

# Occupational Health and Safety in Ontario (April 2020 – March 2021)

An annual report on Ontario's health and safety system from the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

## As you read this document

You will see a number of terms in this report that relate to ministries, regulations and more. We suggest you review this list before you start to read so you can become familiar with them.

- Chief Prevention Officer - CPO  
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- Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development - The ministry
- Occupational health and safety - OHS  
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- The Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act - EMCPA  
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- The Occupational Health and Safety Act - OHSA
- The Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 - ROA  
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## A message from Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety System Leaders

COVID-19 has had wide and heart-breaking effects on our province. Protecting workers is always our Ministry's number one focus. We have worked hard to respond quickly to the evolving evidence about the virus and its impact on our workplaces.

To support these efforts, we recognized we couldn't do it alone. The occupational health and safety (OHS) system (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontarios-occupational-health-and-safety-system>), which includes the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development ('the ministry'), worked together with more partners more closely than ever before in 2020-2021. Examples are woven throughout this report and spotlighted up front.

Reflecting on the past year, we first want to say thank you. Thank you to the essential workers who have kept the lights on, kept our water running, kept our homes safe, and kept us healthy and safe under the most challenging circumstances. Thank you to the health care heroes who have tirelessly put others before themselves. Thank you also to the many dedicated ministry inspectors who have been visiting workplaces, helping employers keep up with changing rules and continuing to help workplaces be safer. We can learn a lot from the past year about the human spirit and what makes us stronger together.

Beyond our COVID-19 response, the OHS system also took major steps forward in other ways. For example: We worked towards becoming more data-driven and more outcomes-focused. This matters because it will help us better measure our performance and improve to keep workers safe. Being data-driven is also key to learning from our efforts to combat COVID-19 in workplaces. We can use this information to improve our initiatives in the future. We released the 2021-2026 OHS Strategy – called Prevention Works  
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(<https://www.ontario.ca/document/prevention-works>) – in July 2021. All OHS system partners played a role in this effort. As you'll read in this report, the work we delivered in the 2020-21 fiscal year aligns with the objectives and areas of systems focus set out in Prevention Works.

Lastly, we want to thank Ron Kelusky, our former Chief Prevention Officer, who retired in September 2021. His vision in creating and releasing Prevention Works has brought new momentum to the OHS system. We look forward to continuing to work together to create an Ontario where workplaces promote and practice health and safety every day. This will help us build an Ontario that is free from occupational injuries, illnesses and fatalities.

- Dr. Joel Moody, Chief Prevention Officer (CPO) / Assistant Deputy Minister, Prevention Division
- Jody Young, Assistant Deputy Minister, Fair, Safe and Healthy Workplaces Division
- David Beaulieu, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy Division

## A message from Prevention Council

The Prevention Council is honoured to help protect and promote the health and safety of Ontario workers. Over this past year, we used the occupational health and safety (OHS) expertise of our members to streamline our strategic advice to the Minister and the Chief Prevention Officer (CPO). We provided advice on the roll-out of innovative initiatives across the system. We also continued to advise the Ministry on the roll-out of the new OHS strategy, Prevention Works, and the OHS response to COVID-19.

We have faced many challenges in this past year. We remain committed to making Ontario one of the healthiest and safest places to live and work in Canada. COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of this effort, including the need to continue learning how we can improve. We have seen – and continue to see – an unwavering commitment to workplace health and safety from workers and employers. We commend the workers and employers of Ontario for their hard work and dedication and the many ways they have stepped up during this unprecedented time.

It is the role of Ontario's Prevention Council to ensure that our industries and our government continue to make the elimination of occupational illness, injury and fatality a top priority. We communicate within the OHS system on a continuous basis to raise awareness of new initiatives, emerging issues and more. For this purpose, the Council released a number of statements to industry stakeholders and partners. These include:

- statement in December 2020, encouraging workplaces to stay alert and to follow CPO procedures and COVID-19 guidance.
- A statement in January 2021, encouraging workplaces to foster open dialogue on anti-Black racism and discrimination – and to continue to take action to break down systemic barriers in the workplace.

We also created sub-committees to provide advice, recommendations and proposals on specific topics, including tower cranes and Health and Safety Representative (HSR) training.

Lastly, we would also like to thank Ron Kelusky, the ministry's former CPO. His work has been key in strengthening the OHS system. The province is healthier and safer because of his efforts. He has led and inspired by showing the power of working closely with our partners to achieve common goals. He has also guided key players to be more data-driven, more results-focused and more accountable. Prevention Works is truly a testament to the impact he has had on health and safety in Ontario.

The Council would also like to welcome Dr. Joel Moody as the newly appointed CPO. We are excited to work alongside Dr. Moody in the years ahead. Together, we will continue to promote health and safety in the workplaces of our province.

**Prevention Council members, 2020–2021:****Blair Allin**

National Health and Safety Representative, International Brotherhood of Boilermakers

**Brian Arnold**

Fire Chief, Cambridge Fire Department

**Patrick Bourgeois (Interim Chair)**

Construction Manager, Peter Kiewit Sons ULC

**John Bourke**

Business Manager/Financial Secretary, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

**Stephen Chaplin**

Vice President of Health, Safety & Environment, EllisDon

**Rodney Cook**

Vice President Workplace Health and Safety Services, WSIB  
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**Cora DeMarco**

Manager, Technica Mining

**Colin de Raaf**

Director of Training, CLAC

**Daniel Fleming**

Manager, Training and Development GTA, NORCAT  
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**Dr. Isra Levy**

Vice President of Medical Affairs and Innovation, Canadian Blood Services

**Bill Mader**

Insulator, Local 95

**Erin Oliver (Chair)**

Vice President of Health, Safety and Sustainability, Modern Niagara Group Inc.

**Patricia Pereira Janicas**

Director, Health & Safety, Kenaidan Contracting Ltd

### **Dustin Philp**

Plant Chairperson, Tormont-Concord Unifor Local 112

### **Sandro Pinto**

Executive Director, LiUNA Local 183

### **Peter Rowe**

Director, Chair of the Regulatory Committee, Ontario Petroleum Institute

### **James St. John**

Business Manager/Financial Secretary, Central Ontario Building Trades

### **Roger Tickner**

President, Tickner and Associates Inc.

## **Introduction**

### **Introduction**

In March 2020, the world faced a public health crisis with the arrival of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and the declaration of a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). It was essential for the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development ('the ministry') to respond swiftly. This infectious disease would quickly have a huge impact on our workplaces. It soon became clear that we could not do this alone.

