

THE COMMUNICATOR

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY'S EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER

February 1999

- [News stories](#)
- [From the President](#)
- [Career Scene](#)
- [Safety Notes](#)



THE COMMUNICATOR

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY'S EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER

News Stories

- [Memorial employee sees safety in numbers](#)
- [President's Award for Exemplary Service](#)
- [What are the benefits of getting involved?](#)
- [Memorial's 72-hour miracle](#)
- [Questions and answers about the pension plan](#)
- [1998 Pension Adjustments](#)
- [Salary adjustments for many employees made in the wake of pay equity](#)
- [Payroll news for 1999](#)
- [CAUBO awards recognize quality, efficiency](#)
- [Employee Profile](#)

[Memorial Home Page](#) | [Communicator Home Page](#) | [February 1999](#) |

Memorial employee sees safety in numbers

(The Communicator - February 1999)

Members of the campus community may have noticed that entrances to campus buildings are being numbered. This safety-minded idea was the brainchild of Richard Newman, an engineering technologist in the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science. Mr. Newman came up with the idea a number of years ago and it was originally implemented in the Engineering Building. The numbering system enables emergency vehicles to respond to the entrance/exit that would allow the most efficient service. The numbering system - informally being dubbed "Newman's Numbers" - has gained acceptance and will now be used on other campus buildings. On the lighter note, Mr. Newman notes with a chuckle that the numbering system has also helped make pizza deliveries and taxi pick ups easier. Once the system is in place, the Office of Safety and Environmental Services will be providing the campus community with more information. Stay tuned!

President's Award for Exemplary Service

(The Communicator - February 1999)

Since 1995, the President's Awards for Exemplary Service have been awarded to administrative staff members to recognize their commitment to service excellence within the university community. The awards honour employees' contribution in any of these areas: contributions made to the university through service, support and professionalism; excellent performance in the job; extending help to students, faculty, fellow employees, parents, and university guests; involvement with committees or organizations. Many academic and administrative units have indicated that a September nomination time frame, with a Sept. 30 deadline, is not practical. In response, the nomination process has been moved to the spring.

Nomination forms will be available March 1 at each academic and administrative department office and through the Office of the Vice-President (Administration and Finance) and Legal Counsel, Arts Building, Room A-2024.

What are the benefits of getting involved?

(*The Communicator* - February 1999)

A great deal of research has been done on the benefits of getting involved in campus life. Probably one of the best known researchers in the area of involvement and its impact on the postsecondary experience is Dr. Alexander Astin. In his books, *Four Critical Years* and *Four Critical Years Revisited*, Dr. Astin reports on his extensive research into the benefits of student involvement. His work has shown that students who are more involved on campus are more likely to:

- graduate
- go on to graduate-level education
- rate their university experiences as more positive
- have more confidence in approaching faculty members
- participate in classroom discussions
- donate to the university upon graduation
- have well-developed critical thinking skills

It is evident that many of the tendencies learned by students through their extra or co-curricular involvements are abilities that are common contributors to academically successful students.

Involved students offer many benefits to their university. Involvement is a solid form of retention. Through involvement, students develop opportunities to pursue avenues of university participation beyond the classroom, yet the impact can be seen within the learning environment. Dr. Astin found that involved students are generally more content with their university experiences. Not surprisingly, students who enjoy attending university are more likely to persist and graduate.

Students who speak highly of Memorial are our best source of promotion. More and more students are advising us on our services, how we could improve their experience, and which student issues outside the classroom frequently infringe the academic learning that should be inherent in a university atmosphere. Students are our providers: They provide us with valuable insights into their own experiences so that we can best bridge the gap between student needs and university support.

Memorial has many opportunities for students to get involved on campus (e.g., our student unions, clubs, societies, student centres, academic committees with student representatives, varsity sports, etc.).

Many student-run programs available through Student Development aim to enrich student life at Memorial while trying to achieve the results that Dr. Astin's research has found. We are evaluating the

impact of involvement on our own students and plans are underway to begin long-term tracking of students involved in our programs. This type of forward thinking research is facilitated through our HEAR (Higher Education And Research) Unit in conjunction with the Student Leadership and Orientation Office in the Thomson Student Centre.

