

Safe At Work Ontario

TODAY

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Safe At Work Ontario

Well received, positive results

TRACEY MILL

Director (A), Occupational Health & Safety Branch

June 2009 was a red-letter month for our *Safe At Work Ontario* strategy. As the program completed its first year, there was indeed a big reason to celebrate. This new risk-based, sector-focused approach to safeguarding workplaces across Ontario reported positive results on various fronts.



Safe At Work Ontario is a risk-based approach to inspecting workplaces with:

- Poor injury records,
- Health and safety risks inherent to the activities of the work, and/or
- History of non-compliance.

It also entails developing and implementing sector-specific strategies based on hazard profiles in each of the following sectors: Industrial (29 sub-sectors), Health Care, Construction, and Mining.

Safe At Work Ontario also includes making compliance information and risk assessment criteria accessible to employers on the MOL website through:

- [Sector plans](#),
- [Hazard-based blitz](#) announcements and background information,
- [CSA Standards](#), and
- [Construction Electronic Notice of Project](#) (eNOP).

In just one year we have seen some very promising results:

- Decrease in the annual rate of lost-time injuries (LTIs), from 1.8 per 100 workers in 2007 to 1.7 per 100 workers in 2008,
- 11,414 fewer injuries in 2008 as compared to 2007, and
- 22 fewer fatalities in 2008 as compared to 2007.

We believe we are targeting the right workplaces based on our risk criteria – including a firm's injury and compliance records and the hazards at work.

We are targeting the right workplaces, especially with the blitzes:

We are issuing more orders during blitzes than the program average.

We are enforcing the Internal Responsibility System (IRS):

We know that sustained improvements in our health and safety system means continually being concerned about the health and safety culture in workplaces

Beware heat stress

Heat, combined with other stresses – like hard physical work, dehydration, fatigue or some medical conditions – can lead to illness, disability and even death.

Heat stress can affect *anyone*, including the young and fit.

Hot weather and humidity put workers at risk indoors and outside, particularly in mid-summer. All workers should be aware of the dangers and symptoms of heat stress, and should work with their employers to protect themselves.

Symptoms of heat stress can include excessive sweating, headache, rashes, cramps, dizziness, and fainting. Employers should plan for first-aid or medical evaluation of sick workers.

Workers in all sectors are at risk. Employers should pay special attention to young and new workers working outside in hot weather.

[MOL Heat Stress Guideline](#)

[OHSCO Heat Stress Awareness Toolkit](#)

and broader communities. We are focusing our efforts this year on the IRS – developing tools and other information to build the IRS in our workplaces.

For example, in the Industrial program blitzes, over 30 per cent of the orders issued were related to the IRS – such as not having a Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC). See page 6 for more information on IRS.

What we will continue to do:

There is a lot that we have set out to achieve over the next few months:

- Sector plans for 2009-10 will be posted on our website,
- Formal consultations are scheduled for Winter 2009,
- We will continue to target high-risk sectors in our nine hazard-focused blitzes,
- The development of a broad-based IRS definition and new tools for inspectors to measure IRS, will help us in gauging employers' commitment to a strong health and safety culture. See story on page 6.

With *Safe At Work Ontario*, the ministry is committed to achieving a continuing reduction of lost-time injury rates (LTIs), while contributing to the WSIB's *Road to Zero* goal of an annual 7 per cent reduction. We are engaging our health and safety partners (through prevention and safety), in building a safety culture in Ontario workplaces and have begun integrating planning for pro-active inspections, which will ensure that intervention is tailored to workplace performance.

There are a lot of changes and challenges ahead. Working together within the ministry and across the health and safety system will allow us to rise to these challenges and find great opportunities!

A modern regulator

SOPHIE DENNIS

Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations Division

Safe At Work Ontario moves the Ministry of Labour from a traditional regulator to a modern regulator – broadening the ministry's scope beyond enforcement to include promoting a health and safety culture in all workplaces.



We are focusing on improving workplace health and safety practices through education, training, and enforcement of provincial legislation and regulations in cooperation with the system's education and prevention partners such as the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) and Ontario's Health and Safety Associations (HSAs).

Safe At Work Ontario has achieved a fundamental shift – moving from a traditional reactive, rigid, enforcement-based focus to a modern, proactive, flexible, compliance-based program. It is innovative, transparent and inclusive of stakeholder concerns, while continuing to protect the public interest.

