

Occupational Health and Safety Branch

Introduction to *Safe At Work Ontario* Sector Plans

2012-2013

Safe At Work Ontario
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Ministry of Labour

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Introduction to *Safe At Work Ontario* Sector Plans

As part of [Safe At Work Ontario](#) the Ministry of Labour develops annual sector-specific enforcement plans that focus on hazards specific to workplaces in different sectors of the economy. The plans describe the specialized and professional services office of the MOL as well as the industrial, health care, construction and mining sectors and outline what inspectors will be looking for during an inspection.

Heightened enforcement campaigns

Provincial heightened enforcement campaigns (“blitzes”) are intended to promote compliance at workplaces across the province. The campaigns focus on hazards that are inherent in the work process or contribute significantly to injuries or illness. The schedule for Ministry of Labour provincial inspection blitzes is posted on the web site at: www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/sawo/blitzes/index.php. Over the course of a health and safety campaign, the MOL also seeks to raise the workplace parties’ awareness of the issues addressed by the campaign. Information about the campaigns for 2012-2013 can be found in the program-specific portion of the sector plan. Although inspection blitzes are announced in advance, individual workplaces are not notified.

The ministry works with its system partners to get the message out to all workplaces.

System priorities

This year, in consultation with our system partners,

- musculoskeletal disorders
- slips, trips and falls
- machinery-related incidents, and
- motor vehicle incidents

were identified as the four key areas of focused planning.

Priority will also be focused on vulnerable workers and small business.

Musculoskeletal disorders

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are injuries and disorders of the muscles, tendons and nerves. They can occur suddenly or gradually, after prolonged or repeated exposure to hazards such as excessive force, awkward posture or repetitive motion. The hazards associated with MSDs may exist in any type of workplace. Because they account for 44 per cent¹ of all lost-time injury claims in Ontario, MSDs will continue to be a focus for the ministry. For more information please visit the [Musculoskeletal Disorders / Ergonomics](#) section of the MOL website.

Slips, trips and falls

Slips and trips are injuries or illnesses resulting from a *single incident of free bodily motion* which imposed stress or strain upon some part of the body. Generally, events in this category result in the occurrence of strains, sprains, ruptures, nerve damage or other internal injuries or illnesses resulting from the assumption of an unnatural position or from voluntary or involuntary motions induced by

¹ Source: WSIB Statistical Supplement to the 2010 Annual Report.

sudden noise, fright, or efforts to recover from slips or loss of balance (not resulting in falls). This category also includes musculoskeletal or internal injury or illness resulting from the execution of personal movements such as walking, climbing, bending, etc. when such movement in itself was the source of injury or illness. Slips and trips accounted for 14 per cent² of total lost time claims when classified by event.

Falls are events in which the injury was produced by impact between the injured person and the source of injury when *the motion producing contact was generated by gravity*. Falls accounted for 19% of total lost time claims when classified by event.

Machinery

“Machinery” includes light and heavy machinery which performs specific functions or processes under power. Machinery is defined as a combination of smaller machines (elements or parts) which are capable of motion and are contained in a stationary frame. Computer, audio, and video products, as well as heating, cooling and cleaning machinery and appliances are also included in this definition. Events involving machinery account for 4.9 per cent³ of lost time claims, but are generally high-impact claims, such as traumatic injuries to the bones, brain, nerves, and spinal cord which include breaking and dislocating bones and cartilage.

Motor vehicle incidents

Motor Vehicle Incidents are incidents involving vehicles that generally move on wheels, runners, water, or air. A vehicle serves the primary purpose of **transporting** people (e.g., automobiles, passenger trains), but it may serve as a means of **carrying or transferring** goods (e.g., forklifts, wheelbarrows). In addition, a vehicle may serve primarily as a recreational device (e.g., canoes, bicycles, jet skis, etc.). Vehicles for all modes of public, private, work-related, and recreational transportation are included in this division. This type of claim resulted in a greater than average fatality rate and accounted for 3.2 per cent⁴ of all LTIs when sorted by event.

Occupational illness and disease

In Ontario, occupational disease accounts for greater mortality events than occupational injuries. Occupational diseases are also harder to diagnose, measure and monitor for a variety of reasons, including long latency periods after exposure, difficulties distinguishing occupational diseases from non-occupational diseases, and a lack of awareness about the occupational origins of some diseases. Since 2001, there has been a steady increase in the proportion of fatal allowed occupational disease claims (from 51 in 2001 to 70 per cent in 2010⁵). In 2010, the number of fatal allowed occupational disease claims was more than three times higher than traumatic injury claims (19 per cent⁶).