What can our faculty and staff do to help students get involved?

- The first step is to raise your own awareness of what ways students can get involved on campus; Student Development's home page is a great place to start. We are located at: <http://www.mun.ca/student>
- Dr. Astin has shown that students' success at university also increases with their opportunities to interact with members of the university community. Participation in departmental activities is a great way, too.
- Promote involvement opportunities within your classroom and on a one-on-one basis.
- Finally, get involved. Memorial is always looking for faculty and staff involvement in many student-focused events.

Students will change when they come to university; that is a certainty. Our choice is how much students will change and whether we can make it a change for the better. Involvement is one of the keys to excellence in academic learning experiences. We all share in the benefits and in the responsibility.

Memorial's 72-hour miracle

(The Communicator - February 1999)

Mary-Beth Hutchens, student services co-ordinator with the School of Social Work, says she's learned a big lesson about Memorial. "The university isn't an institution ... it's a community," she said. "I was asking for a 72-hour miracle and I got it."

Ms. Hutchens is referring to a plea she sent out to the university on Dec. 20 of last year. Averil Molloy, a fourth-year social work student, was seriously ill. Ms. Molloy had been diagnosed with breast cancer in 1995 and after rigorous treatments was pronounced well.

Shortly after she entered the social work program in September 1997, she was forced to admit she wasn't feeling well and in December of that year she learned she had bone cancer.

With the help of classmates like Jacqueline Carey, and faculty and staff, Ms. Molloy completed her winter 1998 semester and prepared for a field placement for the fall. Just a month into the placement, she had to withdraw because of extreme pain.

She learned about a detoxification program at the Health Quarters Ministries in Colorado Springs, U.S. A. Jacqueline Carey's parents donated air points for the ticket and the Carey family did some fundraising in Corner Brook, but a seemingly huge amount of money was still needed. Fourth-year social work students sold tickets on a prize basket. Ms. Hutchens' sister Linda Doody donated a print, with framing from the Art and Frame Shop; tickets on that raised about \$1,000.

On Dec. 20 the more general appeal went out and Mary-Beth Hutchens was almost overwhelmed. "I thought I would be able to handle (the response) myself, but I had to go out and round up some students to help," she said. "I couldn't believe it - especially where it was right before Christmas and I would have thought a lot of people were not in their offices."

From all over the St. John's campus, people were phoning - offering a loonie, \$20, or proceeds from an office collection. Volunteers were kept busy picking up the donations. When the 72 hours had ended, a total of \$2,400 had been collected in addition to the \$1,000 ticket sales on the print.

Ms. Hutchens sends heartfelt thanks to all who contributed. This included a donation from Burton's Pond (\$100); the CSU (\$200); the bookstore (\$100); social work faculty, staff, and students (\$212); everyone who contributed to the jar at Bitters (just over \$300); CUPE 1615 (\$100); the fifth-year social work class (\$500); and the library staff (almost \$300).

Averil Molloy went to Colorado Springs at the end of January for what she described as "a gruelling" treatment.

Editor's note: At publication time Ms. Molloy reports that she underwent the treatment in Colorado Springs and says that her trip was very helpful. She will continue to seek other options and appreciates everyone's help and positive thoughts.

Questions and answers about the pension plan

(The Communicator - February 1999)

Under what authority does the Memorial University Pension Plan operate?

The Memorial University Pension Plan is a legislated public sector pension plan that operates under the authority of the *Memorial University Pensions Act*. The Memorial University Pension Plan is also subject to the Newfoundland *Pension Benefits Act, 1997*, which governs pension plans registered in this province, and provisions of the *Income Tax Act* (Canada) governing registered pension plans.

The Board of Regents is trustee of the Memorial University Pension Plan and the plan is administered by the Department of Human Resources.

What type of pension plan is it?

