient staff or support to address all of the health and safety issues across campus.

C. King will send the Terms of Reference for the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee to all committee members.

C. Boyd will forward the website link for the University’s Safety, Environment and Health Procedures, to C. King, for distribution to committee members.

C. Boyd will send an invitation as soon as possible to all OH&S Committee co-chairs at MUN, to meet. He is hopeful that funding for a safety officer will be made available in the budgets of all major faculties, and noted that the Vice-President (Administration and Finance) is supportive of this.

4b) 4 Clark Place – Written Complaint from Faculty Member.

B. Neis is aware of the ongoing concerns surrounding health and safety issues at 4 Clark Place, and noted these are long-standing issues. Two areas in the basement (an area designated for student offices) have mould which has been above acceptable levels. Because of this, there are currently no students working in the basement area. C. Boyd added that a complaint was directed to him over a year ago, and he will check to see what the status is on that now. In terms of following up on the matter, C. Boyd suggested the Committee send a letter signed by the two co-chairs to Darrell Miles, requesting that they be permitted to attend the inspection of 4 Clark Place. C. Boyd noted that
management must respond within 30 days, and suggested the letter should also ask for prevention plans.

G. Jenner noted that from the committee training he received in November 2007, he understands that if the University does not act on issues such as these, the Committee has recourse in going to government vis a vis Workplace Health and Safety.

G. Jenner nominated R. Gendron to be the MUNFA co-chair. R. Gendron accepted.

4 c) Accident/Incident Investigation: New Standard Operating Procedures – Workplace Inspections SOP Draft
This item was not addressed at this meeting.

4 d) Grievances – Air Quality in Henrietta Harvey Building
This is an asbestos issue. Four individual grievances and one association grievance have been filed. Air quality testing was conducted and reports sent to MUNFA. I. McKinnon reported that extensive cleaning was done in the building and the Maritime History Archive in that building was reopened, and the air quality reports came back ok. C. Boyd reported that Darrell Miles has taken the lead on this issue. G. Jenner asked if the Committee should request an inspection, with Darrell Miles, of the Henrietta Harvey Building. I. McKinnon noted that normally we would be able to do this, but because he (I. McKinnon) is part of the grievance procedure, he will not be able to accompany the Committee on an inspection.

R. Gendron has not seen any follow-up reports indicating that the air quality reports came back ok. G. Jenner offered to follow up with MUNFA, as they have the reports.

4e) Minor revision to Minutes from May 3, 2007 meeting:
This item was not discussed at the meeting, since time had run out.

4f) Article by Dr. Peter Strahlendorf entitled “Is Your Committee Effective?” was distributed to the Committee.

5. Next Meeting: C. King will contact committee members to determine the date of the next meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:45 p.m.
**Action Items from January 10, 2008 Meeting**

1. Note of thanks will be sent to Dr. Hélène Volkoff and Dr. Neil Bishop for their service to the JOHSC.
2. C. Boyd to provide information to the committee regarding work environment standards as per the Canadian Standards Agency.
3. C. Boyd will, as soon as possible, invite the co-chairs from all of MUN’s various OH&S committees to attend a meeting, and that group may then decide to recommend a more formal structure for the overarching committee.
4. C. King will send the Terms of Reference for the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee to all committee members.
5. C. Boyd will forward the website link for the University’s Safety, Environment and Health Procedures, to C. King, for distribution to committee members.
6. C. Boyd will check on the status of a year-old complaint regarding 4 Clark Place.
7. On behalf of the committee, the co-chairs will draft and send a letter to Darrell Miles requesting that they be permitted to attend the inspection of 4 Clark Place, and also asking about prevention plans for the future.
8. G. Jenner will follow up with MUNFA regarding the air quality reports for the Henrietta Harvey Building.