

On Occupational Health and Safety

Using Maps to Identify Health & Safety Problems

by Dorothy Wigmore

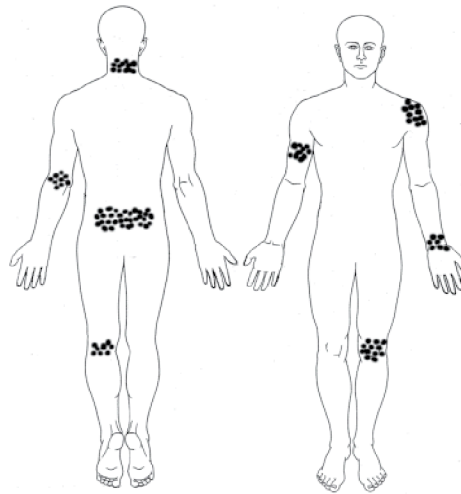
The first step in a health or safety campaign is to find common problems. Then comes the detective work to find the hazards behind the symptoms. Many health and safety activists use body and workplace maps to see how workers are injured in their workplaces now or how they are affected by what they did years ago.

Mapping is participatory and fun. It involves most senses, can be used where workers speak different languages or do not read well, and is a quick way to make sense of complex situations. Maps can show the different experiences of workers by age, seniority, job, or gender.

Body maps can show the patterns of symptoms and the long-term effects of hazards. Workplace maps give an overview that individuals do not have. You can use the two types of maps together to see the workplace in a new light.

Body Maps

“This is the first time I’ve known I’m not alone in my pain,” a veteran construction worker said after seeing the body map he and others made in an ergonomics workshop for operating engineers. His reaction illustrates a classic barrier to health and safety organizing — individual workers think their symptoms are just their problem. Body maps can break that barrier. The most



common version is to use the front and back outlines of a body. You can get these (and much more information on different kinds of mapping) at www.hazards.org, or you can draw your own outlines. Make a large version for the overall group and smaller sheets for groups of workers.

Next, decide what your questions are. Are you looking for aches and pains? All the symptoms workers have now? Long-term effects, such as cancer, chronic pain, stress? Do you want to see the effects by gender, age, job, or seniority?

Get people into small groups. If you want information by age, for example, divide them into groups based on that category. Give each group coloured markers or coloured sticky dots and a code to mark their outlines. One method uses red = aches and pains, green = where does your stress show up, and blue = other symptoms that may be work-related. To get the overall picture, have them transfer their information to the large body map.

When you are looking at aches and pains, one person can act out the job. The others identify which body parts are likely affected by force, repetition, and awkward postures. With permission, they can mark the spots directly on the person, using “ouch” stickers.

Workplace Hazard Maps

Workplace maps usually focus on the hazards behind the symptoms that show up on the body map. Groups of workers draw the layout of their workplace or work area. Be sure to include doors, windows, offices, washrooms, desks, machinery and equipment. The larger the map, the more details you can add.

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Eritrean Community Launches New Video on Workers Health and Safety

This past November, the Eritrean community in Winnipeg launched a new video on workers' health and safety rights featuring voices and images of their own community. More than 200 people, mainly from the local Eritrean community, attended the video launch at the University of Winnipeg and enthusiastically praised both the message and the delivery of the video.

The Eritrean Community in Winnipeg Inc. worked in cooperation with the Occupational Health Centre and local video production company, MediaCircus.TV to produce the video. The video hosts deliver the main messages of the video in Tigrinia and Arabic and are Eritrean community members trained by the Occupational Health Centre on workplace health and safety issues.

Karen Hamilton works with the Eritrean community for the Occupational Health Centre. She says that in addition to having a new educational tool on workplace health and safety in their own language, making the video was also an effective community development strategy. More than 20 community members directly participated in the making of the video both on and off screen. Seeing their community celebrated and portrayed in a culturally sensitive manner and

having their own community members provide crucial information sends a powerful message that promotes community empowerment.



Lambros Kyriakakos

Lambros Kyriakakos, the key organizer for the video from the Eritrean community explains that the work they had to do in the community to make the video is much more than what is seen on screen. Bringing community members together to appear on the video or to work "behind the scenes" generated interest and raised awareness about the issue of workplace health and safety. Kyriakakos reports that during the making of the video, the community learned about some of its own members who have suffered permanent injuries in the workplace and will carry the consequences of their injuries for their entire life. Although they were hesitant to appear on camera, Kyriakakos says that by

sharing their stories, "these individuals have benefited the entire community and taught us a lesson about the importance of our health and preventing injuries in the workplace."

The video for the Eritrean community was made possible with funding from Manitoba Labour and Immigration's Immigrant Integration Program.