The Memorial University Pension Plan is a "defined-benefit" plan, which means that employees' retirement pensions are calculated according to a pre-determined pension formula specified in the plan provisions. This type of plan differs from a "defined-contribution or money-purchase" pension plan whereby an individual's retirement benefits are dependent on the amount of contributions and investment income accumulated in the individual's account at the time of retirement.

Who participates in the pension plan?

People who are appointed to full-time permanent university positions are required to become members of the Memorial University Pension Plan. Those who are appointed for a minimum contract period of six months to work at least 20 hours per week may elect to participate in the plan.

How much are employees required to contribute to the plan?

Employees' contributions to the Memorial University Pension Plan are integrated with contributions to the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) according to the following schedule:

- 6.565% of earnings up to and including the Year's Basic Exemption (YBE) under CPP. The YBE is the portion of earnings upon which no CPP contributions are required. The YBE for 1999 is \$3,500.
- 4.765% of earnings in excess of the YBE up to and including the Year's Maximum Pensionable Earnings (YMPE) under CPP. The YMPE is the ceiling upon which CPP contributions and benefits are based. The YMPE for 1999 is \$37,400.
- 6.565% of earnings in excess of the YMPE.

For example:

Annual salary	\$45,000	6.565% x \$3,500	\$229.78
---------------	----------	------------------	----------

YMPE	\$37,400	4.765% x \$33,900	1,615.34
YBE	\$3,500	6.565% x \$7,600	498.94
MUN pension contributions			\$ 2,344.06

Does the university also contribute to the Memorial University Pension Plan?

Yes, the university generally matches employee contributions. Further, the university is responsible to contribute additional amounts if, at some time, there is not sufficient money in the fund to cover the benefits accrued to plan members.

Employee contributions and those made by the university are paid into the Memorial University Pension Fund for investment.

How are retirement benefits calculated under the Memorial University Pension Plan?

Retirement benefits are calculated in accordance with a pre-determined formula referred to above. The formula is based on pensionable salary and years of pensionable service and is integrated with benefits received under CPP, as follows:

$$[2\% \times A \times B] - C$$

where A = best five-year average pensionable salary

B = number of years credited pensionable service

C = CPP reduction (0.6% x best five-year average CPP contributory earnings x # years CPP service) applied upon receipt of CPP pension benefits

Is there a maximum number of years' pensionable service?

No, as long as people continue to be employed in pensionable position, they are required to contribute to the Pension Plan and will continue to accrue pensionable service until retirement. Prior to January 1997, however, pensionable service accrual was limited to 35 years.

For further information on the Memorial University Pension Plan, please contact the Benefits and Pensions Office at 737-7406.

Stay tuned for more pension Q and As in future issues of *The Communicator*.

1998 Pension Adjustments

(The Communicator - February 1999)

Members of the Memorial University Pension Plan will see higher Pension Adjustment (PA) amounts reported on their 1998 T-4s as a result of 27 pay periods in 1998 compared to the usual 26 pay periods in most calendar years. An employee's PA is a measure of the value of the pension benefit earned during the year and is calculated with reference to their reported annual pensionable earnings. Higher pensionable earnings mean higher PAs.

The PA reported in any given year is one of the factors used by Revenue Canada to determine an employee's room to contribute to a registered retirement savings plan (RRSP) for the following year. The PA that is reported in 1998, for example, is deducted from 18 per cent of 1998 earned income - to a maximum of \$13,500 - and used in determining the RRSP contribution room generated for 1999. For many employees, the amount of RRSP room that is used up by the higher PA will be offset through the calculation of 18 per cent of earned income, where earned income includes an additional pay period in 1998. In some cases, though, particularly those employees for which 18 per cent of earned income is at or near the \$13,500 limit, there may be no recovery of reduced contribution room.

If you have any questions on your 1998 pension adjustment amount, please contact Glen Roberts in the Benefits and Pensions Office, 737-7406.