Learning from the past, building for the future

The ministry now identifies and engages workplaces, not just according to their injury record, but also a variety of factors such as a history of non-compliance and the presence of health and safety hazards inherent to business activities.

View CSA standards cited in OHSA Regulations

Many regulations made under Ontario's [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) require compliance with standards published by the [Canadian Standards Association](#) (CSA). These standards define requirements for reducing the risk of workplace injuries.

Ontario – together with the other provinces and territories of Canada – is working with CSA to make it easier for employers and workers to comply with occupational health and safety requirements. Thanks to a pilot project funded in part by the Government of Ontario, you can now read the relevant CSA standards before you buy.

Registration to view the standards is required; however, there is no obligation to purchase anything.

CSA standards cited in Ontario's occupational health and safety regulations are available online for many sectors, including industry, health care, mining, manufacturing, agriculture and construction.

[View CSA Standards](#)



The ministry and its system partners' level of engagement with the workplace depends on factors such as employers' commitment to a strong health and safety culture, and a sustainable Internal Responsibility System (IRS). Other factors affecting the level of engagement by the ministry include the number of lost-time injuries (LTIs) and no-lost-time injuries (NLTIs), the nature and extent of any past non-compliance, and the corrective actions required of the employer to achieve compliance.



“Open for business” with fairness and transparency

As a modern regulator, the ministry, under *Safe At Work Ontario*, has introduced a balanced and transparent process that supports the government's Open for Business initiative.

For example, the ministry now consults annually with stakeholders in the development of sector-specific enforcement strategies and posts its planned inspection blitzes on the MOL internet. Another key element of the modern regulator built into *Safe At Work Ontario* is continuous improvement. Every year the risk-ranking criteria for firms are reviewed. Identification of firms for engagement is performed in consultation with all health and safety system partners (e.g., HSAs and the WSIB). Integrated planning is promoting the *right* system partner being in the *right* workplace at the *right* time with the *right* tool to meet that workplace's health and safety needs.

Targeting enforcement with hazard-focused blitzes

Inspection blitzes raise awareness of known workplace hazards and compliance with safety regulations. During blitzes, inspectors concentrate on contraventions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and its regulations, with a particular focus on the blitz hazards. The overall goal is to promote a long-lasting increase in compliance, and a decrease in the number of injuries.

Let's take a closer look at blitzes in construction and in mining – and at a blitz focused on all sectors.

Construction

Falls are the number one workplace killer on Ontario construction projects, followed closely by incidents with construction equipment and materials handling.

Electrical hazards are also a major concern. In 2008-09, the Ministry of Labour conducted a construction sector electrical blitz focused on work on or near energized conductors, equipment or panels. Workplaces were also checked to ensure that:

- There was sufficient clearance from overhead power lines,
- Adequate programs and lock-out procedures were in place and implemented by employers on construction sites, and

Construction Project Notification: we've made it easier

Hundreds of people in construction are finding it easier to comply with the law that requires them to notify the Ministry of Labour (MOL) before construction begins on any project meeting any of the requirements of section 6 of the [Regulation for Construction Projects](#).

A new, free, [electronic Notification of Project](#) (e-NOP) application form is now available on-line, and more than half of project notifications are coming to the ministry electronically.

Constructors, employers and individuals engaged in construction projects in Ontario have an efficient, easy-to-use access through the MOL website to register construction projects.

This project is part of the Ontario Government's business modernization initiative. Through this, the government is creating faster, smarter and more streamlined government services to business – while protecting public safety and ensuring that the best interests of the people of Ontario are a priority at every step.

- Only licensed electricians or apprentices carried out the duties of electricians on projects.

The blitz was so successful in identifying uncontrolled electrical hazards that we'll repeat the blitz this year and expand it to the mining sector.

Mining

Good electrical practices in the mining sector are critical to ensure a safe workplace. "The variety and scope of electrical issues encountered by MOL field staff in the past two years provide a foundation for this inspection initiative," noted John Robertson, Provincial Coordinator for the Mining Health & Safety Program. "Our field staff were trained on the new Canadian Standards Association standard, CSA Z462-08, Workplace Electrical Safety. This year, our staff were updated on changes to the Electrical Safety Act, ensuring an understanding of how Electrical Safety Authority jurisdiction meshes with that of the mining inspector."

