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Releases

BCFED offers free English classes in Richmond, Vancouver to promote safer workplaces

Vancouver - The BC Federation of Labour is offering free English as an Additional Language (EAL) courses to help new English language speakers in the workforce and promote improved workplace health and safety.

In Vancouver, the course runs from 5:45 pm to 7:45 pm Tuesdays and Thursdays for 12 weeks, starting July 4, at the BCFED office, 200-5118 Joyce Street, near the Joyce SkyTrain station.

In Richmond, the course runs from 10 am to 2 pm Fridays for 12 weeks, starting July 7, at Richmond Multicultural Community Services office, 220-4351 No. 3 Road, at the Aberdeen SkyTrain station.

The workshops are open to all workers or those seeking work throughout the Lower Mainland who want to improve their English language skills. At the same time, participants learn about workplace health and safety rules, their rights as workers, and employers' obligations to provide a safe working environment.

Upon completion, participants in the program receive a certificate and are invited to a graduation dinner.

"This program is unique in Canada," said Irene Lanzinger, president of the BCFED. "We're trying to overcome any barriers that people have to accessing health and safety information to help make workplaces safer."

The program—which has been offered since 2008—started in response to high profile tragedies that highlighted the need for increased awareness of health and safety rights and responsibilities for new Canadians with language or literacy barriers.

In 2007, a van carrying farm workers was involved in a motor vehicle accident near Abbotsford. Three workers were killed, and 14 were seriously injured. In 2008, three immigrant workers were killed and two were left with permanent brain damage after inhaling toxic fumes at a Langley mushroom farm.

The free courses are coordinated and run by the Federation’s Health & Safety Centre with funding from the BC Workers' Compensation Board (WorkSafe BC).

For more information or to register for the program, visit: http://www.healthandsafetybc.ca/eal