Singled out stipend causes controversy

Salary adjustments for many employees made in the wake of pay equity

(The Communicator - February 1999)

In 1997, in the wake of pay equity adjustments, the Department of Human Resources undertook a review of some university jobs to address a number of distortions that had occurred in workplace salary relationships. Only certain classes of employees had been evaluated under pay equity and, among other problems, the action resulted in some jobs that were subordinate to others actually being paid at a higher salary. "We weren't totally surprised that some of the traditional salary relationships among employees were distorted by the number of changes we made to pay rates and to job classifications," said Dr. George Hickman, director of Human Resources. "We reviewed a number of job classes and made several adjustments to employees' salaries as a consequence."

Now, one of those adjustments, the payment of a stipend to administrative support employees in executive offices, has caused some controversy at the university. The Canadian Union of Public Employees local on campus, CUPE 1615, recently claimed that the stipend represents preferential treatment for the eight women who work as secretaries and executive assistants in the offices of the president and vice-presidents.

However, university officials say that the only thing unfair is the manner in which these employees are being singled out by the union. "We made adjustments across a number of job classes that resulted in increased salaries for union, management and non-bargaining unit employees," said Dr. Hickman. "To single out this small group of employees is to ignore the adjustments we made at the same time to over 90 other employees who were in similar circumstances."

Dr. Hickman said the review of job classes reviewed three things: supervisory relationships, salary relationships and market relationships. "The largest group affected was the Administrative Staff Specialist II class who all received pay adjustments," he said. "We also made adjustments to salaries of other classes of employees including general office supervisors, staff accountants, tendering clerk and customs clerk employees, the secretary to Senate, the personnel technician and benefits officer class, university information officer class, equity officer, computing systems officer and system programmer classes, senior clerk stenographer class, assistant systems officer and accountant clerk classes. In addition, we introduced market differentials to deal with the need of the university to compete with the private sector on salary for computing and information technology employees."

The stipends for the executive support staff came about as part of this overall review and were introduced along with these other measures as a means of providing a pay incentive for employees who assume these senior administrative support positions - positions where the employees are on a constant "on-call" status and whose work requires them to be in the front line in many situations that do not occur elsewhere in the university.

"It's unfortunate the union has misunderstood this issue," said Dr. Hickman. "All we are doing is trying to develop a pay system that is fair for all of our employees and that fairly compensates them for their work. We didn't inform the union about some of these moves because, quite frankly, they didn't involve union personnel. But, in retrospect, perhaps if we had communicated to the entire university on this earlier, we could have avoided the confusion and misrepresentation we have seen from CUPE on this issue over the past few weeks."

Payroll news for 1999

(The Communicator - February 1999)

The federal government has made the following changes to employment insurance and the Canada Pension Plan for 1999:

	1998	1999
Canada Pension Plan		
Contribution rate	3.2%	3.5%
Maximum per year	\$ 1068.80	\$ 1186.50
Employment Insurance		
Contribution rate	2.7%	2.55%
Maximum per year	\$1,053.00	\$ 994.50
Total maximum for CPP and EI	\$ 2,121.80	\$ 2,181.00

An employee who contributes the maximum for CPP and EI will pay \$59.20 more in 1999.

The description on your pay cheque for Canadian Employment Insurance (CANADIAN E) has been changed to "EI DEDN" effective Feb. 12, 1999. This should better explain the reason for the deduction.

T4s were sent out Feb. 17, 1999. Don't forget that there were 27 pay periods in 1998 and box 40 is the taxable benefit for the amount of life insurance paid by the employer.

CAUBO awards recognize quality, efficiency

(The Communicator - February 1999)

Editor's note: The following information is provided as a reminder. Information on the CAUBO awards was previously circulated to the campus community by Wayne Thistle, vice-president (administration finance) and legal counsel.

The Canadian Association of University Business Officers Quality and Productivity Awards deadline is approaching. CAUBO promotes the professional and effective management of the administrative, financial and business affairs of higher education. This annual awards program is designed to recognize, reward, and share university achievements aimed at improving the quality while reducing the cost of higher education programs and services. (Editor's note: Memorial won an Atlantic Regional Award in last year's competition for a partnership between the university and Newtel Information Solutions which saw the team deliver IT consulting to the Dublin Institute of Technology.) Academic initiatives will be considered on the grounds of increased productivity and effectiveness. Increased quality of instruction alone will not be considered, since it is beyond the scope of the CAUBO mandate, and other venues exist for its recognition.

