Ministry of Labour launched an eight-week safety campaign in July that urged workers and employers to put safety first on construction sites across Ontario. The construction safety tour kicked off in Toronto, making stops in cities where summer construction activity is at its highest.

The campaign’s message was clear: get proper training, be aware of dangers and work safely.

Although Ontario has one of the lowest lost-time injury rates of construction workers in Canada, we must do more. According to Ministry of Labour data, between 2005 and 2009, nearly 40 per cent of workers killed in work-related incidents were construction workers. Ninety-seven died in construction-related incidents, while nearly 1,000 workers were seriously injured.

Working with the Workplace Safety Insurance Board (WSIB) and the Infrastructure Health and Safety Association (IHSA), our campaign targeted construction sites and local offices with information that raised awareness of enforcement and safety.

We couldn’t have done this without the help of our partners. For example, the IHSA sent an e-notice to their 20,000 members, and wrote about the campaign in its *Health & Safety News, Construction* publication, which goes to more than 21,000 readers. Dozens of other stakeholders also requested copies of the construction material for their staff.

We created on-site signage, coffee sleeves and newspaper ads that promoted construction safety. All together, more than 300,000 printed items were created. Dozens of media outlets across Ontario also covered the construction safety message this summer, reaching hundreds of thousands more people.

We are also striving to reach vulnerable workers in various ethnic communities. We placed advertisements in nearly a dozen ethnic news publications and printed construction safety tip cards in several languages.

The campaign came after a 90-day blitz of more than 2,800 construction sites earlier this year. During the blitz, inspectors found a volume of violations such as missing or inappropriate use of guardrails, scaffolding and fall protection systems, and inadequate supervisor and worker training.
The ministry is continuing a heightened enforcement on construction sites. This autumn, ministry inspectors are returning to sites that received fall hazard orders during the 90-day blitz to ensure compliance.

We will continue to keep you apprised of our enforcement in the construction sector.

By the numbers

Tens of thousands of products were created for this summer’s construction safety campaign. They included:

- 150,000 coffee sleeves
- 108,000 construction safety tip cards
- 10,000 posters
- 12,500 Safe At Work Ontario fact sheets
- 45,000 campaign stickers

New season, new resources

SOPHIE DENNIS
Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations Division

A strong health and safety culture requires all workplace parties to pay constant, appropriate attention to workplace health and safety. Workplace health and safety education is essential. As we enter the fall season, we continue to work with our health and safety system partners to create resources that help keep workers safe on the job.

Employers and worker groups have said they’ve wanted more tools to help them understand their duties and rights under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. We continue to listen. Here are some examples of new tools to help workplaces comply.

A new swing stage video is also available on our website, highlighting what an inspector looks for during an inspection of swing stages. It was produced in conjunction with Infrastructure Health and Safety Association.


We’ve created new downloadable fact sheets to help workplace parties prevent musculoskeletal disorders and falls on construction sites. And we’ve also updated a fact sheet to reflect the ongoing proactive enforcement of vehicle body repair shops that began in September. These fact sheets also outline what inspectors will be looking for during enforcement.


“There’s an epidemic of injuries and deaths in Ontario construction. That’s why this campaign is so important, and why we’re doing everything we can to support it. We hope the campaign will encourage everyone to live up to their safety responsibilities. And IHSA is ready to help both companies and workers with cost-effective training, safety information, and consulting.”

Al Beattie, Interim President and CEO of the Infrastructure Health & Safety Association.

Our ministry is also creating a series of posters over the next few months to help employers and employees stay safe. These will coincide with the ministry’s inspection blitzes. The Prevent Workplace Pains & Strains colour poster is now available for download and printing for workplace use and stakeholder distribution. The poster was created with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board and the health and safety associations. It is available in 15 languages, from Croatian to Chinese.


We look forward to our annual stakeholder consultations in January, where we will be hearing from worker, employer and sector representatives.

Thank you for continuing to work with us so that workers across Ontario are able to come home safely after each workday.
Toll-free number

The ministry has launched a single, dedicated toll-free number – 1-877-202-0008 – to which anyone can report anything that appears unsafe at any worksite. The number can also be used to report work refusals, incidents, critical injuries or fatalities. The public can also call the number with general workplace health and safety inquiries.