The ministry worked across the occupational health and safety (OHS) system

(<https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontarios-occupational-health-and-safety-system>) to help Ontario workers, businesses and communities navigate through the challenges. We also worked with a broad set of external stakeholders and partners, including the Ministry of Health and Public Health Ontario on education and outreach as well as compliance assistance and enforcement initiatives related to the new COVID-19 requirements. In addition to creating hundreds of resources for workplaces, over 60% of the ministry's 72,473 Ministry of Labour Training and Skill Development. Operational Data. April 28, 2021 OHS inspections in 2020-21 were COVID-19 related. The Spotlight section reports in more detail on how the ministry and its partners responded to COVID-19.

While COVID-19 has been a top priority, the ministry has also continued to work towards improving the OHS system as a whole. Although Ontario has had the lowest frequency of lost-time claims in Canada since 2009 Detailed Key Statistical Measures Report | AWCBC / ACATC (<https://awcbc.org/en/statistics/ksm-annual-report/>), there is still work to be done. In 2020:

- There were 65 deaths from traumatic injuries at work according to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. The sectors with the most traumatic fatalities were construction (31%), transportation and warehousing (15%) and manufacturing (11%).

- There were 259 occupational disease fatalities by entitlement year.
- Workplaces under Schedule 1 (<https://www.wsib.ca/en/bythenumbers/schedule-1-2020-highlights>) (employers that must contribute to the WSIB insurance fund) had 48,429 allowed lost-time injury claims (1.07 per 100 workers) AWCBC / ACATC and 83,449 allowed no lost-time injury claims (1.84 per 100 workers). The sectors with the most allowed lost-time claims are non-hospital healthcare and social assistance (22%), manufacturing (17%) and retail (11%).
- In “COVID-19 has made up 44% of allowed occupational disease claims while having the highest benefit costs.” Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, By the Numbers: Schedule 1 - Injuries and occupational disease - Occupational diseases (<https://www.wsib.ca/en/bythenumbers/schedule-1-injuries-and-occupational-disease-occupational-diseases>)

Throughout the 2020-21 fiscal year, the ministry prepared to release the province’s 2021-2026 Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Strategy, called Prevention Works (<https://www.ontario.ca/document/prevention-works>). Prevention Works, released in July 2021, provides a five-year framework for Ontario’s OHS system. Our goal: to help ensure that Ontario remains one of the safest and healthiest jurisdictions to work in Canada. Through Prevention Works, the OHS system will be moving towards an evidence-informed, risk-based model. Under this model, we will focus on prevention initiatives that are customer- and outcomes-focused, with measurable results for continuous improvement.

In addition to highlighting the OHS system’s response to COVID-19, this 2020–2021 annual report serves as a transitional report that focuses on programs or projects the OHS system has delivered that align with the objectives and areas of systems focus of Prevention Works. It also demonstrates how these activities support the Minister’s key priorities:

- Strengthening system oversight
- Promoting secure workplaces and labour mobility
- Supporting small businesses and customer service excellence.

## Spotlight: A coordinated response to help stop the spread of COVID-19 in Ontario workplaces

The COVID-19 pandemic began to unfold quickly in early 2020. Enforcement staff on the frontlines and workplaces across the province needed accurate, current information. The ministry answered this call with a coordinated response that included education and outreach, compliance assistance, and enforcement.

The following examples highlight the responses delivered by key partners working together.

### Education and outreach

#### Foundational and sector-specific COVID-19 workplace guidance

The newly created Pandemic Workplace Safety Branch (PWSB) developed a simple, flexible, risk-focused approach to help employers develop a COVID-19 workplace safety plan (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/guide-developing-your-covid-19-workplace-safety-plan>) using public health and workplace guidance and resources. Working with the OHS system, over 200 best practice and guidance resources (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-workplace-health-safety>) were created. Together, they also produced

sector-specific resources for over 30 sectors. These resources were available through a single-window webpage to enhance customer service during the pandemic. As of March 31, 2021, these supports had received almost 1.3 million views.

Working together has been key throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. PWSB continues to provide OHS support with an integrated public health approach to Ontario workplaces. PWSB also acts as a key support and advisory resource to the ministry and government more broadly.

In addition to providing regular advice to the CPO and Minister, the Prevention Council, which normally meets quarterly, began to meet on a bi-weekly basis to provide expert OHS advice to the ministry in developing COVID-19 guidance for workplaces. The council also provided the ministry with recommendations and advice on COVID-19 related protocols such as contact tracing and point-of-care testing, in workplaces.

### **Workplace COVID-19 Safety Survey**

MLTSD worked collaboratively with the Behavioural Insights Unit (BIU) to design a survey to provide insights on workers' understanding, attitudes, and beliefs on COVID-19 safety. The survey consisted of 60 questions. A total of 1,359 workers across key sectors of interest (agriculture, construction, corrections, food processing, food sales, healthcare, restaurants, manufacturing, personal care services and retail) responded. The survey aimed to gain insights on workers' attitudes, beliefs and understanding of workplace messaging (posters), mask use and COVID-19 safety behaviours.

The Survey Findings were analyzed by the BIU and a detailed final report was prepared. The findings were shared with the Health and Safety Associations, Prevention Council and industry associations to inform and improve their approach to COVID-19 safety education and outreach.

The findings can be summarized as follows:

1. Social context in the workplace drives behaviour:
  - Beliefs about social norms were the best predictor of mask-wearing behaviour.
  - Respondents reported that they comply with guidelines to protect their colleagues and family members.
2. Behaviourally-informed posters were more memorable, impactful, and easier to understand.
3. People underestimate the COVID-19 risk associated with activities such as sharing vehicles and during meal and break periods, when people are unmasked.
4. COVID-19-related concerns vary across groups. Different ages and sectors report different level of perceived risk / impact from COVID-19 and could be targeted differently as a result.

### **New Infection Prevention and Control training**

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) training throughout all Ontario workplace sectors. As a result, the ministry, in partnership with Public Services Health & Safety Association (PSHSA), developed the Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) at Work: Basic Awareness Training module. (<https://www.pshsa.ca/training/free-training/infection-prevention-and-control-at-work-basic-awareness-training>)

This program launched on January 27, 2021. As of March 31, 2021, there were almost 14,000 views on PSHSA's website. More than 3,400 individuals had registered for the course. Topics include:

- what IPAC is and why it is important
- how infections spread
- the steps workers and employers can take to prevent and control the spread of infections.

CPO extension of Working at Heights (WAH) training and JHSC certification

COVID-19 presented many challenges for both employers and employees. In response, extensions to validity periods were provided for:

- Working at Heights (WAH) training
- Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) certification.