Awards

There are two award categories-national and regional. Three national cash awards are given annually for the best three submissions nationally. No institution may receive more than one national award per year.

First prize: \$10,000

Second prize: \$5,000

Third prize: \$3,000

In addition to the national awards, four regional awards will be given for the best submission in each region (Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario and Western Canada) which does not win a national award. Submissions receiving a national award are not eligible for a regional award; however, an institution may win both a national and a regional award for different submissions.

The selection committee reserves the right not to give an award if not warranted in its judgement. Awards winners are announced in May, and prizes and plaques are presented by the sponsors at the Annual CAUBO conference in June. Initiatives may be resubmitted by an institution provided they contain additional qualitative and quantitative results.

Criteria

Five categories, each with its own weight, are used to evaluate submissions for the Quality and Productivity Awards, leading to a maximum score of 100 points. The scoring factors and point values for each category are as follows.

- 1. 15 per cent/Portability** - the potential for use of the technique at other institutions.
- 2. 20 per cent/Originality** - the originality and uniqueness of the idea as applied to higher education.
- 3. 25 per cent/Quality impact** - the extent of the impact of improvements in quality of service as seen by the end user, or in working conditions as seen by staff.
- 4. 25 per cent/Productivity impact** - the extent of the impact of the improvements in productivity. The size of the institution will be taken into account where the improvements generate financial savings or increased revenue.
- 5. 15 per cent/Involvement** - the extent of the involvement of the entire institutional community. Consultation beforehand with staff and users, faculty and students, and broad acceptance of the changes will be taken into account.

100 per cent

Clarity of presentation is an essential element in the assessment of the portability criterion and a major consideration in the scoring in the other categories.

The deadline for the Quality and Productivity Awards is March 5, 1999. For further information about these awards, and for application forms, please call 737-8217.

Employee Profile

(The Communicator - February 1999)

Bernard Healy **Engineering Technologist** **Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science**

Bernie is a familiar face to the generations of undergraduate engineering students with whom he's worked in the first floor labs. The 25-year veteran of the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science is a millwright/industrial mechanic by trade. He recalls the days when the design lab was "just a bunch of drafting tables."

Bernie takes particular pride and satisfaction from seeing Memorial-trained engineers appear on television as spokespersons for large engineering concerns such as Hibernia, as well as for their own successful local firms. Over the years he has observed some interesting changes in the abilities and aptitudes of incoming students, which he attributes to what he calls "the throwaway society."

"Nobody tinkers anymore, and you get a different breed of students coming in. Things are more like black boxes to people nowadays: if it breaks, you throw it away and get another one."

In contrast to this trend towards disposable technology, Bernie himself enjoys working with his hands, and has built a cabin for his family. "It's one of those projects that will never be done," he reports with a smile.

An avid sportsman and lover of the outdoors, Bernie enjoys fishing, hunting, and hiking. He has coached hockey and baseball at the inter-provincial level, and enjoys a game of squash these days.

Bernie and his wife, Sherida, have three sons: Mark, 25, Paul, 21, and Peter, 17.

Bernie, together with a number of his colleagues on the technical side of faculty, reports having outlasted five deans. He's certainly a fixture in the business of educating engineers here at Memorial: just ask any of the graduates who call or drop by seeking his advice.

From The President

Increased grant means status quo

(The Communicator - February 1999)

In December the university submitted its budgetary request to government. We estimated that maintaining operations at current levels would require an additional \$7.3 million for 1999-2000 and \$7.7 million for 2000-2001. The university's budget presentation to government was published in the Jan. 21, 1999, issue of the *Gazette*.

I'm sure I share with many of you the opinion that the provincial government's decision to increase the university's operating grant by \$7 million in each of the next two years was welcome news. The increase will bring our operating grant to \$106 million (not including Medicine) which is actually less than what government provided annually at the beginning of this decade. Thus the increase was much needed. As a result, we were able to hold the line on tuition, which will remain at \$3,300 for a full-time undergraduate student (except in Medicine) taking 10 courses over two semesters.