The number is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Ministry to focus on musculoskeletal disorders

The Ministry of Labour launched a two-month workplace safety blitz on Sept. 15 that focuses on musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). Safe At Work Ontario TODAY spoke with Anne Duffy, the ministry’s Provincial Ergonomist, about MSDs and what types of things inspectors will be looking for.

Q. Tell us about the ministry’s musculoskeletal disorders blitz.

Between September 15 and November 15, 2010, we will be focusing on hazards involving musculoskeletal disorders at workplaces across Ontario. They will include workplaces in the construction, health care, industrial and mining sectors. Our inspectors have the authority to take enforcement action if they find contraventions to the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations. They may include issuing orders or laying charges under the act.

Q. What are musculoskeletal disorders?

Musculoskeletal disorders, also known as MSDs, is an umbrella term for a number of injuries, and disorders of the muscles, tendons, nerves and bones. They can develop in your workplace as a result of ongoing exposure to such things as repetitive work, forceful exertions such as heavy lifting and carrying. They can also result from awkward postures and vibrating equipment that can affect our bones, joints, ligaments and other soft tissues.

Q. Can you give me an example of an MSD?

Sure. Common MSDs that can develop in the workplace include back pain, muscle strain, tendonitis, carpal tunnel syndrome and tennis elbow.

Q. Why is the Ministry of Labour conducting this blitz?

MSDs are also the most common reported workplace injury. They account for 43 per cent of all lost-time injuries, 43 per cent of costs and 45 per cent of days lost at work in Ontario. We’re talking about tens of thousands of injured workers and more than a million working days lost. Just in 2008, more than $330 million was spent by businesses in WSIB costs.

By focusing our enforcement efforts on MSD hazards, we expect to increase attention and action to address the hazards before injuries occur.
The money saved will be realized in the prevention of claims. As well, enhancing the ergonomics of a workstation, tool or overall work organization can have immediate cost benefits in productivity, quality and worker well-being. These cost savings can be significant and occur well before a drop in MSD claims is realized.

Stepped-up enforcement is part of the province’s Safe At Work Ontario strategy, which we launched in June 2008.

Q. Will the ministry be visiting any specific companies or workplaces?

There are no specific companies that are being targeted as part of this blitz. But, the ministry has directed inspectors during the blitz to target types of workplaces known to have high frequencies of MSD injuries and hazards. These include workplaces such as retail stores, the homebuilding sector, hospitals and mining operations.

Q. What will inspectors look for specifically?

It depends on the sector. For example, in the homebuilding sector, there will be a particular focus on mechanical equipment such as masonry mixers and wheelbarrows, ensuring they are well maintained. Inspectors will also check to see if materials being carried on the ground-level paths are free of obstacles. They will also look for other things.

In the retail sector – as another example – inspectors could focus on tasks involving worker handling of materials on ladders and step stools, team lifting of heavy objects, the safe transportation of work carts and cashier work.

Please visit our fact sheet on our webpage for a list of priority areas.

http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/sawo/pubs/fs_msd.php

Q. Thanks, Anne. Do you have anything else to add?

Yes, I’d just to let your readers know that our ministry and the health and safety associations have many resources on our website to help protect you and your workplace from MSDs. We’ve worked with the WSIB and other system partners to develop a spate of tools for employers and workers. We have a colour poster for you to download, an MSD interactive tool, prevention guidelines, a prevention toolbox and many other resources. Remember: Stay safe and work safe.


Anne Duffy joined the ministry in October 2006 as the Provincial Ergonomist. Anne leads the Pains and Strains campaign and acts as the senior ministry expert on ergonomics. She has more than 20 years of experience dealing with workplace health and safety, and she has authored and developed various guidelines and tools on workplace ergonomics. She is a Canadian Certified Professional Ergonomist.

NEW on the MOL website:

Construction safety resources (multilingual)
http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/topics/construction.php

Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) Fact Sheet: Prevent Pains and Strains in the Workplace
http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/sawo/pubs/fs_msd.php

Vehicle Body Repair Fact Sheet: What Vehicle Body Repair Shops Need to Know
http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/sawo/pubs/fs_autobody.php

Results-based Plans and Annual Reports
http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/about/pubs/rbp/index.php

Court Bulletins

Inspection videos available online
Swing Stage Inspections (new!)
Auto Body Repair Shops
Forklift Safety
Fall Hazards in Low-Rise Construction
Workplace Violence

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Inspection blitzes

The ministry created inspection blitzes to increase awareness, promote compliance with health and safety legislation, and expand the reach of inspector visits of hazards in Ontario workplaces. Blitzes are announced in advance to help employers prepare and ensure compliance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act. They also help communicate to employers the leading sector-specific workplace hazards that contribute to most of Ontario’s workplace injuries and fatalities. The ministry tracks each sector to determine if the blitzes result in a long-lasting increase in compliance and decrease in injuries.