The extension applied to workers already trained or certified and who were due to complete their refresher training between February 28 and August 31, 2020. The ministry notified approximately 130,000 WAH learners and 7,000 JHSC certification learners of the new validity period so they could complete their refresher training. As of March 31, 2021, CPO-approved training providers have trained over 1,020,000 workers on working at heights for the construction sector. In the 2020–2021 fiscal year, over 117,000 workers completed working at heights training or joint health and safety refresher training.

Calls to the ministry increased six-fold in the first four months of 2021. More than 70% of calls related to WAH and 25% related to JHSC training. The ministry continues to provide client services amid significantly increased call volumes for OHS requirements.

### Supporting the Provincial Antigen Screening Program (PASP)

The ministry also supported the launch of the Provincial Antigen Screening Program (PASP) (<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/provincial-antigen-screening-program>). The ministry brought together the Ministry of Health and employers to run a pilot program in December 2020. Participants included EllisDon and Crosslinx, and the Central Ontario Building and Construction Trades Council.

The government expanded the program in January 2021 to all essential businesses, including construction. The Pandemic Workers Safety Branch continues to support the program.

### Working together: cross-ministerial and agency COVID-19 enforcement support

From the day the pandemic was declared on March 11, 2020 to March 31, 2021, the ministry's OHS inspection team has conducted over 45,000 COVID-19 related field visits. Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. "COVID-19 Dashboard.: February 14, 2022.. The ministry also established and supported operational interdisciplinary teams. These teams responded to the increased need for OHS education and awareness, compliance assistance and enforcement. Examples follow below.

### Coronavirus Advisory Team

The ministry established an internal committee to assist with a rapid response to our inspectors in the field. This committee later became known as the Coronavirus Advisory Team (COVAT). The focus of COVAT was to support the ministry's OHS field staff in three main ways:

- ensure field staff are aware of the latest developments across the province
- help field staff apply the legislation and regulations consistently across the province
- help field staff work with businesses and workers to navigate the public health and workplace safety requirements in place to stop the spread of COVID-19

COVAT is comprised of regional representatives, program experts, including Infection Control Specialists, Provincial Specialists and the ministry's Senior Medical Consultants. Throughout 2020-21, COVAT held regular meetings with field staff and additional experts who provided support as required.

### **Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act and Reopening Ontario Act, 2020 Team**

After the COVID-19 pandemic was declared a provincial emergency, various orders were put in place to help stop the spread of the virus. Two main pieces of legislation guided Ontario's response:

- *The Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA)*
- *The Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 (ROA)*

However, businesses, workers and members of the public required direct support as they tried to navigate the legislative requirements. In response, the ministry brought together the EMCPA/ROA team (ROAT). The role of this team was to:

- review the legislation and provide enforcement direction
- develop training and resources to aid inspectors and officers in helping businesses comply with the regulations.

Enforcement staff across many ministries were designated as Provincial Offences Officers under the Provincial Offences Act. They were given the power to enforce both the EMCPA and the ROA requirements. The ROAT trained ministry inspectors and officers, promoted compliance and assessed the results of these efforts.

The in-person visits from enforcement staff helped businesses to determine what actions they needed to take to comply with Ontario regulations. Businesses also received supportive information and resources to apply for funding. With these supports, businesses were able to both open safely for workers and help stop the spread of COVID-19.

### **Compliance Assistance Team (CAT)**

Early in the pandemic, OHS inspectors responded to an unusually high number of OHS complaints and work refusals. This meant fewer resources were available for proactive compliance assistance. Proactive work is key to help workplaces improve their practices even when no complaints have been made.

In April 2020, the ministry created the Compliance Assistance Team (CAT) to fill the gap. This team included Employment Standards Officers (ESOs) across the province. The *Regulatory Modernization Act, 2007 (RMA)* was used to provide limited Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) authorities to ESOs across the province.

The CAT officers initially started in the construction sector to get boots on the ground. They worked to provide compliance assistance to help workplace parties keep their workplaces safe amid the challenges of COVID-19. The CAT project was expanded in May 2020 to sectors that were permitted to open under the new *Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 (ROA)*.

CAT officers played a key role in promoting ROA and OHSA compliance by providing information to businesses and organizations. In total, more than 60 officers participated. From April 2020 to March 2021, they provided OHS compliance assistance and ROA education and enforcement through:

- 2,468 construction sector visits
- 7,532 industrial sector visits (including retail, personal care, restaurants and others).

### Partnering with Technical Standards and Safety Authority (TSSA)

At the start of the pandemic, the ministry Health and Safety Contact Centre began to receive many phone and email complaints from public health units and the public regarding COVID-19 in the workplace. The number of complaints rose quickly to hundreds each week.

In April 2020, the ministry contracted the TSSA to help address these complaints. Two dozen TSSA inspectors across the province were trained on how to respond. They completed field visits and helped enforce the *EMCPA* See the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA) .

Over time, the number of complaints began to drop. As of May 13, 2020, the TSSA began to focus more on proactive field visits to workplaces allowed to open within the Stage 2 restrictions See O.Reg. 263/20 (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/200263>) . TSSA inspectors used these visits to provide compliance assistance to those businesses.

As the province began to reopen, providing compliance assistance to businesses on the new requirements became a priority. The total number of complaints referred to TSSA from April 21, 2020 to March 31, 2021 was 1,461. The total number of field visits was 12,489. Most of these visits (90%) were proactive.

From the findings noted above, there were:

- 4,023 visits to full-service restaurants
- 2,645 visits to limited service restaurants (take-out and pick-up)
- 1,327 visits to personal care services
- 324 visits to retailers (including grocery stores, big box retailers, convenience stores, etc.).

### Multi-Ministry Team (MMT)

In response to the call for help with the enforcement of COVID-19 regulations See Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA), Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act (ROA) and the Health Protection and Promotion Act (HPPA), in October 2020 the ministry led the development of a Multi-Ministry Team (MMT). The MMT includes more than 450 provincial offences officers from various ministries. They volunteered to help as needed throughout Ontario. Participating ministries and partners include:

- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
- Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry

- Ministry of the Solicitor General
- Ministry of Transportation
- Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
- Regulatory Compliance Ontario

As one of the lead ministries of the MMT, we provided training to inspectors and officers and guidance on enforcement action. We also managed the collection of data on field visit activity and data reporting on all the campaigns.

MMT campaigns were designed to help businesses comply with the province's COVID-19 regulations. The MMT worked with police, public health units and by-law departments to avoid duplicating local compliance and enforcement efforts. Campaigns were scheduled based on the needs of the local public health unit and municipalities. To help the province reopen safely, campaigns focused first on key sectors, taking a gradual approach to enforcement, using compliance assistance and education as well as tickets.