The very public announcement on Jan. 14 of these additional funds will probably increase expectations. The fact is that the \$7 million is not a pool of funds for new initiatives. Rather, it allows us to maintain academic programs, salaries, services and tuition fees at current levels.

It does not factor in wage increases beyond the normal step increases that have already been negotiated.

This year will see the beginning of negotiations on new contracts for MUNFA and CUPE, our largest unions. If such negotiations result in salary increases, and I have little doubt that this will be one of the main goals, it must be understood that there is no existing pool of money from which such increases can be found.

The money would have to come from government as an increase to our operating grant, or internally through program reduction or other means; indeed government was informed of this in our budget submission.

All this is by way of suggesting that the process we have begun, to re-shape and re-define the university, must continue. We must continue our efforts to develop a highly efficient and cost-effective academic and administrative structure. We must do all this together and in view of our mutual aim, which is to make Memorial University the best that it can be. The \$7 million gives us time to complete the process of re-examination and hopefully signals a trend toward greater funding of this institution. It also signals

a willingness on the part of those charged with developing and implementing public policy to provide appropriate levels of funding for an institution of the size and complexity of Memorial. This is a good thing for the institution, for its employees and students, and for the entire province.

A. W. May, O.C.

PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR

Career Scene

(*The Communicator*, February 1999)

The following career changes have received approval since the last issue of *The Communicator*. They are provided by Human Resources and are current at the time of publication.

ACADEMIC

Appointments

Dr. Douglas Baggs, (Emergency Medicine), Medicine, assistant professor, April 1, 1999

Dr. Stephen Crocker, Sociology, assistant professor, Jan. 1, 1999

Dr. Maura Hanrahan, Division of Community Health, Medicine, assistant professor, Feb. 1, 1999

Dr. Linda Healey, Discipline of Psychiatry, Medicine, clinical assistant professor, Feb. 1, 1999

Dr. Serpil Kocabiyik, Mathematics and Statistics, associate professor, Jan. 1, 1999

Dr. Rod Martin, Discipline of Surgery, Medicine, clinical assistant professor, Jan. 18, 1999

Dr. Cherry Pike, Discipline of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Medicine, clinical assistant professor, Jan. 18, 1999

Dr. Guy Quirion, Physics and Physical Oceanography, assistant professor, Jan. 1, 1999

Dr. Xingfu Zou, Mathematics and Statistics, assistant professor, Jan. 1, 1999

Term Appointments

Dr. Jerome Delaney, Education, assistant professor, Jan. 1, 1999

Appointments, Other

Andrew Fisher, Engineering and Applied Science, director of Continuing Engineering Education (CEE), Feb. 1, 1999

Dr. Se-Kwon Kim, Biochemistry, visiting professor, Feb. 1, 1999

Dr. Scott Moffatt, Medicine, postgraduate counsellor, Jan. 18, 1999

Dr. John Myers, Earth Sciences, Voisey's Bay Nickel-Paterson Chair (for a five-year term), and professor (with tenure), May 1, 1999

Cross Appointments

Dr. Gerard Curtis, Visual Arts, Sir Wilfred Grenfell College to Historical Studies, Division of Arts, Sir Wilfred Grenfell College, Sept. 1, 1999

Dr. James Friel, Biochemistry to Discipline of Pediatrics, Medicine, Jan. 18, 1999

Dr. K. Wilf Nicholls, Memorial Botanical Garden to Biology, Sept. 1, 1999

Dr. Michael Parker, Classics, Sir Wilfred Grenfell College to Historical Studies, Division of Arts, Sir Wilfred Grenfell College, Sept. 1, 1999