Under the [Occupational Health and Safety Act \(OHSA\)](#), occupational illness is defined as a condition that results from exposure in a workplace to a physical, chemical or biological agent to the extent that the normal physiological mechanisms are affected and the health of the worker is impaired thereby and includes an *occupational disease* for which a worker is entitled to benefits under the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*. During the 2012-13 enforcement period MOL inspectors will continue to

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.*

ensure that workplace parties are aware of their obligations under the OHSA and its regulation as it applies to occupational illness and diseases. In addition, the ministry will continue to work with our health and safety partners to reduce the risk of exposure to harmful chemicals, biological and physical agents in the workplace.

The Internal Responsibility System: Fostering a culture of safety

The MOL has a primary responsibility to ensure that workplaces comply with the OHSA and its regulations. This includes ensuring that a strong Internal Responsibility System (IRS) is in place that fosters a sustained culture of workplace health and safety.

Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) establishes legal requirements that provide a foundation for the Internal Responsibility System (IRS). The IRS is a system, within an organization, where everyone has a responsibility for workplace health and safety that is appropriate to one's role and function within the organization. One of the indicators of a sound IRS is a well-functioning Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC), where required.

A strong health and safety workplace culture consists of:

- **Competence** (appropriate knowledge and training, systems for responding to events, a properly functioning JHSC, and other IRS components)
- **Commitment** (demonstration by the employer of leadership on safety, appropriate policies and procedures to protect workers, low tolerance for poor health and safety practices, insistence upon full compliance), and
- **Capacity** (adequate resources for preventing injuries, a good system for obtaining assistance from HSAs and the WSIB).

A strong IRS produces a strong culture of health and safety. Strong leadership by senior executives and other managers sets the tone and establishes a corporate culture that nurtures the IRS. A health and safety culture requires all workplace parties to pay constant, appropriate attention to workplace health and safety.

A sustainable workplace health and safety culture needs a strong commitment by everyone to prevent injuries and illness and to reduce risk.

Implementation of Bill 160

The Chief Prevention Officer and the Prevention Office

[George Gritziotis](#) became Ontario's first Chief Prevention Officer (CPO), an Associate Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Labour in mid-October.

As CPO, he is responsible for:

- developing a provincial occupational health and safety strategy
- preparing and providing to the Minister a report on the performance of Ontario's occupational health and safety system each year
- providing advice to the Minister on the prevention of workplace injuries and occupational illnesses

- advising the Minister on proposed changes for the funding and delivery of prevention services
- working with Ontario's Health and Safety Associations (HSAs) to establish effective delivery of prevention programs and services
- establishing training and other requirements for a JHSC member to be certified, and certifying JHSC members
- establishing standards for health and safety training.

Compliance support and partnerships

The ministry is one of several partners in the health and safety system in Ontario focused on preventing workplace injuries and illnesses, and improving workplace health and safety. If you are searching for more information please consider the list provided below.

MOL partners' in health and safety include the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), the Workers Health and Safety Centre (WHSC) and Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW) and [Health & Safety Ontario](#) (HSO).

[HSO](#) is comprised of four health and safety associations working together to get Ontario's workers home safely and achieve our goal of zero work-related injuries, illness and fatalities.

- Infrastructure Health and Safety Association (IHSA)
- Workplace Safety North (WSN)
- Public Services Health and Safety Association (PSHSA)
- Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS)

Other partners include:

- Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (MTCU)
- Electrical Safety Authority (ESA)
- Technical Standards and Safety Authority (TSSA)
- Ministry of Health & Long-term Care (MOHLTC)
- Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (OAHPP)
- Regional Infection Control Networks (RICNs)
- Other Ontario government ministries, agencies, unions, employer associations, occupational health and safety and infection prevention and control professionals and consultants, educational institutions and community organizations
- The federal government on the issue of Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) global harmonization
- The Canadian Standards Association (CSA) on standards such as those concerning ergonomics and work in confined space
- The Institute for Work and Health on systematic health and safety reviews
- The Ontario Veterinary Medical Association on radiation issues, and
- Several of the Minister's health and safety advisory committees, appointed under section 21 of the Occupational Health & Safety Act.

Working with these system partners, the Ministry of Labour continues to provide more information to employers and workers. Along with our system partners, the MOL is focussing the efforts of inspectors on employers in ways that minimize the overlap of system resources and puts the appropriate system partner in the appropriate workplace.

Ontario has a telephone number for reporting workplace health and safety incidents, unsafe practices and general inquiries. The provincial toll-free telephone number – 1-877-202-0008 – operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Anyone, anywhere in Ontario, may call to report a workplace health and safety incident, critical injury, fatality or work refusal, or with general inquiries.

To download a copy of the [OHSA](#) and its regulation visit the e-Laws website: www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/navigation?file=browseStatutes&reset=yes&menu=browse&lang=en.

You are encouraged to familiarize yourself with all of the contents of the sector plans and to share copies freely with others in your workplace. The Introduction to *Safe At Work Ontario* Sector Plans and the sector specific plans may be downloaded from:

www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/sawo/sectorplans/index.php.