Between October 23, 2020 to March 31, 2021, the MMT conducted a total of 9,549 field visits Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. "MMT Dashboard". 2021. In 3,702 of those visits, the MMT identified ROA non-compliances. The MMT provided additional support to these businesses to help them become compliant. However, where enforcement measures were warranted, inspectors issued:

- 1,236 formal warnings
- 868 OHS orders
- 401 tickets

### Working with other partners to support OHS during the pandemic

The ministry sought the support of other partners to reach thousands of more businesses across Ontario.

They worked to spread awareness about new COVID-19-related requirements through site visits and engagements by phone. For example:

- Infrastructure Health and Safety Association (IHSA) conducted a total of 1,210 phone consultations and 424 site visits to construction workplaces.
- Workplace Safety and Prevention Services (WSPS) conducted 211 engagements, mainly with food manufacturing and food service workplaces.

Public Services Health & Safety Association (PSHSA) played a central role in re-opening the court system and schools. PSHSA's COVID-19 risk assessments provided expertise and best practices for infection prevention and control. Applying these measures, clients were able to make informed operational decisions while protecting the health and safety of employees and the public. These COVID-19 risk assessments covered:

- physical site inspections
- careful consideration of floor plans
- current control measures and personal protective equipment (PPE)
- the flow of workers and materials through each facility
- reviews of organizational safety plans

PSHSA's performed a total of 301 risk assessments from April 1, 2020 – March 31, 2021. Visits included:

- 87 courthouse locations
- 5 tribunal sites
- 40 Provincial Offences Act courts
- 88 Legal Aid Ontario offices
- 24 Employment Ontario apprenticeship exam centres
- 21 schools
- 14 Service Ontario locations
- 12 mediation rooms at the Ontario Labour Relations Board
- 10 mediation rooms at the Workplace Safety & Insurance Appeals Tribunal

## Building evidence-informed initiatives, measuring performance and increasing system oversight

The ministry and its partners continued to shift towards a more evidence-based, measurable and accountable OHS system throughout 2020–2021. This can be seen in Prevention Works, the 2021–2026 Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Strategy.

### Additional feedback on Prevention Works

Prevention Works was developed based on extensive research and province-wide consultations (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-consultation-ontarios-next-occupational-health-and-safety-strategy>) in 2019. In 2020, the ministry added COVID-19 considerations to the strategy. To prepare for the launch of the strategy, the ministry sought stakeholder buy-in and support. The Prevention Division at the ministry presented the draft strategy to more than 20 audiences in 2020–2021. These included businesses and labour associations, as well as internal partners. Feedback received from these discussions was positive. The ministry used their suggestions to create a truly collaborative and evidence-based strategy.

### Building system capacity to conduct risk assessments and identify root causes of workplace injuries, illnesses and fatalities

Back in 2018, the ministry formally adopted a method of conducting risk assessments. The goal was to ensure consistency in the way that the OHS system:

- focuses on high-risk hazards
- shares results of risk assessment workshops with stakeholders
- identifies and analyzes risks in the workplace

The Prevention Division has led work in this area by using a “train the trainer” approach. This allows the OHS system to build capacity in identifying leading OHS risks. It also empowers OHS system partners to conduct their own risk assessments to reduce Ontario’s critical injuries, illnesses and fatalities in the workplace.

From August 2020 to March 31, 2021, the ministry delivered four “train the trainer” sessions to the Health and Safety Associations (HSAs). These sessions prepared the HSAs to develop their own Risk Assessment and Root-Cause Analysis workshops for their sectors. For example:

- Workplace Safety North (WSN) completed a virtual Pulp and Paper Root Cause Analysis workshop in Fall 2020.
- The Infrastructure Health and Safety Association (IHSA) completed a Transportation Yard Safety Root Cause Analysis workshop in January 2021.

As these workshops continue, the resulting evidence and data will help the OHS community make informed decisions that will help reduce workplace-related injuries, illnesses and fatalities in Ontario.

## Working with our system partners to develop new ways of collecting and managing data

### OHS System Data Strategy

The ministry worked with system partners to develop the OHS System Data Strategy. The strategy was accepted by the OHS Data Community in September 2020. Goals included:

- improve data sharing across the system
- align data governance and improve data quality rules, methodologies and practices
- ensure adequate IT infrastructure throughout the system
- apply existing data and identify new data for analytics and decision making

Over the 2020-2021 fiscal year, the ministry conducted an inventory of all major datasets held by each of the OHS partners. The ministry shared this inventory with all partners in August 2020. This was an important first step towards future common governance rules. The ministry will continue to work with the OHS Data Community to align with outcomes of Prevention Works.

## Broadening evidence to target sectors, evaluating programs and collecting outcome-based performance data

### Chief Prevention Officer (CPO) directed programs

In 2019 the CPO launched the CPO-directed program for Ontario’s four Safe Workplace Associations (SWAs). This required the SWAs to set aside at least 10% of the yearly budget they receive from the province to address the most dangerous and high-risk sectors. Some of these priority sectors include forestry, mining, agriculture, construction, transportation and young workers in manufacturing. In addition, the SWAs were also asked to address the issue of work-related mental health. This important issue cuts across all sectors.

In 2020-2021, the following programs continued to be implemented or were approved by the CPO:

Public Services Health & Safety Association (<https://www.pshsa.ca/>)

- The COVID-19 in the Workplace – Managing OHS and Mental Health Program
  - COVID-19 Resource Centre (<https://www.pshsa.ca/covid-19>)

- Psychological Health and Safety Program Checklist (<https://www.pshsa.ca/safe-environments/topics/psychological-health-safety>)
- Managing Mental Health: Stay at Work and Return to Work in First Responder Organizations (<https://www.pshsa.ca/courses/managing-mental-health-stay-at-work-and-return-to-work-in-first-responder-organizations>)
- ResilientME (<https://www.pshsa.ca/training/free-training/resilientme>)

This is a two-year program approved in 2020–2021.

Infrastructure Health & Safety Association (<https://www.ihsa.ca/Homepage.aspx>)

- Supporting Health and Safety Management Systems in the workplace:
  - Health and Safety Excellence Program – Medium and Large Firms (<https://www.ihsa.ca/IHSA/Products/Items/Health-Safety-Excellence-Program-Medium-and-La.aspx>)
  - Health and Safety Excellence Program – Small Business (<https://www.ihsa.ca/IHSA/Products/Items/Health-Safety-Excellence-Program-Small-Busines.aspx>)
  - Certificate of Recognition 2020 (<https://www.ihsa.ca/Training/Courses/COR-Essentials.aspx>)

This is a three-year program approved in 2020–2021 for year one.