Upcoming Events

QNET presents

Capable Managers: What do they do? Why does it Matter? with Linda Duxbury
February 28, 2008 - 12:30 pm - 4:30 pm
For more information or to register call 949-4999 or go to www.qnet.mb.ca

Family Centre of Winnipeg presents

Creating Inclusive, Respectful & Healthy Workplaces and Communities
March 3, 2008 - 8:30 am - 12:30 pm
Norwood Hotel
For more information or to register call 947-1677 or go to www.familycentre.mb.ca

Manitoba's Labour Movement presents

Day of Mourning for workers killed and injured on the job - April 28, 2008

- 8:30 a.m. - CUPE 500 - Sunrise Service
- 11:30 a.m. - Workers of Tomorrow Leaders' Walk
- 6:00 p.m. - MFL Candlelight Service

Room 2C - Union Centre
For more information call 947-1400

Manitoba Federation of Labour presents

27th Annual Health & Safety Conference
May 8 & 9, 2008 - Winnipeg Convention Centre
For more information call 947-1400

Hazards are often divided into six categories

- safety (immediate causes of injuries)
- physical (energy sources such as radiation, temperature, and noise)
- chemical (dusts, liquids, gases)
- biological or communicable (infection, needlesticks, mould)
- ergonomic (force, repetition, posture, design of control panels)
- work organization/psychosocial risks (things that cause stress such as long or odd work schedules, no say about the job, workload).

Draw a different coloured icon or shape to show each category of hazard. Different sizes can show the seriousness, and the number of workers who may be exposed to the hazard can be marked inside the icon. Use sticky dots or some other format to put the people in the picture and show where they work.

It is also useful to show the flow of work and workers' usual paths (movements) in the workplace. The map is easier to read if you use string for this information. One worker made two maps using different colours of string to show the paths in a nursing home, on "normal" days and then when working short-staffed. The clear differences between the maps led to an "ah-hah" about her increased workload, a serious stressor.

World Mapping

Work takes a toll off the job — on our families, our leisure time, and our communities. "World mapping" is one way to show these effects.

Put a large sheet of paper up on a wall, with a small human figure in the centre. Then draw or add words around the figure to show how your lives are affected by your work. You might draw guitars you no longer can play because of crippled tendons or broken hearts from a divorce linked to long hours and stress.

Using the Maps

The first question to ask after you have made any of these maps is, "What do you see?" Look for patterns and things that do not fit the patterns.

Put together maps of work areas to get the overall picture of a workplace. Over time, come back to them to record new information or check on changes.

This article is reprinted with permission from Labour Notes, November 2006, No. 332. It originally appeared in **A Troublemaker's Handbook 2: How to Fight Back Where you Work and Win**. Dorothy Wigmore is a long-time health and safety specialist and activist based in Winnipeg, Canada.

did you know . . . ?

Overnight shift work is now classified as a 'probable' cause of cancer by the International Agency for Research on Cancer.

Scientists suspect that overnight work is dangerous because it disrupts the body's biological clock. The hormone melatonin, which can suppress tumour development, is normally produced at night.

Fair Trade Challenge — OHC will participate in Fair Trade Manitoba's One Month Challenge by buying fair trade coffee for 30 days, starting February 16, 2008. Choosing fair trade products supports fair wages and working conditions. To sign up or for more information visit: www.fairtrademanitoba.ca

I want to help!

I will support the Occupational Health Centre to help Manitobans protect their health and safety at work.

Name _____

Please make your cheque payable to the
MFL Occupational Health Centre
102-275 Broadway

Address _____

City _____ Prov _____

Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 4M6

Postal Code _____



Newly Released

Influenza 1918: Disease, Death and Struggle in Winnipeg by Eyllt W. Jones, University of Toronto Press, December 2007

Eyllt Jones examines the impact of the pandemic, including its role in the eruption of the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919. Arguing that labour historians have largely ignored the impact of infectious disease upon the working class, Jones traces the pandemic's affect on the family, the public health infrastructure, and other social institutions. This study brings into focus the interrelationships between epidemic disease and working class, gender, labour, and ethnic history in Canada.

Influenza 1918 concludes that social conflict is not an inevitable outcome of epidemics, but rather of inequality and public failure to fully engage all members of the community in the fight against disease.

Eyllt W. Jones is an assistant professor in the Department of History at the University of Manitoba. Her book is available at McNally Robinson Booksellers,



Send your newsletter contributions for "Focus on Occupational Health and Safety" to Karen Hamilton at khamilton@mflhcc.mb.ca or fax: 956-0848. We reserve the right to edit.

"Focus on Occupational Health and Safety" is published three times a year.

(Printed on chlorine-free paper made with 100% post consumer waste. Publication supported by our generous donors.)

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Are Depressed Men Part of Your Workplace?

Men's depression often goes unrecognized. Men are diagnosed half as often as women but die by suicide four times as often. The Man to Man Project of Clinic Community Health Centre can

- assist workplaces recognize the cost of men's depression
- provide mental health information designed for men in your workplace
- help male employees identify problems and seek help

For more information call Daryl Reimer, Project Coordinator at 784-4069 or email: dreimer@clinic.mb.ca

The MFL Occupational Health Centre (OHC) is a community health centre focussed on promoting the health of Manitoba workers. We are a non-profit, charitable organization funded by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and by donations from individuals and unions. We are committed to working with all Manitobans who are interested in creating safer and healthier workplaces.

The OHC provides the following services to Manitobans:

- **medical services to help you find out if your job is making you sick**
- **education and assistance to workplace health and safety committees to identify and resolve health and safety problems.**
- **special initiatives with immigrant and Aboriginal communities**
- **information and library services, Monday to Friday from 9 am to 5 pm**

Healthy Workplaces Healthy Workers Healthy Communities