Various concerns, noted by MOL staff in the field, will be considered as guidance as the ministry prepares for the mining-sector Electrical Lock and Tag inspection blitz this September:

- Building increased awareness of CSA Z462-08, which describes electrical safety requirements for the practical safeguarding of workers,
- The need for appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) is important,
- Arc flash burns cause more injuries than electrical contact. There are enhanced labelling requirements regarding arc flash, and current and protection requirements on new installations will be a focus of the blitz,
- There is increasing awareness that past tolerance for "working live" is not appropriate now. The new standard enables closer scrutiny of this practice and more thorough and formal assessment before engaging in this risky practice.

MSDs: the leader in lost-time injury claims

WSIB data indicates year after year that Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) are the leading type of lost-time injury claim.

Ministry inspectors look for the presence of MSD hazards (e.g., force, awkward postures, repetition, and vibration), and enforce compliance under the OHSA.

In April 2009, there was an all-sector blitz on MSD hazards.

This was the first time such hazards were the focus of a blitz and that a blitz was conducted across all four MOL health and safety sectors – industrial, healthcare, construction and mining – at the same time. "We know MSD hazards exist in all workplaces," says Sophie Dennis, Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations Division. "By having a blitz specifically on this topic, we send a message to workplaces that MSD hazards need to be addressed with the same diligence as other work-related hazards. Blitzes heighten awareness."



H1N1 Flu Virus Information

Health Care Providers:

- [Important Notices for Health Care Providers](#)
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
- [Influenza A \(H1N1 Information\)](#)
Ontario Safety Association for Community and Healthcare
- [FAQ: Health Care Providers](#)

Public Information:

- [H1N1 Flu Virus: What you should know](#)
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
- [FAQ: Public Information](#)

Employers and Workers

- [Emergency Preparedness at Work](#)
- [Pandemic Planning Guide for Employers](#)
- [Information Guide for Private Sector Pandemic Planning](#)

In April, the MSD blitz focused on the following workplaces and activities:

- Industrial – retail grocery stores, focusing on work in refrigerators and freezers, transporting work carts, storing products on high shelves, and cashier workstations,
- Health care – nursing and retirement homes, focusing on lifting, transferring and repositioning residents,
- Construction – homebuilding and specifically low rise forming, focusing on site access and egress, how workers handle concrete forms, and housekeeping,
- Mining – underground and surface mines, focusing on handling of drills.

The MSD blitz strategy was communicated beforehand to the HSAs and stakeholder groups who would be the focus of the blitz. This allowed our health and safety system partners to communicate with their member firms about the blitz and to offer resources, training and consultation. It also enabled workplaces to prepare for the MOL visits.

Ontario's HSAs did an outstanding job of generating awareness of the blitz and the issue of MSDs. Thousands of employers knew that the MOL could be visiting their workplace to inspect for MSD hazards. Resources were widely available.

Preliminary results indicate the MSD blitz achieved the goals of:

- Generating awareness that MSDs are a priority for the MOL,
- Generating awareness through the HSAs of MSD hazards,
- Increasing inspector field activity associated with MSD hazards, and
- Increasing enforcement related to MSD hazards.

Inspectors conducted more MSD blitz visits than any other blitz. The next issue of *Safe At Work Ontario TODAY* will feature the results of the blitz.

MOL Resources – Pains and Strains:

[Information for Employers](#)

[Information for Workers](#)

Inspection blitzes 2009-10

• Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) (Multi-sector): April 2009

We focused on hazards involving musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) during a workplace safety blitz in April, targeting workplaces in the construction, health care, industrial and mining sectors. Inspectors concentrated on tasks requiring workers to exert force in lifting, pushing or carrying items and on tasks that put workers in awkward postures or are repetitive. Look for a report on the MOL website soon. See story on page 4.

<http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/news/2009/09-32.html>

• New and Young Workers (Industrial Sector): June 2009

This annual blitz focused on the supervision and training of young workers and those new to a job. Many students have begun their summer jobs and recent graduates have begun full- or part-time work. New workers of any age



Internal Responsibility System

The Internal Responsibility System (IRS) within an organization gives *everyone* direct responsibility for health and safety as an essential part of his or her job – responsibility for reducing the risk of injury and illness.

It does not matter where people are in the organization; they achieve health and safety in a way that suits the kind of work they do. Each person takes initiative on health and safety issues and works to solve problems and make improvements.