- Workplace Safety North Ground Control – Final year of two-year program (<https://www.workplacesafetynorth.ca/resources/ground-control>)
- Safe Driving on Forest Roads – Year two of three-year program (<https://www.workplacesafetynorth.ca/training/course/safe-driving-forest-roads-e-learning?SID=3199>)
- Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS) (<https://www.wsps.ca/Home.aspx>)

Through 2020–2021, WSPS continued work on the three CPO-directed programs that were approved in 2019:

- Greenhouse Risk Assessment Project – Year two of three-year program (<https://www.wsps.ca/resource-hub/articles/greenhouse-riskassessment-project>)
- Laying the Foundation for Workplace Mental Harm Prevention – Year two of three-year program
- Young Workers Project - Windsor-Essex County Project – Year two of three-year program (<https://www.wsps.ca/young-workers-research>)

To increase system oversight, the Prevention Division is currently developing a performance-based funding model for the Health and Safety Association (HSA) program that will focus on the achievement of performance and outcomes to determine funding levels. This work is ongoing and will align with the performance measurement framework that is being developed for the new Prevention Works Strategy.

## OHS research

In 2020–2021, the ministry continued to modernize its approach to funding research. The focus was on reporting and transparency requirements with OHS Research Centres (RCs). Goals include:

- Improve oversight of funding.
- Increase transparency on provincial and other funding.

- Align more closely with Prevention Works

During 2020–2021, our research partners have been actively engaged to ensure that state-of-the-art evidence supports OHS decisions, policies and initiatives. More than 50 research projects were completed.

Examples of the research our funded partners have led include:

- The Occupational Disease Surveillance Program (ODSP) and Occupational Disease Surveillance System (ODSS) (<https://www.odsp-ocrc.ca/projects/odss/>)
- Workplace mental health among health-care workers during COVID-19 (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0706743720961729>)
- The quality of work-life of paramedics in northern Ontario (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34147060/>)
- The role of employers and settlement agencies in safe employment integration (<https://www.iwh.on.ca/projects/role-of-employers-and-settlement-agencies-in-safe-employment-integration>)
- Occupational health and safety performance in unionized construction (<https://www.iwh.on.ca/projects/evaluating-prevention-strategies-to-reduce-risk-of-work-related-cancers-in-ontarios-construction-sector>)
- Strategies to reduce future risks of cancer in the Ontario construction industry (<https://www.occupationalcancer.ca/2016/prevention-in-construction/>)

We also expanded the outreach of ministry-funded research. Several research summaries have been shared and made publicly available on our funded partners' websites. These include:

- the Institute for Work and Health
- the Centre for Research in Occupational Safety Health
- the Centre for Research Expertise in Occupational Disease
- the Centre of Research Expertise for the Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders
- the Occupational Cancer Research Centre (housed under Ontario Health)

Funded research has been translated into at least 28 book chapters and 250 published and in-press articles in 2020-21. At least 30 PhD, postdoctoral and practicum students and junior faculty members received research funding to support occupational health and safety research in the province.

Our funded partners have further established strategic partnerships with research partners and users of research. In 2020-21, these partnerships included at least 75 think tanks, universities, health and safety associations, hospitals, business associations, professional associations and insurance boards within and beyond Ontario. Close collaboration and partnerships with research partners and users of research is expected to enhance the use of evidence to inform OHS decisions. This will ultimately help make Ontario workplaces healthier and safer places to work.

In the 2020-2021 fiscal year, the MLITSD funded OHS research by investing a total of \$1.22 million in Prevention Grants and \$7.93 million in the Research Centres. This was an increase of \$1.08 million investment from the 2019–2020 fiscal year.

## Working at Heights five-year standards review

The Prevention Division also began a review of the Working at Heights (WAH) program. These training standards were established in 2015. See Section 7.1 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA). The standards include a CPO commitment to review the standards at least every five years. Most workers on construction projects who may use specified methods of fall protection must take this training.

This review is to help ensure the standards:

- are relevant and effective
- reflect modern best practices in content and delivery so that workers, learners, and employers can have continued confidence in the training.

The review began in 2020 and included the posting of a public consultation paper for feedback between (<https://www.ontariocanada.com/registry/view.do?postingId=35988&language=en>) January 25, 2021 to March 25, 2021. In addition, a learner survey was sent to 2,000 WAH training participants. The ministry also held virtual meetings with key stakeholders. The ministry received 32 written responses to the public consultation paper and 280 responses to the learner survey. Analysis of the feedback received from consultations were considered along with:

- other key relevant research and data
- Coroner Jury Reports and Recommendations
- best practices for training delivery and assessment.

Recommendations for revisions to the standards were made to the CPO in the fall of 2021. Updated standards will be published in early 2022.

## Improving occupational health and safety knowledge and practices

The ministry is focused on making OHS training for workers more accessible and affordable. In 2020-21 it was important to consider the impact of COVID-19 and to deliver information to a number of sectors. Throughout the pandemic, the ministry regularly reached out to the CPO-approved OHS Training Provider Network (TPN) to understand their concerns. We listened to feedback they shared from clients and worked to support them with the most current COVID-19 information. We also suggested steps they could take to help ensure training could safely continue.

### OHS training modernization and oversight

The Chief Prevention Officer (CPO) met with the CPO-approved OHS TPN in November 2020 and January 2021. These meetings were held to discuss the collection of training data. The CPO launched the Voluntary Data Collection initiative in November 2020.

In February 2021, the Prevention Division developed an online survey to collect information on non-mandated training in three focus areas:

- information on training providers and the data they collect
- data on nine training courses selected by the Division

- information on the development of learning outcomes, quality assurance processes and OHS training prioritization

The Voluntary Data Collection initiative has created opportunities to better assess the effectiveness and to enhance oversight of OHS training. The initiative will support the Prevention Works strategy.

