

Introduction to Safe At Work Ontario Sector Plans 2013-2014

Safe At Work Ontario

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Disclaimer: This resource has been prepared to help the workplace parties understand some of their obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and regulations. It is not legal advice. It is not intended to replace the OHSA or the regulations. [FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE SEE FULL DISCLAIMER](#)

As part of [Safe At Work Ontario](#) the Ministry of Labour (MOL) 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.

Blitz initiatives

Provincial blitzes are intended to promote compliance at workplaces across the province. The initiatives focus on hazards that are inherent in the work process or have significant potential to contribute to injuries or illness. The schedule for Ministry of Labour provincial [inspection blitzes](#) is posted on the MOL web site. During a health and safety blitz, the MOL also seeks to raise the workplace parties' awareness of the issues addressed by the blitz. Information about the campaigns for 2013-2014 can be found in the program-specific portion of the sector plans. 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, the following four key system priorities were identified for focused planning:

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

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

Each sector specific health and safety program has also established priorities which are outlined in the program specific sector plans.

Note: Statistics in this introduction are from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) By the Numbers: 2011 WSIB Statistical Report, Schedule 1.

Musculoskeletal disorders

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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 45 per cent of all lost-time injury claims in Ontario for Schedule 1 employers, 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 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 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 sudden noise, fright, or efforts to recover from slips or loss of balance (not resulting in falls).

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 20.3 per cent of total lost time claims by injury event in 2011 for Schedule 1 employers.

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 6.4 per cent of lost time claims for Schedule 1 employers.

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). From 2002 to 2011, motor vehicle incidents accounted for the highest percentages of traumatic fatalities (38.7 per cent).

Occupational illness and disease

In Ontario, occupational disease accounts for more 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. In 2011, there were 190 fatal WSIB-allowed occupational disease claims. Since 2002, the WSIB has allowed 2,077 fatal occupational disease claims.

The [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) (OHSA) defines occupational illness 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 2013-14 enforcement period, MOL inspectors will continue to ensure that workplace parties are aware of their obligations under the OHSA and its regulations as they apply to occupational illness and diseases. In addition, the MOL will continue to work with its 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 OHSA establishes legal requirements that provide a foundation for the 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/health and safety representative, 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, and a good system for obtaining assistance

from Health and Safety Associations (HSAs) and other sources.

A strong IRS produces an effective culture of health and safety and committed leadership by senior executives and other managers, and sets the tone and establishes a corporate culture that nurture 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 an unwavering commitment by everyone to prevent injuries and illness and to reduce risk.

Compliance, support and partnerships

The MOL 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 below.

MOL partners in health and safety include the [Workplace Safety and Insurance Board](#), the [Workers Health and Safety Centre](#) (WHSC) and [Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers](#) (OHCOW) and [Health & Safety Ontario](#) (HSO). HSO is composed of four health and safety associations working to achieve 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:

- Minister's Section 21 advisory committees
- Electrical Safety Authority (ESA)
- Technical Standards and Safety Authority (TSSA)
- Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (OAHP)
- Regional Infection Control Networks (RICNs)
- 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 Government of Canada
- Canadian Standards Association (CSA)
- Institute for Work and Health, and
- Ontario Veterinary Medical Association.

Working with these system partners, the MOL continues to provide more information to employers and workers. 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 for general inquiries: 1-877-202-0008. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Anyone, anywhere in Ontario, may call anytime to report a workplace health and safety incident, critical injury, fatality, work refusal, or complaint. (General inquiries about workplace health and safety are answered on weekdays between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.) **Always call 911 in an emergency.**

To download a copy of the OHS Act and its regulations visit the [e-laws website](#).

You are encouraged to familiarize yourself with all of the contents of the [2013-2014 sector plans](#) and to share copies with others in your workplace.

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