

Health and Safety Report

May 2023

2023 Metal Removal Fluid Medical Surveillance Program

The Metal Removal Fluid (MRF) Medical Surveillance program for our Plant is being offered on a voluntary basis to eligible St. Catharines Propulsion Plant team members who regularly work in or have worked with machining fluids in the past. This medical evaluation exam consists primarily of a questionnaire to review signs or symptoms of respiratory and/or dermal conditions that may be associated with occupational exposure to metal removal fluids, in accordance with GM Medical Policy 6.7. Your responses to the questionnaire will be reviewed by Plant Medical to determine next steps, if needed, and results will be placed in your medical file.

Results that are placed in your medical file are private and confidential, and they are not shared with the Company. In fact, this applies to any information gathered by Plant Medical during any of the medical evaluations they conduct to ensure we are medically fit to safely perform certain tasks, such as drive a lift truck. Plant Medical only shares with the Company if required by GM Medical Policy, and only their conclusion of the evaluation that we are medically fit, medically fit with restrictions, or medically unfit to perform the task. That is not the case here, unless someone is deemed medically fit but in need of restrictions.

The MRF Medical Evaluation was negotiated by the Union in 2020. We asked for this, not the Company. We fought for four years for this medical evaluation, because Public Medical Professionals may find it difficult to determine work relatedness of the symptoms of MRF exposure unless occupational disease is linked back to workplace exposures. Respiratory symptoms can be attributed to a multitude of conditions, both occupational and non-occupational, especially now that we are living with COVID-19. While we work within and below the agreed Occupational Exposure Limits following GM Performance Standards for MRF, if you are working with or have worked with MRF in the past, it is important to have any respiratory symptoms documented properly.

The goal of monitoring symptoms annually is two-fold. Firstly, annual evaluations that are documented can be reviewed and tracked if symptoms appear or worsen, and we may be advised by Plant Medical to seek outside medical treatment. A worst-case scenario is where we may be evaluated by the Plant Medical Doctor and deemed medically fit with restrictions, but this may ultimately help alleviate symptoms by moving us to a different job with lower exposure. As OHCOW Occupational Hygienist John Oudyk writes, “The nature of these exposures is that most of the ill health effects are acute and will resolve once exposure to MRF has stopped.”

Secondly, the Union’s goal of linking our occupational exposure to symptoms is to provide an incentive to the Company to maintain our plant MRF exposure to levels that are low enough that we are not experiencing symptoms. This will ultimately help us improve air quality for the plant as our employer wants to keep WSIB costs low while also taking all reasonable precautions for the health and safety of its workers.

Starting April 24, 2023, eligible workers will be offered an opportunity to enroll or decline participation in the program. Forms must be picked up from, and returned to, Plant Medical no later than May 12, 2023. You must arrange your own appointment with Plant Medical by phone, email or in person, and you must inform your Group Leader of your scheduled appointment.

This is a voluntary program that has been used in UAW plants since 1996. We asked for it, we support it and we strongly encourage you to participate. Please contact us with any concerns or questions you may have.

Unifor Health and Safety Rep Edward Steers, 905 641 6420, Cell/Text 905 658 3271 ed.steers@gm.com
Alt. Unifor Health and Safety Rep Richard Piper 905 641 6505, Cell/Text 289 228 7126 richard.piper@gm.com