We’ve provided resources – such as posters, fact sheets and videos – to help employers ensure they are compliant before, during and after a blitz. http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/sawo/pubs/index.php

In May 2010, the Ministry of Labour conducted a workplace health and safety blitz that focused on falls from heights in the industrial sector, including at retailers, restaurants, wholesalers and vehicle sales and service outlets. The blitz results are now available. http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/sawo/blitzes/blitz_report19.php

The musculoskeletal disorders (MSD) blitz is running between September 15 and November 15, 2010. And starting September 15, 2010, ministry inspectors began visiting more than 500 vehicle body repair shops to ensure that workplace parties are complying with orders issued last year and are eliminating certain hazards. http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pubs/msd_bulletin.php

Future blitzes include:

- February 1-28: Loading docks – Industrial and Health Care Sectors
Ministry of Labour receives healthy workplace award

The Ministry of Labour has been honoured with the prestigious Canada Awards for Excellence silver award for its outstanding internal healthy workplace strategy.

The award from the National Quality Institute (NQI) follows the ministry’s Progressive Excellence Program Level 3 accreditation in July, acknowledging the ministry’s strong internal healthy workplace strategy.

“This award is a testament to this ministry’s dedication to ensuring the safest and healthiest workplaces possible – including its own,” Minister of Labour Peter Fonseca said.

Increasingly, Canadian organizations and businesses recognize the need for a healthy workplace to boost workplace morale and productivity. They are also recognizing its importance in attracting and retaining staff.

Health and safety at workplaces across Ontario is a top priority for the ministry, which always strives to lead by example. In its evaluation, NQI noted a long list of the ministry’s strengths, including leadership commitment to a healthy workplace, strong engagement throughout the ministry, a commitment to mental health and encouragement of a work-home life balance.

“I’m honoured that our ministry has received this prestigious award. The benefits of healthier workplaces are evident: enhanced physical, social and mental wellness, not to mention a more effective organization,” said Deputy Minister of Labour Cynthia Morton.

The Ministry of Labour becomes the first Ontario ministry to receive this level of accolade for healthy workplaces, joining a distinguished list of well-known organization and companies. This year, NQI has awarded the Canada Awards for Excellence to 10 organizations, and the Order of Excellence to five organizations.

The Governor General of Canada is the Vice-Regal Patron of the Canada Awards for Excellence. The ministry received the award at an annual gala lunch on Oct. 20, 2010, in Toronto.
Tell us what you think!

Please take a minute to complete our brief online survey. We want to know what you think about Safe At Work Ontario TODAY – and what you would like to see in future issues. Thanks.  

Are you using the health and safety resources of your HSA?

Healthy and safe workplaces require enforcement and prevention. Work parties also need proper training and education. Businesses across Ontario can take advantage of many health and safety training and consulting resources available through Ontario’s four Health and Safety Associations (HSAs).

Earlier this year, 12 health and safety associations amalgamated into four organizations to serve more than 236,000 businesses across Ontario. The Ministry of Labour often identifies firms with poor safety records for inspection. These firms are also often engaged by an HSA for health and safety education and training.

Health and Safety Ontario (HSO) comprises four associations that provide services to every type of business:

- Infrastructure Health & Safety Association (IHSA) – construction, electrical and utilities and transportation
- Public Services Health & Safety Association (PSHSA) – universities, colleges and school boards, municipalities, health and community care organizations, emergency services and First Nations
- Workplace Safety North (WSN) – serving all northern Ontario firms and province-wide services for forestry, mining, smelters, refineries, pulp and paper, and printing industries.
- Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS) – agriculture, landscaping, manufacturing, service, hospitality, retail and wholesale services

HSAs provide:

- Health and safety expertise and best practices
- Innovative and cost-effective solutions
- Sector-specific products and services, and
- Information, advice and training.

Visit Health and Safety Ontario today for healthy and safety best practices, and cost-effective product and services.  
http://healthandsafetyontario.ca/