They do this both singly and co-operatively. It is a responsibility of company management to ensure that the entire system of direct responsibility for health and safety within the company is established, promoted and improved. Successful implementation of the IRS should result in progressively longer intervals between accidents or work-related illnesses. [IRS Resources](#)

In November 2008, the ministry launched a new project focused on the IRS. The project team is creating the tools to promote a common understanding of what the IRS is, and how it can be established and maintained in the workplace. More information will be available in October 2009.

are up to four times more likely to be injured during the first month on the job than at any other time.

<http://www.news.ontario.ca/mol/en/2009/05/ontario-protecting-young-and-new-workers.html>

- **High-rise Formwork (CHSP): August 2009**

Safety issues surrounding the construction of high-rise formwork on industrial, commercial and residential buildings will be the focus of a blitz this August. Inspectors will focus on confirming that an engineer has designed the formwork and support system and will inspect the forms before concrete is placed. Inspectors will also look for compliance with fall protection requirements and ergonomic risks related to this type of work.

- **Electrical Hazards (Mining Sector): September 2009**

In preparation for the electrical hazard blitz, our field staff were trained last year on frequently encountered electrical hazards, and they were updated on the new standard – CSA Z462-08 – and recent changes to the Electrical Safety Act (ESA). The types of electrical installations and hazards are similar to those in the industrial and construction sectors. See story on page 4.

- **Hazardous Chemicals (Industrial and Health Care Sectors): September 2009**

This blitz will focus on compliance with regulations regarding the handling, use and storage of hazardous chemicals – as well as the use and care of personal protective equipment (PPE) and emergency measures and procedures.

- **Electrical Hazards (Construction Sector): October 2009**

The types of electrical installations and hazards are similar to the industrial sector, and include working near exposed electrical sources, proximity to overhead power lines and underground utilities. The upcoming blitz will focus on clearances, lockout procedures, training and authorization.

- **Falls (Industrial Sector): November 2009**

This blitz will focus on falls in retail, warehouse and utilities workplaces, particularly on worker training and proper use of ladders and mobile stairs. Inspectors will visit schools to discuss slips and trips and to review plans to prevent slips and falls in parking lots.

- **Forklifts and Lifting Devices (Industrial Sector): February 2010**

This will be a repeat of the successful February 2009 blitz, focusing on three priorities: Lifting Device Inspection and Maintenance, Operation of the Lifting Device by a Competent Person, and a Safe Work Environment.

Link to the February 2009 Forklift Blitz results:

<http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/sawo/blitz/blitz-report6.html>

- **Safe Ladder Use (CHSP Sector): Year long May 2009-March 31, 2010**

Ladders should be the last choice as a work positioning device. This blitz will stress on the appropriate use of ladders, ergonomic issues and ladder condition.

Links

Ministry of Labour website
[Home Page](#)

Inspection blitzes:
[Blitz announcements and results](#)

2008-2009 Sector Plans:
[Construction Sector Plan 2008/09](#)
[Healthcare Sector Plan 2008/09](#)
[Industrial Sector Plan 2008/09](#)
[Mining Sector Plan 2008/09](#)

News

Workplace Violence

Violence and harassment have no place in the workplace. That's the message Ontario is sending by introducing legislative amendments to the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* that would, if passed, help protect workers from workplace violence and harassment.

Bill 168, if passed, would:

- Require employers to develop of framework that includes policies and programs to help prevent workplace violence and address workplace harassment,
- Require employers to take reasonable precautions to protect a worker from domestic violence in the workplace, and
- Allow workers to refuse work if they have reason to believe that they are at risk of physical injury due to workplace violence.

Bill 168 received first reading before the House adjourned for the summer in June.

[Bill 168, Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act \(Violence and Harassment in the Workplace\) 2009](#)

OHSA: 30 years

For more than a century, MOL has played an important and evolving role in workplace health and safety. October 1, 2009, marks the 30th anniversary of the coming into force of the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA); an important piece of legislation that shaped the modern face of our ministry, as well as the workplaces of Ontario.



The OHSA (Bill 70) replaced a wide range of “piecemeal” occupational health and safety legislation that had evolved since the Ontario Factories Act of 1884.

After 30 years of the OHSA, we’re recognizing a period of remarkable change and achievement.

[Occupational Health and Safety Act \(OHSA\)](#)
[A Guide to the Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)
[Chronology, the Ministry of Labour and occupational health and safety](#)

Call

416-326-3835
(Greater Toronto Area)

1-800-268-8013
(Toll free province-wide)

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