



GOOD NEWS:

# QUITTING NOT AN OPTION FOR BADLY BURNED TEACHER



Daryl Matthews

Looking back, Daryl Matthews couldn't tell you what he did on the morning of June 2, 1982, but he'll never forget what happened that afternoon.

Only 24 at the time, Matthews was teaching a Grade 9 shop class at Barnhill Memorial School in Saint John. With the end of the school year in sight, Matthews thought a demonstration involving methanol steam engines would be more stimulating for his students than a textbook assignment. However, the demonstration went horribly wrong when a flame leapt from the table, ran up the hose and into the methanol container. It exploded, hurling Matthews into the blackboard behind him.

While his first concern was for his students, it soon shifted to his own well-being. Engulfed in flames and looking for a place to roll, he escaped from the building where a co-worker smothered the flames with a blanket. The extent of his injuries soon became obvious.

"Coincidentally, my doctor lived across the street and he came over to see what the commotion was. When he saw me, he said that if I didn't get an ambulance within 10 minutes, I'd risk dying. I was probably on an adrenaline rush and the pain hadn't really sunk in, so I thought he was crazy. Then I noticed the skin on my hands peeling off like a glove."

Matthews was rushed to the hospital where he'd begin a long, painful road to recovery. He suffered burns to 95% of his body, 65% of which were third-degree burns. He ballooned from 180 to 220 pounds overnight, due to swelling. To deal with the excruciating pain, he was given as much Demerol as his body could handle.

"The doctors told me that had I not been in such good physical condition, I would not have survived."

At the time, Matthews could not imagine things getting much worse. But they did. The burns on his skin left him vulnerable to infection, so nurses lathered him in a silver sulfadiazine antibacterial cream daily. After a few weeks of treatment he developed an immunity, so doctors switched him to a different antibacterial cream. This would result in lifelong implications to both his hearing and balance.

"I woke up and distinctly remember that MASH was on the TV, but I couldn't make out what they were saying. I thought I had an ear infection."

His body had absorbed a toxic level of the drug. This permanently damaged his inner ear, affecting his balance and ability to hear high frequencies. Given the damage his legs sustained in the fire, learning to walk again was already a challenge, but having no balance compounded the difficulty.

"During the healing process, scar tissue would form on my body and tighten the skin, so even extending my legs was a challenge. One day after a fall, I remember my leg more or less exploding."

Matthews spent 110 days in the hospital, enduring comas, skin grafts, and painful rehabilitation. But never one to quit, Matthews was finally discharged into his parent's care. In November, Matthews was sent to WorkSafeNB's rehabilitation centre in Grand Bay, where he spent four months. By then his weight had dropped to 138 pounds, so much of his rehab was focused on regaining his strength.

"To this day I'm grateful for the compassion and patience exhibited by everyone I dealt with at WorkSafeNB. I only have good things to say about them."

By September 1983, Matthews was back in the classroom, this time at the Dr. Losier Middle School in his native Miramichi. He worked there until 2009, before retiring at the age of 51. The fact Matthews worked through pain and adversity to get back to his passion is not something that's lost on his case manager, Monique Doucet.

"He has certainly been through a lot, both physically and emotionally. He's taken the initiative to help other burn victims and to educate students on health and safety. He has overcome many obstacles and has a strong will to keep fighting."

Today, Matthews bides his time as the general manager of the Chatham Ironmen baseball team. His advice to others who have suffered a setback is simple – "Don't ever quit." •

## BOARD MEMBER PROFILE



Sharon Tucker

While some might question Sharon Tucker's decision to take on the role as chair at WorkSafeNB during such a time of significant transition, Tucker said she accepted the position out of love – her love of people and her love of a good challenge.

Tucker joined the board at a time when WorkSafeNB is not only looking for a new president and CEO (Doug Stanley retired on January 15, and has yet to be replaced), but must fill three

board member vacancies. "That represents 40% of our board," Tucker said, adding that two of the current members have been on the board less than a year. On top of that, the board is now working with a new minister (WorkSafeNB reports to the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour), a new government and new legislation, she said.

"The challenge will be building the new board as a team, and ensuring all members have the same

level of understanding. My focus as chair will be on leadership, governance and strategic direction."

In addition to her responsibility as chair, Tucker is facility administrator of the Charlotte County Hospital in St. Stephen, and is serving her third year as mayor of St. George, each a demanding role in itself. So how does she manage to juggle all three?

"I do sometimes get frustrated that there are not enough hours in the day. But I have been blessed with these opportunities, and am thankful for the gifts I have been given to help others. I am known as a consensus builder and team player, and have a good head for administration," she said, adding that her faith provides her with strength.

"I will give the amount of time to the job that it requires. It (chairperson) just requires a little more time now, than it will a year down the road."

