

Pivotal Moments in OHS History: The OC Transpo Massacre Raises Awareness of Workplace Violence



Pierre Lebrun was an unlikely candidate for the notoriety now associated with his name. Tall, lanky and soft-spoken, the 40-year-old Lebrun was considered a 'nice guy' by most of his co-workers at OC Transpo, the mass transportation authority of Ottawa.

<http://murderpedia.org/male.L/l/lebrun-pierre.htm> Pierre Lebrun: The man who gave Canada a workplace violence wake-up call

A Poison Work Environment

But there was one thing about Pierre that stood out: his stutter. Some of his colleagues gave Pierre a hard time about the way he struggled to get words out. What started as teasing soon turned into harassment. And Pierre didn't like it.

Deciding that enough was enough, Pierre got into a fight with a co-worker. OC Transpo fired him as a result. The union contested and won reinstatement. Pierre agreed to take anger management counseling.

Pierre Snaps

But the situation got worse. Pierre left OC Transpo. And then on April 6, 1999, he snapped. At 2:30 PM, Pierre, an avid hunting enthusiast, showed up at OC Transpo headquarters armed with a Remington 760 .30-06 rifle and pockets stuffed with ammunition. 'It's judgment day!,' he shouted as he entered the building.

Before the rampage had ended, Pierre had fatally shot 4 employees and seriously wounded another. He then turned the gun on himself.

The Legacy of Pierre Lebrun

Pierre Lebrun was hardly the first person to engage in workplace violence in Canada. On the contrary, Canada has and continues to have more than its fair share of incidents. But Pierre Lebrun and the OC Transpo massacre took the issue to the front of newspapers, public awareness and regulatory agendas across the country.

One by one, provinces changed their OHS laws to make it mandatory for employers to take actions to prevent violence in the workplace, including Ontario Bill 168.