## Making OHS training convenient and affordable

### Revised CPO Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) Training and Distance Standards

COVID-19 has shown that we need to understand how people best learn, adapt and retain knowledge. That way, we can then develop health and safety training practices to achieve the greatest results. In 2020–2021, the OHS system adapted to deliver eLearning and distance learning options. In May and June 2020, the CPO established:

- revised JHSC Training Certification Training Program and Provider Standards Program standard for joint health and safety committee training | ontario.ca (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/program-standard-joint-health-and-safety-committee-training>)
- a new JHSC Certification Distance Learning Standard This standard was established as a temporary measure to meet the needs of online learning during the first COVID-19 restrictions. The CPO has since revoked the standard and included the requirements in the JHSC Training Program and Provider Standards. (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/program-standard-joint-health-and-safety-committee-training>)

Under the new standards, Part One, Part Two and Refresher training can now be completed through distance learning. As of March 31, 2021, over 65,000 individuals have been fully certified as Joint Health and Safety Committee members, meaning they have successfully completed their Part 1 and 2 training. During the 2020-2021 fiscal year: (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/program-standard-joint-health-and-safety-committee-training>)

- over 12,000 people completed their Part One training (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/program-standard-joint-health-and-safety-committee-training>)
- more than 9,800 people completed Part Two training to become fully certified (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/program-standard-joint-health-and-safety-committee-training>)
- over 4,200 people completed Refresher training (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/program-standard-joint-health-and-safety-committee-training>)

This includes real-time instruction delivered through online platforms. Benefits include:

(<https://www.ontario.ca/page/program-standard-joint-health-and-safety-committee-training>)

- learners were able to access training and maintain certification during the COVID-19 pandemic (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/program-standard-joint-health-and-safety-committee-training>)
- training could be delivered while maintaining safe physical distancing (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/program-standard-joint-health-and-safety-committee-training>)
- training providers were able to continue to operate and generate revenue (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/program-standard-joint-health-and-safety-committee-training>)

At the same time the ministry updated their Certification Management System (CMS) Training Provider Application Portal to make it easier for training providers to submit JHSC eLearning and JHSC Distance Learning

training program applications. Between April 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021:

(<https://www.ontario.ca/page/program-standard-joint-health-and-safety-committee-training>)

- over 158,000 new learner accounts were created (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/program-standard-joint-health-and-safety-committee-training>)
- over 1,000 learners completed training through eLearning eLearning is a wide set of applications and processes such as web-based learning and computer-based learning, typically delivered online through a computer or any other digital device. (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/program-standard-joint-health-and-safety-committee-training>)
- over 110,000 new training course completion records were created (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/program-standard-joint-health-and-safety-committee-training>)
- CMS received over 800 requests for new employer accounts (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/program-standard-joint-health-and-safety-committee-training>)

### **HSA eLearning and Distance Learning options (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/program-standard-joint-health-and-safety-committee-training>)**

In 2020–2021, the Health and Safety Associations (HSAs) developed new ways to allow for continued training during COVID-19. These included: (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/program-standard-joint-health-and-safety-committee-training>)

- launching their own eLearning courses to make training more convenient (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/program-standard-joint-health-and-safety-committee-training>)
- hosting online webinars to address emerging COVID-19 issues (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/program-standard-joint-health-and-safety-committee-training>)
- providing no-cost resources and services to help businesses understand and address COVID-19 (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/program-standard-joint-health-and-safety-committee-training>)

For example, in 2020, the Infrastructure Health and Safety Association (IHSA) launched its own suite of on demand, self-paced eLearning courses. These included the new (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/program-standard-joint-health-and-safety-committee-training>) Trenching Safety certificate (<https://www.ihsa.ca/Training/Courses/Trenching-Safety-Hazard-Introduction.aspx>) course and the new Preventing Falls in Trucking ([https://www.ihsa.ca/Training/Courses/Preventing-Falls-in-Trucking-\(eLearning\).aspx](https://www.ihsa.ca/Training/Courses/Preventing-Falls-in-Trucking-(eLearning).aspx)) course. IHSA also introduced virtual training options. A total of 9,895 learners enrolled in IHSA's eLearning services. That was up 34% from the prior year.

Likewise, the Workers Health and Safety Centre (WHSC) began hosting webinars on emerging COVID-19 issues. They also launched virtual classrooms for globally harmonized WHIMIS training. In 2020–2021 the WHSC trained a total of 35,157 participants. Approximately half of this training was delivered in virtual classrooms.

Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS) (<https://www.wsps.ca/>) also developed a Prevent COVID at Work free mobile app. This app aimed to support individuals, colleagues and the community in several ways. It provided information on what the workplace should be doing during COVID-19. It also provided information on rights and responsibilities under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Workers could access timely, relevant and trustworthy guidance in plain language. They could also share content with peers.

WSPS conducted 819 virtual sessions (including training, consulting, conferences, webinars, etc.). A total of 22,047 people participated. Overall, customer satisfaction for virtual sessions remained high at 4.61 out of 5.00.

## Occupational Health and Safety Training Initiative

COVID-19 also highlighted the need to improve access to OHS training. On July 3, 2020, the ministry launched the Occupational Health and Safety Training Initiative

(<http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/programs/ohsti.html>) . This initiative committed \$3 million to provide a suite of 10 free online health and safety training courses for up to 100,000 jobseekers through Employment Ontario (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/employment-ontario>) . Goals of the initiative included:

- remove financial barriers to completing health and safety training
- support the safe reopening of businesses

Total registration across all training providers was 23,114. More than 9,850 people completed courses, with an overall completion rate of 43%. The ministry collected feedback from program participants. Most indicated they felt that the training helped them learn about the course topic, that they would be able to use what they learned on the job, and that they felt safer at work as a result of the training.

## Recognizing out-of-province training

### Newfoundland and Labrador fall protection training

To further improve access to OHS training, the ministry amended the OHS Awareness and Training regulation. As of January 2021, Ontario recognized fall protection training from Newfoundland and Labrador as an acceptable alternative to Ontario's Working at Heights training. This change supports the mobility of workers trained on fall protection in Newfoundland and Labrador who want to work at heights in Ontario.

# Supporting workplace parties to fulfill their occupational health and safety roles and responsibilities and achieve excellence

Some workplaces need help complying with the basic requirements of Ontario laws. Others are striving for excellence. The OHS system is committed to supporting both. In 2020–2021, OHS system partners developed new resources to support their sectors during COVID-19 and delivered existing OHS programs. The ministry undertook initiatives to increase compliance. At the same time, the ministry launched or enhanced programs to help employers achieve OHS excellence.

## Programs and resources to support workplaces to fulfil their OHS roles and responsibilities

### Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) COVID-19 resources

WSIB quickly responded to the COVID-19 pandemic with a focused strategy. Their approach involved:

- providing COVID-19 related information on their website and social channels, including COVID-19 guidance documents that link users back to the ministry website

- adding pandemic readiness tools to their Health and Safety Excellence program (<https://www.wsib.ca/en/healthandsafety>) materials, for example they created a COVID-19 roadmap for employers
- posting online FAQs, including questions related to temporary foreign agricultural employees
- sharing links to other helpful sources of information on their website and through social channels
- allowing employers enrolled in the Health and Safety Excellence program to choose topics that would help them manage their pandemic response

### Infrastructure Health and Safety Association (IHSA) COVID-19 guidance

To help workplaces prevent the spread of COVID-19, the IHSA produced over 40 guidance resources. These resources have been downloaded by more than 61,000 unique users. IHSA also offered on-site and phone consultations to the construction, electrical utilities and transportation sectors. Between March 2020 and April 2021, the IHSA:

- completed 629 site visits, reaching the workplaces of 9,179 workers in Ontario
- placed 1,281 calls to worksites across Ontario, reaching 7,340 workers

Additionally, IHSA developed 13 on-demand COVID-19 awareness webinars (<https://www.ihsa.ca/covid-19/videos/workplace-guides-best-practices>). More than 1,000 people attended these sessions.