Tucker said her experience as mayor and job as facility administrator have prepared her for her role as chairperson. "In those roles, you work from an agenda, identify weaknesses in processes and provide direction – exactly what I need to do

as chairperson," adding that she has no worries about the challenges faced by the board.

"Having already served on the board (she served as a worker representative from 2007-2010), I have nothing but respect for it. I was impressed with the structure and how the organization functions. It is so solid, with an exceptional staff and senior executive," she said.

"When I first served on the board, I learned very quickly that New Brunswick is a leader in many avenues of prevention and compensation. I consider it a great privilege to be asked to be part of it once again, and I appreciate the confidence placed in me."

Tucker said that WorkSafeNB is a leader in its field, because of a "staff that is committed to meeting the benchmarks for ensuring good results for our injured workers. But despite great outcomes (accidents continue to decline), the organization is always looking for new ways to improve. We don't sit back; we are always looking for that next step to improve, while always maintaining the focus on healthy and safe workplaces." •

# ANNUAL REPORT HIGHLIGHTS POSITIVE RESULTS

In 2010, WorkSafeNB met the targets set by its board of directors for safety, return to work, balance and staff satisfaction and engagement. The results were released recently in the *2010 Annual Report*.

Highlights of the 2010 report include the provincial accident frequency rate being well within the target of the previous five-year average, resulting in WorkSafeNB reporting one of the lowest accident frequency rates in the country. A significant decrease in the duration of lost-time claims was reported as well as a move toward changing the safety culture in New Brunswick through an overall increase in the percentage of New Brunswickers who view

workplace injuries as preventable.

The report also shows how WorkSafeNB continued to build upon positive operating results attained in 2009. Better than expected investment returns and in particular, lower than expected claims costs helped improve the funded position to 111.5%. And while the provisional average assessment rate increased in 2010, it still remained the lowest in Atlantic Canada.

Maintaining a fully funded position is great news for both employers and workers, said Sharon Tucker, chairperson of WorkSafeNB's board of directors. "Full-funding contributes to rate stability by reducing

the impact of year-to-year fluctuations, disasters and other unexpected events. And it means secured benefit payments for our injured workers," she said.

"I congratulate the workers and employers of New Brunswick who helped us achieve these results by reducing injuries and lost-time claims and claim durations, which drive our costs. And I thank WorkSafeNB's board of directors, its management and staff for their continued commitment and hard work toward our vision of healthy and safe workplaces in New Brunswick."

The 2010 Annual Report is available for download at [www.worksafenb.ca](http://www.worksafenb.ca). •

# MONUMENT HONOURING FALLEN WORKERS TO BE UNVEILED



A monument honouring fallen workers will be unveiled outside the W. Frank Hatheway Labour Exhibit Centre at the Lily Lake Pavilion on April 28, the National Day of Mourning. The day commemorates workers who have been killed, injured or suffered illness due to workplace related hazards and incidents.

While a majestic piece, it's only after you've considered its numerous symbolic elements can you truly appreciate its meaning.

Cast in bronze, the memorial consists of four workers lifting a beam overhead. Two of the figures are ghostly in appearance and represent lives lost on the job. A woman standing on a crate reminds us of unsafe work conditions that still exist today, and the man lifting a post at the end symbolizes the intense labour that went into the building of Saint John. At the end of the beam sits a canary, representing the era when miners used them to test the toxicity of the air in mine shafts.

Designed by Sussex area artists and friends, Darren Byers and Fred Harrison, their concept was chosen by the Hatheway Trust-April 28 Monument Committee out of 12 entries from Atlantic Canadian artists.

The statue will also serve as a sundial, marking the passage of time which eases the pain of loss. As a finishing touch, Byers said a beam of light will emerge from the canary's head.

"It will serve as a beacon of light and will shine out over the lake."

The selection committee described the statue as having a provocative design that invites interaction, inspection and reflection. Committee chairman George Vair agreed.

"This monument is a significant and meaningful piece of art which will become a local landmark in the city. It's a fitting way to honour the lives lost,

and to increase our focus on health and safety in the workplace."

The National Day of Mourning, held annually on April 28, was officially recognized by the federal government in 1991, eight years after the day of remembrance was launched by the Canadian Labour Congress. The Day of Mourning has since spread to over 100 countries around the world and has been adopted by the AFL-CIO and the International Confederation of Free Trade.

Last year, nine New Brunswickers lost their lives due to work-related causes. WorkSafeNB suggests that on April 28 you take part in flag lowering at your workplace or attend ceremonies being held at various locations around the province. Pay tribute to those present and those lost in New Brunswick workplaces with a moment's silence. For more information on Day of Mourning activities, visit the WorkSafeNB website at [www.worksafenb.ca](http://www.worksafenb.ca).

# STORYBOOK CONTEST LAUNCHED

## STELLA THE SAFETY SKUNK



WorkSafeNB is pleased to announce an exciting new contest for New Brunswick teachers and their students in Grades K-2. Classes are invited to create an original safety-themed story, featuring WorkSafeNB's mascot, Stella the Safety Skunk.

