



TECH TO TECH

Newsletter

of the College Laboratory Technician Chapter of the PSC/CUNY

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No. 3

IN THE CONTRACT

Workers' Compensation: Article 38

The PSC/CUNY contract states:

"The parties agree that Workers' Compensation shall be made applicable."

Why file for WC?

1. It does not cost you anything to file.
2. Our welfare fund should not be used for work related injuries or illnesses.
3. You do not have to stop working to receive full WC benefits.
4. WC payments may continue even if you get a new job, retire or leave the state and if you can never return to work, benefits can continue for life.
5. You are entitled to WC no matter whose fault the injury/illness was (there are exceptions, i.e., intoxication from alcohol or controlled substance or by willful intention of the injured employee to harm himself or another).
6. If you use sick leave you may get it "reimbursed".
7. Generally you cannot sue your employer for job-related injuries.
8. Your injury may occur again (i.e., back injuries) and if your case was not established the first time, you may have difficulty getting benefits.
9. You may be eligible for additional monies (Schedule Loss of Use Awards) which are only available if you file for WC.

Excess Workload: Article 15.4(e)

In the 1996-2000 PSC-CUNY Contract, you were granted the right to bring excess workload complaints to the attention of a Labor/Management committee selected on each campus that would make recommendations to the President for resolution of these complaints.

Several CLTs have brought excess workload issues to our attention, but in order for anything to be done about them,

- a) You must document them and provide your PSC grievance counselor with that documentation. That means that you must be willing to put your complaint in writing and to follow through with it.
- b) Procedures have to be put in place at your campus to convene an excess workload committee. Most campuses do not yet have one. Your CLT Chapter is working on clarification of Article 15.4, and on setting up and augmenting procedures that can be applied to all CUNY campuses.

What constitutes "excess workload?" Whatever adds to your 35-hour work week can become excess workload if you cannot reasonably complete these extra tasks within the 35 hours. Examples may be:

- 1) Extra course sections.
- 2) Substantial increase in laboratory preparations, such as the number, type and size of preparations.
- 3) Construction or other physical plant change that necessitate traversing between distant locations on campus.

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IN THE CONTRACT

continued from page 1

Workers' Compensation

When are you covered?

1. Starting your first day at work;
2. Regardless of how the injury happened;
3. You must file a form C-3 at the WCB within the two years of the date of the injury.
4. If you are out of work for 7 days or less, no benefits are paid for lost wages. Your medical costs will be covered. **But the 7 days do not have to be consecutive days of absence.** They can accumulate over time. Your eligibility for lost wages begins the 8th day. If your doctor keeps you out of work for 15 days or more, your wage payments will be retroactive to day one.
5. It usually takes several weeks before you receive any checks.

Any questions regarding job related injuries or illness should be referred to either-

Michael Fikes @ 212-354-1252 ext. 290 or
Bob Wurman @ 212-354-1252 ext. 208 on
Wednesdays.

Bob Wurman

Excess Workload

- 4) Traveling between campuses.
- 5) Increased maintenance tasks resulting from decreased student or part time assistance.
- 6) Increased paperwork resulting from changes in purchasing procedures.
- 7) Increased recordkeeping and lab work to meet EPA compliance requirements.
- 8) Additional training required to set up new equipment and technology or to repair old equipment.

Bring excess workload issues to us with your documentation.

Ellen Steinberg

Know Your Contract— That's How You Ensure Your Workplace Rights.

FROM THE CHAIR

Legislative Action: If you ever wondered why the PSC has a Legislative Committee, look no further than the conflict over the Chancellor's scheme to extend the tenure clock.

At the first sounding of the Chancellor's attempt to drag out the pre-tenure period to seven years, our Legislative Committee—headed by Co-chairs Vera Weeks and Eileen Moran, and Legislative Coordinator Cecelia McCall—sprang into action.

With the aid of NYSUT's Committee of 100, our committee lobbied in Albany to counteract Management's assault on NYS Education Law, Section 6212, our tenure provision.

As a result of their resolute efforts, to this date no sponsor for Management's proposal has emerged in the State Legislature. The struggle is not over, but the Legislative Committee is on the case.

(I don't know about you, but I've had nightmares about CLTs being subservient for seven years, two years more than we now have to endure until we are tenured.

After all, CLTs have no research/publishing responsibility to evaluate for tenure. How long does it take to assess one's technical and collegial competency? Five years, in fact, is an unnecessarily long time. CLTs should be granted tenure in three years.)

Shelly Mendlinger

To Your Health

Indoor Air Pollution

An Overview

Many of us work in buildings with mechanical heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems. The efficiency and effective operation of HVAC is the major determinant of the indoor air quality (IAQ) in such structures.

High energy costs in the 1970's and 1980's encouraged the development of tight buildings and a reduction in the amount of outdoor air brought in for ventilation. In addition, building operating and maintenance budgets have been reduced to minimal levels, particularly in schools and colleges. These actions, combined with the proliferation of indoor sources of contaminants, reduce the quality of indoor air environments and consequently the health and comfort of building occupants.

Sick Building Syndrome (SBS)

a) Definition— the class of physical complaints and symptoms expressed by a large percentage of building occupants.

b) Causes

- Inadequate ventilation— allows pollution levels of existing sources to increase.
- Bioaerosols— mold spores, bacteria, viruses, pollen, etc. These could be particularly virulent or cause violent allergic reactions.
- Indoor pollutants— volatile organic compounds found in building materials, furnishings and fabrics, cleaning agents, office copiers, pesticides.
- Tobacco smoke, asbestos, radon.
- Outside sources— motor vehicle exhaust fumes, toilet gas, etc., much of it due to improperly placed outside air intakes.

c) Physical Effects— The cause of the symptoms is not known. Most complainants report relief upon leaving the building.