Dr. Thakor Patel, Biology to Biochemistry, Feb. 1, 1999

Dr. Catherine Szego, Music to Folklore, Feb. 1, 1999

Tenures

Dr. Bagala Biswal, Economics, Sept. 1, 1999

Dr. Trevor Bell, Geography, Sept. 1, 1999

Dr. Sheila Drover, Basic Medical Sciences, Medicine, Sept. 1, 1999

Dr. Michael Grant, Basic Medical Sciences, Medicine, Sept. 1, 1999

Dr. Jennifer Porter, Religious Studies, Sept. 1, 1999

Dr. Anne Thareau, French and Spanish, Sept. 1, 1999

Dr. Marc Thackray, Business Administration, Sept. 1, 1999

Dr. Diane Tye, Folklore, Sept. 1, 1999

Dr. John Usher, Business Administration, Sept. 1, 1999

Promotions

Dr. Kenneth R. Kao, Medicine, associate professor, Sept. 1, 1999

Victoria Marshall, Librarian IV, Sept. 1, 1999

Dr. Alasdair Turnbull, Business Administration, associate professor, Sept. 1, 1999

Retirements

Dr. Everard H. King, English Language and Literature, Aug. 31, 1999

ADMINISTRATIVE

Contractual to Permanent Appointments

Patrick Clarke, Technical Services, technologist II, Oct. 3, 1998

John Kuzmanovic, Technical Services, technologist II, Aug. 26, 1998

Transfers

Deanna Janes, senior secretary, Faculty of Science to School of Continuing Education, Dec. 16, 1998

| [Memorial Home Page](#) | [Communicator Home Page](#) | [February 1999](#) |

Safety Notes

Safety Notes is compiled by the Office of Safety and Environmental Services, Department of Facilities Management, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Nfld., Canada, A1C 5S7. It is distributed in the university's employee newsletter, The Communicator, and to external safety organizations. For further information contact Wally Drover, manager of safety and environmental services, 709-737-4393.

- [Laser pointers can wound eyes](#)
- [What's in this container?](#)

Laser pointers can wound eyes

(The Communicator - February 1999)

There have been several recent news reports of eye injuries and other accidents caused by misuse of laser pointers. Laser light is the strongest source of light ever created. A one milliwatt (1 mW) laser is one million times brighter than a 100-watt light bulb. Initially, laser pointers were less than 1 mW and could not cause permanent eye injury. Recent models, from 1 to 5 mW, are Class 3a lasers and are dangerous to the eye.

Laser pointers are intended for use during lectures and demonstrations but, because of price reductions and wider marketing, are being purchased as novelty items. Unfortunately, users are not knowledgeable about the intensity of the light and the effect it may have on the eye. Reflected or direct exposure of the eye can cause temporary or permanent injury because the eye is so sensitive to light.

Laser pointers must be used with caution. Avoid aiming at people or towards mirrors or mirrored surfaces. Use a model that stays on only while you apply pressure to a switch. Laser pointers should be used only for their intended purpose and should be kept out of the reach of children. If your eyes are exposed to a laser pointer and any effect persists, you are advised to consult a doctor.

Copies of a recent Health Canada bulletin on misuse of laser pointers are available from Safety and Environmental Services, 737-8250.

What's in this container?

(The Communicator - February 1999)

Do SLS, MBTH, EDTA and DAB mean anything to you? How about Solution A, Fred's Stuff, and Do Not Throw Out? Containers on campus have been observed labelled like this in both laboratory and office settings. Individuals are prone to using abbreviations and jargon and this carries over to the labelling of secondary containers (those containers that were not filled and labelled by the manufacturer).

As long as everyone in the work area knows the meaning of the abbreviations, there should not be a problem, right? Wrong. According to WHMIS (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System) regulations, all secondary containers must be labelled with proper workplace labels that includes the full name of the material as listed on the original manufacturer's label. This is to protect the health and safety of everyone who enters the workplace, including custodial and maintenance staff and emergency responders. In the event of a chemical spill, fire or other emergency, it is imperative to know the identity and concentration of the materials involved. Also, often when the person who labelled the containers leaves the workplace, we are left trying to determine the proper disposal of an "unknown" material. So for the health and safety of us all, avoid using abbreviations and label all containers with the proper name.
