

July 21, 2017

## UPDATE - FENTANYL

Since fall 2016, CUPW has undertaken discussions with CPC concerning the implementation of an emergency procedure for cases of accidental exposure to Fentanyl or any other opioid in the workplace.

During the March 2017 meeting of the National Joint Health and Safety Committee, a Health Canada expert came to explain the properties of Fentanyl as well as the various modes of absorption in the human body. According to the expert, the intravenous mode of absorption is by far the most dangerous. While absorption through the pores of the skin is possible, it would take an exposure of more than six (6) minutes to be affected. We were also informed that the nitrile gloves provided by the Corporation constitute adequate protection against absorption through the pores of the skin.

Moreover, the expert informed us that, to date, no one in Canada has died due to exposure to or contact with Fentanyl other than by voluntary absorption through the natural pathways of the human body. This information was corroborated in writing last June by the office of the Minister of Health for Manitoba in answer to a concern expressed by one of our members.

Following this discussion with Health Canada's expert, the Corporation published a safety talk for supervisors who, in turn, were to hold a floor meeting and explain what Fentanyl is, the possible consequences of exposure to this product and the procedure to follow should the presence of Fentanyl or opioids in the workplace be suspected.

Accordingly, CUPW asked the Corporation to make available Fentanyl antidote kits (Naloxone or other) in all of the Corporation's facilities. Canada Post had instead decided to deploy Naloxone in the three mail sorting plants (Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal) where agents of the Canadian Border

Services Agency are located. Recently, CPC informed us that the kits will be available in all mail sorting plants in Canada.

Despite this CPC decision, CUPW maintains its request that Naloxone be available in all Canada Post facilities across the country.

Nevertheless, workers across the country must remain very vigilant and, at the slightest suspicion of the presence of Fentanyl or of any other dangerous substance, the procedure established in the Corporate Manual System, (CMS 1605.21) "*Suspected Biohazard Incident Response*", must be implemented immediately.

CUPW is aware that this situation is evolving and will keep you informed of all new developments.

The struggle continues!

In solidarity,



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Health and Safety

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