

## If It Explodes, It's The Top Head That Rolls

WCB law requires industry employers educate their workers about the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS), and to ensure that all hazardous materials used are properly labeled, workers are trained in their use, and professional first aid is readily available in case of injury. Failure to meet any of these criteria, or failure of an employee to answer basic WHMIS questions, could result in the shut-down of a production.

While the threat of a shut-down and the cost associated with it should be incentive enough to follow the rules, the serious injury—or even death—of an employee could have grave consequences to a production. Damage to the reputation of company executives and to the production's producer is essentially guaranteed, and both civil and criminal lawsuits could follow. Should the company be underinsured or not insured at all, the results could be financially devastating. And for "guerilla" filmmakers trying to get that first reel finished, injury could end a career before it begins.

But is it practical to expect a producer to be aware of all hazardous materials on a set? No. And yet the law remains. Producers should therefore insist production

department heads and buyers acquire Material Safety Data Sheets (available from manufacturers and suppliers) on all hazardous goods, post them in full view of workers, and forward copies to both the producer and the first aid attendant. Producers must also insist on proper labeling of containers, particularly where contents are moved from the manufacturer's container into a secondary container (for example, moving paint thinner into a jar); and they should get into the habit of policing set for violations. While all this may seem overzealous, remember it will be the top head that rolls if injury occurs.

The transient nature of our employment means it is next to impossible for a production company to train employees as is required by WCB law; therefore, both I.A.T.S.E. and the DGC offer free weekend workshops to their respective members. Non-members may sign-up as space permits for a fee of approximately \$30. You get a proof-of-attendance card when you finish—and don't forget to put it on your résumé.

*Michelle Demers recently attended a WHMIS workshop sponsored by I.A.T.S.E. 891.*