### Line Crew Ground Support Program

The IHSA worked with industry partners to create the Line Crew Ground Support Program. This program is intended for Indigenous people in Ontario. It helps participants prepare and build practical powerline and health and safety skills to help integrate more easily into the workforce. In 2020, 36 students from various Indigenous communities across the province completed this program.

### Public Services Health and Safety Association (PSHSA) conferences

PSHSA delivered a free Return to the Workplace virtual conference on June 16, 2020. Nearly 1,500 participants registered for the event to learn how COVID-19 has impacted businesses. They were able to interact with experts for guidance on how to navigate return to the workplace during COVID-19. They were also able to hear about innovations that could help them keep workers and customers healthy and safe. An evaluation completed by 129 attendees, speakers and exhibitors showed that there was a 95% satisfaction rate.

On November 17, 2020, PSHSA followed up with a second free virtual conference: The Workplace, Reimagined. This focused on “where we go from here” and gathered innovative perspectives on what our new world of work should look like. The conference featured six knowledge streams across 33 sessions. Sessions included topics such as leadership, emerging technologies, resilience, digital learning change management and diversity, equity, and inclusion. A total of 1,103 participants registered for the event. An evaluation completed by 113 attendees, speakers, and exhibitors showed that there was a 91% satisfaction rate.

Recorded sessions for both virtual conferences — Return to the Workplace (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmyQhDPavCQlztIVpGtcDr6DDtpFw5VG3>) and The Workplace, Reimagined (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmyQhDPavCQko9zumBW37lvFSBXm13UMG>) — are available online.

## Supporting the agriculture sector through COVID-19

OHS system partners worked with industry to develop educational resources and supports for the agricultural sector during COVID-19. This included supports for Temporary Foreign Agricultural Workers (TFAW). For example, to ensure TFAWs could access and understand COVID-19 related information, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) developed FAQs (<https://www.wsib.ca/en/covid-19-faqs-foreign-agricultural-workers-and-their-employers>) made specifically for them and their employers. Other resources — like this brochure in Spanish ([https://www.wsib.ca/sites/default/files/2019-04/0120p\\_agriworkersbrochure\\_injuredorillspanish.pdf](https://www.wsib.ca/sites/default/files/2019-04/0120p_agriworkersbrochure_injuredorillspanish.pdf)) — are also available on WSIB's website. In addition, Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS) worked with industry partners to produce several COVID-19 related educational resources (<https://covid19.wspss.ca/resources>). These included webinars and guidance documents for the agriculture sector.

Partnerships were a key factor in the system's response to COVID-19 within the agriculture sector. For example, WSPS worked with the ministry and other government partners and sector stakeholders Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), Labour Issues Coordinating Committees (LICC) to provide free training resources to temporary foreign agriculture workers. These resources were designed to:

- help workers protect themselves from COVID-19 while at work and in housing
- provide information on vaccine safety to reduce vaccine hesitancy

All resources were translated into four languages.

WSPS initiatives also successfully supported the agriculture sector in different ways at a time when it was struggling through the pandemic. Highlights include:

- "Relieving the pains of greenhouse work" ([https://www.greenhousecanada.com/relieving-the-pains-of-greenhouse-work/?oly\\_enc\\_id=5578I9161845E1J](https://www.greenhousecanada.com/relieving-the-pains-of-greenhouse-work/?oly_enc_id=5578I9161845E1J)) published by WSPS in January 2021. This article addresses the risks of musculoskeletal disorders in greenhouses with tips on how to prevent them. It has been distributed via Greenhouse Canada Magazine.
- A webinar conducted in collaboration with Greenhouse Canada. More than 90 participants attended. The event was designed to raise awareness as part of the Greenhouse Risk Assessment Project.

Webinars organized through WSPS and Landscape Ontario and a podcast organized through Landscape Ontario's COVID-19 Task Force. The goal was to help their members safely re-open by providing guidance and resources. In addition, the ministry worked with its OHS system partners on some of these initiatives as mentioned. The ministry also completed compliance initiatives and regular inspection work which included visits to agriculture sector workplaces. See more on ministry compliance initiatives below.

## Supporting mining with the Ontario Mine Rescue Program

All underground mine owners must maintain a roster of actively trained mine rescue volunteers. There must be enough volunteers ready to respond across all work shifts. When a new mine starts, or when a currently operating mine loses workers from this list of available responders, the employer must recruit more volunteers. To qualify, these workers must complete an Introductory Mine Rescue program. Mine owners are required to have sufficient workers trained in mine rescue under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* Mines and Mining Plants Regulation. In 2020-21, Workplace Safety North delivered 31 Introductory Mine Rescue Certification training sessions, totaling 7,280 participant hours of training.

## Mandatory Mining Skills Training

Workplace Safety North's (WSN) Mandatory Mining Skills Training

(<https://www.workplacesafetynorth.ca/mandatory-skills-training>) program was designed to help learners meet the requirements for certification set by the former Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. In 2020-2021, WSN delivered 120 Mandatory Mining Skills Training sessions to a total of 1,329 participants. Much of this training was delivered online.

## Annual Field Visit Activity

### Enforcement

Occupational health and safety inspectors visit workplaces to provide information and conduct inspections to ensure that the workplace complies with health and safety legislation. If a workplace is not in compliance, the inspector may issue an order and the employer must correct the problem within a certain timeframe. If the problem poses an immediate threat to worker health and safety, the inspector may issue a stop work order, which means that work stops until the problem is corrected.

Inspectors also do consultations, which may happen before a workplace inspection. An inspector may discuss the purpose of their visit with the employer and/or joint health and safety committee members/worker health and safety representative and may request information from the workplace parties to prepare for their next visit.

### Total inspections

In 2020-21, ministry inspectors conducted a total of 72,473 visits to 36,605 workplaces and issued 75,188 orders. Of those orders, 5,356 were stop use or stop work orders.

### Proactive inspections

Proactive inspections are unannounced field visits conducted to improve safety and prevent injuries or fatalities. At proactive visits, inspectors:

- monitor compliance with occupational health and safety legislation
- promote the internal responsibility system
- advise workplace parties of their rights, duties and responsibilities
- discuss requirements of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90o01>) (OHSA) and its regulations

In 2020–2021, 47% of the field visits (34,399) were proactive visits.

