

THUNDER BAY & DISTRICT INJURED
WORKERS SUPPORT GROUP
PRESENTS:
Your Voice Matters Series



GERRY LANDRY

Gerry worked on the Dryden project for only a short period of time between June and August, but this experience would have a lasting impact on his life.

Gerry Landry is currently 68 years old and lives in Nipigon, Ontario. Throughout his career, Gerry has worked as a boilermaker and was responsible for things such as hydrostatic testing, assembling energy infrastructure including air emissions equipment and precipitators. These tasks exposed Gerry to both the Oil and Gas industry as well as the Pulp and Paper industry.

After working on the Dryden Recovery Boiler 4 project - Gerry wished he would never have to work in Pulp and Paper again.

On the Dryden RB4 project, Gerry was working with a team of welders to correct an engineering mistake which had caused a misalignment in piping. He worked at heights on the 16th floor and was level with the two biggest chimneys of the mill. It was during these few weeks on the job that Gerry was exposed to countless chemicals and toxins.

Gerry recalls being given no safety training before starting work on the project and the only PPE provided was an escape mask - something not designed for working extended periods of time in. This was the only protection given to workers who were in close proximity to the chimneys. Requests for the proper PPE were refused.

During Gerry's last three days on the job, his body felt like a lead brick and he had to rest in the lunchroom from extreme fatigue. On the last day, he was experiencing chest pain and was taken to the Dryden Hospital. On this day, 59 other workers were on oxygen. Little attention was given to Gerry's condition and hospital staff appeared to be minimizing any injuries reported by Mill staff. He was told to get back to work and that nothing was wrong with him. This was after two individuals had died at home on the weekend who had been working at the Mill. Gerry returned later that evening again when he was experiencing burning in his throat and tongue. A doctor told him that he was likely experiencing hypoxia because of the chemical exposure.

Prior to the Dryden project, Gerry was a healthy man. After the project, Gerry has experienced countless lingering injuries from the job including memory loss, brain fog, heart problems, gastrointestinal problems, and lactose intolerance. Many of these problems have been difficult to receive a medical diagnosis or treatment for, and Gerry has had to advocate for his own health and find his own solutions to these problems.

Gerry worked briefly in the industry after the RB4 project, although it was difficult for him to continue working as a result of his injuries. After being injured on another job, he was successful in a WSIB claim after fighting for over 3 years for compensation.

Gerry's story highlights how the fear and intimidation exerted by Dryden Mill construction management caused workers to be needlessly exposed to dangerous situations. Workers had to advocate for their own safety, and oftentimes the medical establishment was not willing to acknowledge the source of their injuries. These injuries could have been prevented by proper manifolds and safety systems being utilized at the Dryden Paper Mill. Instead, the company chose to prioritize profits over safety and individuals like Gerry are forced to pay the price.