The grand prize winner will receive a class visit from Stella, and Stella the Safety Skunk T-shirts for each student. In addition, the grand prize winner will receive a signed, published copy of their storybook, which will also be published on [www.youthsafenb.com](http://www.youthsafenb.com), and the teacher will receive a \$100 Staples gift card.

Four finalists will also earn a classroom visit from Stella, T-shirts for each student and a \$50 Staples gift card for the teacher. Their storybooks will also be published on our youth website. Deadline

for entries is April 29, 2011 with the winner announced on May 18.

For more information, contact WorkSafeNB's youth programs co-ordinator, Chantal Durelle, at [chantal.durelle@ws-ts.nb.ca](mailto:chantal.durelle@ws-ts.nb.ca).

## Save the date!

**WorkSafeNB's 31st Annual Health & Safety Conference**  
October 12-14, 2011  
Fredericton Convention Centre,  
Fredericton, N.B.

# DON'T BE DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION

## PAY ATTENTION TO THE NEW LEGISLATION!



**Y**ou wouldn't write your friend a letter while driving a vehicle, so why would you send them a text message?

After legislation banning the use of hand-held wireless devices while driving was introduced in November, WorkSafeNB hopes you'd do neither.

"It's dangerous and there's no excuse," said WorkSafeNB associate counsel, Mike McGovern. "It jeopardizes not only you and your passengers, but everyone you share the road with."

The stats back it up. A poll commissioned by the Allstate Insurance Company of Canada in July 2010 found that while most Canadian motorists view distracted driving negatively, 75% admit they focus on tasks other than driving while behind the wheel. This is a huge problem, considering Allstate's statistics also indicate that 80% of collisions result from driver distraction.

But what constitutes distracted driving? While nearly 90% of the poll's 1,605 respondents had a negative

view of texting while driving, fewer than 20% saw adjusting the radio as a distraction.

New Brunswick's law against distracted driving only prohibits the use of any electronic device with a display screen, communication device, or entertainment device that is not firmly attached to a vehicle's dashboard while driving. It does not restrict drivers from other dangerous behaviours like grooming, eating and smoking.

In 2007, the most recent year for which numbers are available, insurance claims as a result of auto collisions in New Brunswick amounted to more than \$161 million. Using Allstate's findings, \$129 million would be due to distracted driving. Bill Adams, regional vice-president of the Insurance Bureau of Canada, said while the legislation is a step in the right direction, it's just a small part of the bigger picture.

"Dangerous distractions go beyond just electronic gadgets, but since common sense cannot be legislated, we encourage drivers to think about all distractions and change their behaviour accordingly."

So what does this mean for New Brunswick employers? McGovern said while the law doesn't target workplaces, he encourages employers to develop policies for, and to train employees on, safe driving practices. He applauded the City of Moncton for taking a proactive approach to

distracted driving last year.

"City employees were banned from using communication devices while operating city vehicles on March 31, 2010. Under the policy, employees must let all calls go to voice mail and can respond only once they've stopped at a proper location," he said.

McGovern cautions however, that the shoulder of a highway is not necessarily a safe place to pull over. "If you must make a phone call, find a restaurant, service station or other well-lit parking lot."

Drivers caught using illegal devices while driving will receive three demerit points and be fined \$172.50. The law exempts on-duty police officers, firefighters and ambulance staff and also allows citizens to use cellphones to report an emergency or to call 911 while driving. The ban doesn't affect use of two-way radios by commercial drivers, and ham radio operators are exempt if they're involved in a search and rescue.

A spokesperson for the Department of Transportation said the regulations are still being worked upon and that the department is currently developing a driver distraction public awareness campaign, which will begin once the law has been passed. •



### Day of Mourning April 28

Canada's National Day of Mourning is a day to remember workers killed, injured, or who developed an illness on the job. Please call your local District Labour Council for the times and locations of events planned in your community. You can also visit our website at [www.worksafenb.ca](http://www.worksafenb.ca).

## EVENTS

### North American Occupational Safety and Health (NAOSH) Week May 1 - 7

NAOSH Week focuses the attention of employers, employees, the general public and all partners in occupational health and safety on the importance of preventing injury and illness in the workplace and at home. This year's theme is "Safety & Health: A Commitment for Life! What's Your Plan?" For more on NAOSH Week, visit [www.naosh.ca](http://www.naosh.ca).

### Disability Awareness Week May 29 - June 4

2011 marks the 24th annual Disability Awareness Week (DAW) in New Brunswick. This year's theme is "Yes we can!" A variety of exciting activities and community projects related to the theme are being planned across the province. Regular updates on DAW events will be posted on the Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons' website, at [www.gnb.ca/0048](http://www.gnb.ca/0048).