Typical complaints and symptoms include:

- Headache, dizziness, nausea
- Fatigue
- Eye, nose or throat irritation
- Dry or itchy skin
- Congestion, sinus trouble

Building Related Illness (BRI)

Most occupational diseases fall into this category. Their causes are clearly identifiable. They include:

- Allergic respiratory diseases—asthma, humidifier fever, rhinitis, sinusitis.
- Infections— Legionnaires' Disease, Pontiac fever.
- Skin diseases—Typical complaints and symptoms are very similar to those associated with SBS.

Preexisting Illnesses are exacerbated by indoor air pollution, flu and colds.

TIGHT BUILDINGS AND TIGHT BUDGETS HELP REDUCE THE QUALITY OF INDOOR AIR!

**Ezra Seltzer.
Randy Smith**

Have a Seat

A new study by researchers at the University of Texas School of Public Health at Houston, published December 15, 2003, offers scientific evidence that combining a highly adjustable office chair with ergonomic training can improve an individual's health and productivity. This is particularly relevant in the computer age, when instructional staff members spend long hours sitting in front of this instrument.

There is nothing new here. However, it emphasizes the importance of ergonomically sound practices. The study was published in the December 15, 2003 issue of the journal *Spine*. For more information, visit www.spinejournal.com.

Ezra Seltzer.

Lab Safety-

Don't Touch That Hotplate!

Prudent Lab Practices-I

Disposal of Waste Acids and Bases in the Laboratory

Neutralization of acids and bases (corrosives) is generally exempt from an RCRA treatment permit. However, because the products of the reaction are often disposed of in the sanitary sewer, it is important to ensure that hazardous waste such as toxic metal ions is not part of the effluent.

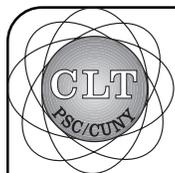
In most laboratories, both waste acids and waste bases are generated, and so it is most economical to collect them separately and then neutralize them one with the other. If additional acid or base is required, sulfuric acid or hydrochloric acid or sodium or magnesium hydroxide, respectively, can be used.

If the acid or base is highly concentrated, it is prudent to first dilute it with cold water (adding the acid or base to the water) to a concentration below ten percent (10%). Then the acid and base are mixed, and additional water is slowly added when necessary to cool and dilute the neutralized product. The concentration of neutral salt disposed of in the sanitary sewer should generally be below one percent (1%).

Prudent Practices in The Laboratory: Handling and Disposal of Chemicals

ISBN#-0-309-05229-7, ©1995, 427 pp. **Ezra Seltzer**

[See your campus Chemical Hygiene Officer before beginning this procedure. Ed.]



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PSC/CUNY

President

Barbara Bowen

Newsletter staff

Editors

Shelly Mendlinger

Randy Smith

City Editor

Ezra Seltzer

Layout/design

Shelly Mendlinger

OPEIU #153

Names and Numbers

CLT Executive Committee

Shelly Mendlinger . Chair	(718) 951-5721
Ellen Steinberg Vice Chair, Grievance councl	(212) 481-5056
Randy Smith, ret. ... Secretary, DA, Membership Chair	
Steve Trimboli Cross Campus Officer, Grievance Chair. ...	(718) 960-8644
Louis Rivera Officer-at-Large	(212) 220-1490
Keith Rowan Officer-at-Large	(718) 982-3278
Tom Shemanski Officer-at-Large	(718) 631-6271
Robert Suhoke Officer-at-Large	(212) 650-6973
Joy Johnson DA	(718) 270-6210
Robert Wurman, ret. DA, .	
Freelun Maria Chen, ret. Alt DA	
Camille MacIntyre . Alt DA	(212) 481-5057
Ellen Steinberg Alt DA	(212) 481-5056
Marion Saccardi Alt DA	(718) 368-5198
Ezra Seltzer, ret. Communicator	(718) 209-0416

CLT Campus Representatives

Campus	CLT Rep.	Phone
Baruch	Alan Pearlman	(646) 312-4492
BMCC	Louis Rivera	(212) 220-1490
BxCC	Lourdes Rosario	(718) 289-5219
Brooklyn	Shelly Mendlinger	(718) 951-5721
City	Derek Quinlan	(212) 650-6060
COSI	Marie Larsen	(718) 982-3967
Grad Center	Barry Carr	(212) 817-2523,7336
Hostos	Marisa Rodrigues	(718) 518-6548
Hunter	Camille McIntyre	(212) 481-5057
John Jay	Kettline Paul	(212) 237-8893
KCC	Marion Saccardi	(718) 368-5198
LaGuardia	Marge Lesser	(718) 482-5779
Lehman	Michael Baxter	(718) 960-8237
Medgar Evers	Joy Johnson	(718) 270-6204
NYCCT	Albert Sherman	(718) 260-5837
Queens	Alan Bartow	(718) 997-4181
Queensboro	Tom Shemanski	(718) 631-6271
York	Joel Gomez	(718) 262-2596

PSC/CUNY

Central Office	(212) 354-1252
Central Office Fax	(212) 302-7815
Credit Union	(212) 354-2238
Welfare Fund	(212) 354-5230

E-Info

PSC web page www.psc-cuny.org

CLT Info-list cunyclt-l@hunter.cuny.edu (to send e-mail)

To subscribe send e-mail to:

majordomo@hunter.cuny.edu

In body of message type the command:

subscribe cunyclt-l

CLT Discussion-list psc-clt@groups.yahoo.com (to send e-mail)

To subscribe send e-mail to: Ellen Steinberg at

esteinb@hunter.cuny.edu

Ask to be subscribed to psc-clt.