



Trades and Maintenance Workers

FACT SHEET – OCCUPATIONAL CONFERENCES 2009

WHO THEY ARE

If you've ever utilized a hospital elevator, relied on lights to lead you through a facility's winding corridors or stairwells, found relief in a heated or air conditioned hospital unit, used washroom facilities or a hospital switchboard – HEU trades and maintenance members are behind that work.

Trades and maintenance workers are responsible for the safe and continuous operation of a facility's infrastructure, equipment, energy and plant systems, as well as air and water quality. Their jobs include electricians, cooks/bakers, power engineers, carpenters, boiler operators, radiographic processor maintainers, mechanics, painters, welders, electronic technicians, and maintenance supervisors, among others.

They work in about 70 job classifications and comprise six per cent of the union's membership. These workers are vital in keeping life-saving systems functioning, including oxygen, life support, medical gases, and emergency backup generators. They're also responsible for smoke and fire control testing, building or renovating nurses' stations, and isolating ventilation systems to contain airborne contaminants.

HEU's trades and maintenance team is also the front-line emergency responder for such crises as building floods, hazardous spills, natural disasters, and electrical failures.

WORKPLACE CHALLENGES

Recruitment and retention, lack of preventative infrastructure maintenance, job security, and health and safety are some of the challenges in the trades and maintenance field.

They're also concerned about compensation for multi-ticketed trades, increased scope of practice, skills upgrading opportunities, and apprenticeship programs.

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WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

"We maintain all the building temperatures. We control disease by doing room pressurization. We manage all alarm systems. We also maintain temperatures for freezing or cooling for medications, for food services, for pharmacy."

"I supply backup power to the O.R., the PAR, the ICU, where people are in very weakened conditions."

"We are in control of, or responsible for, billions of dollars of buildings and infrastructure in the B.C. health care system."

"I've been entrusted to take care of a community asset. A hospital is the heart of a community, and with those tax dollars, we are paid to maintain the hospital and do projects and upgrades."

"Everything we do is all about the patient. I've never before seen an industry that was so dedicated to the work they do – whether it be a housekeeper or a cook, an engineer or a pilot on a Medivac, it's all about the patient."

"We maintain those diesel generators and engines so that if a surgeon was in the middle of an operation, he should not know that the power went out."

"If you're sick, you're in the hospital to recuperate. You want home-cooked meals, and that's what you're going to get with in-house food services, not TV dinners."

"We install equipment that's worth millions of dollars. We make sure that it's operated safely and properly."

WHAT THEY'RE DOING

The HEU trades and maintenance subcommittee – which includes HEU members Robert Bonham, Robin Elliott, Alex Gutowski, Albert Magnusson, Brad Stang, Lynnette Kingston (P.E.), James Barrett (P.E.), and staff advisor Noel Gulbrandsen – is the resource for workers in this occupational group.

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MATTERS!**
OCCUPATIONAL & WAGE POLICY CONFERENCES 2009



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