

BEIJING STAFF WINNERS

Twelve members of the Canadian Embassy in Beijing, China, were granted a departmental Merit award. In the face of the Tiananmen violence and with the maneuvering of eleven different Chinese armies in the vicinity of Beijing, a decision was taken to withdraw all non-essential Embassy staff members and dependants. The emergency staff who remained behind were expected to perform long and arduous tasks. Most of the remaining staff had just seen their families evacuated and did not know when they would be reunited. Each of those remaining knew that there was a real risk of civil war, and that the risks to their safety were real. Staff moved from their staff quarters into temporary quarters in or near the embassy. Tents were pitched on the Chancery lawn, and the already cramped Embassy facilities became a refuge for

Canadians from across China who were desperately seeking means to leave the country.

Equally important were the contributions of staff and dependants who volunteered to stay behind, and who provided all the practical skills to enable the mission to function when it was such a focus of interest to the Canadian Government and, to Canadians in general.

The ability of these individuals to deal with the innumerable requests for information from Canada, including media representatives, is a tribute to their ability to function effectively under pressure. The task of evacuation of Canadian nationals from China, which was accomplished without injury to any Canadian, is in itself a testimony to the hard work of the mission staff in the most trying of circumstances.

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

Today, increasingly, workplaces are subject to change, not only in the use of technology, materials, and chemicals, but in many other ways that affect the health and safety of the work environment. The federal government's response to this ongoing change is the creation of an occupational safety and health program that receives input from both employer and employees. Occupational Safety and Health Committees, or as the case may be, a safety and health representative at each work site, are a manifestation of the program in action.

Under both the Canada Labour Code and the Occupational Safety and Health Standards, employers are required to establish safety and health committees at workplaces with 20 or more employees.

Representatives of both management and the employees work together to identify and solve safety and health problems in the workplace. At workplaces with fewer than 20, but more than five employees, a safety and health representative selected by employees must be appointed.

The Department of External Affairs has four Occupational Safety and Health Committees in Ottawa and 32 Committees at various missions abroad. The names of Committee members and the minutes of the monthly meetings are posted on notice boards for all employees to see. Should you have a job-related health or safety concern, bring it to the attention of your supervisor. Health and safety in the workplace are everybody's business.