There were 46,727 orders issued during proactive visits, which accounted for 62% of all orders issued.

### Reactive Inspections

Reactive inspections are field visits conducted to investigate a fatality, critical injury, work refusal, complaint, occupational disease or other health and safety-related event in the workplace. Reactive visits are a critical part of inspectors' work.

In 2020–2021, there were 38, 074 reactive field visits, where inspectors issued 28,461 orders. Over the past decade, the number of reactive visits has increased from 23,979 in 2009–2021 to 38,074 in 2020–2021.

- Data on OHS worker fatalities and critical injury counts can be found here  
(<https://data.ontario.ca/en/dataset/occupational-health-and-safety-worker-fatality-and-critical-injury-counts-report>) .
- Data on OHS inspections can be found here (<https://data.ontario.ca/en/dataset/occupational-health-and-safety-inspections-report>) .
- Data on OHS orders can be found here (<https://data.ontario.ca/en/dataset/occupational-health-and-safety-orders-report>) .
- Data on OHS events can be found here (<https://data.ontario.ca/en/dataset/occupational-health-and-safety-events-report>) .

## Compliance initiatives

Each year, the ministry schedules compliance initiatives in specific sectors. Goals of these initiatives include to:

- protect workers' rights under the Occupational Health and Safety Act
- ensure workplace parties understand their responsibilities and comply

With the arrival of COVID-19 in 2020, the ministry shifted its compliance focus to support workplaces in protecting workers from the virus.

## Cross-sector initiatives

### COVID-19 "Stay Safe All Day" campaign

In planning this campaign, the ministry and OHS partners looked at the factors that were thought to be helping to spread COVID-19 among workers. Most employers and their workers may be following COVID-19 safety requirements when working. However, they may fail to maintain physical distancing in the lunchroom. They may not wear masks when travelling together in a confined vehicle. Or they may fail to take safety precautions when in common areas.

The "Stay Safe All Day" campaign focused on the factors that most often result in a workplace outbreak. Its aim was to:

- improve compliance amongst workers, supervisors and employers with COVID-19 health and safety requirements
- enforce the related regulationsOccupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and associated regulations, and requirements under the Re-Opening Ontario Act, 2020 (ROA).

As part of this campaign, ministry inspectors shared resources with workplaces that highlighted the most common gaps in COVID-19 protection. These resources were developed by the ministry's Pandemic Workplace Safety Branch and OHS system partners, including: Meal and break periods at work during COVID-19. (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/meal-and-break-periods-work-during-covid-19>)

## Construction initiatives

### COVID-19 Construction "Stay Safe All Day" campaign

This campaign began on February 2, 2021. It had two main goals:

- To increase awareness of the COVID-19 workplace measures needed at construction sites. These include a workplace safety plan, hand hygiene and masking.
- To highlight the importance of daily screening, physical distancing and how to adapt the work environment to meet these requirements.

As part of this campaign, inspectors from the construction health and safety program conducted field visits. To prepare inspectors, the ministry created an Inspector Guidance Toolkit. This toolkit included quick reference information such as a COVID-19 Inspection Checklist. The campaign increased the efforts of all workplace parties to roll out COVID-19 procedures or protocols.

Ministry inspectors conducted 3,830 field visits in 3,117 construction workplaces. They issued 8,424 OHSA orders from February 2, 2021 to May 7, 2021.

### **Tower crane initiative**

After two tower crane failures in the summer of 2020, the ministry conducted a province-wide tower crane initiative. This initiative ran from August 31, 2020 until December 31, 2020. The ministry sent inspectors out to review the practices in place at construction sites to inspect, install and maintain tower cranes. Ministry inspectors conducted 325 field visits at 161 workplaces. They issued a total of 911 orders.

Read More (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/compliance-initiative-results-tower-cranes-2020>)

### **Health care initiatives**

#### **Respiratory Infections Strategy: Long-term care homes & retirement homes**

During the pandemic, the ministry has made its presence in long-term care homes and retirement homes a key priority. From the earliest days of the pandemic, we have:

- Helped workplaces understand and manage the risks and protect workers
- Maintained ongoing communications with key health care stakeholders. This includes employers, workers, unions, sector associations and others in the long-term care sector
- Participated in webinars on OHS during COVID-19 for key stakeholders in long-term care

Prior to the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, in September 2020 the ministry initiated a Respiratory Infections Strategy in long-term care homes and retirement homes. The goal was to help Ontario's long-term care sector to prepare and respond to respiratory hazards related to COVID-19, the flu and more. The strategy included a process for sharing information between the ministry, Ministry of Long-term Care, Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility and the Retirement Home Regulatory Authority about inspections. Specific issues were referred to the correct partners for action. This has contributed to more timely inspections for homes identified as at-risk. It has also allowed all three enforcement agencies to expand their reach.

The ministry began focused inspections as part of the strategy on September 20, 2020. However, the ministry has had an ongoing presence in the long-term care sector for many years prior to the pandemic.

From September 20, 2020 to March 29, 2021, ministry inspectors completed:

- 979 COVID-19 related field visits to long-term care homes (317 proactive, and 662 reactive), resulting in 220 orders
- 456 COVID-19 related field visits to retirement homes (230 proactive and 226 reactive), resulting in 224 orders

Ministry inspectors also provided information and resources to help workplaces in their response to COVID-19.

## Industrial initiatives

### Temporary help agencies initiative

Many Ontario workplaces faced significant labour shortages during the COVID-19 pandemic. They relied on workers supplied from multiple sources to fill vacant positions. These included:

- temporary foreign workers
- employment agencies
- temporary help agencies
- local workers

Workers from some of these sources may be unaware of their rights and responsibilities under Ontario legislation. For example: Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), Employment Standards Act, 2000 (ESA), This created new risks for COVID-19 transmission.

The ministry launched an initiative that focused on the use of temporary help agencies from May 1, 2020 to August 31, 2020. It included visits in the agriculture, food processing, manufacturing and storage and warehousing sectors. OHS inspectors assessed workplaces for compliance with OHSA requirements. OHSA inspectors were granted temporary *Employment Standards Act, 2020* authority to collect information about the use of temporary help agencies. This information was then shared with the ministry's Employment Standards Program and Service Canada.

Between May 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021, 761 field visits were conducted under the Temporary Help Agencies initiative as part of the Underground Economy Initiative. There were 570 orders and requirements issued including 5 stop work orders under OHSA.

The ministry launched a modified version of this initiative again for the 2021 growing season. The ministry implemented new data collection tools to drive data-driven decision making for this sector.

### Temporary foreign agriculture workers (TFAW) farming initiative

This initiative was conducted from May 2020 to December 2021. Its goal was to address the increase in positive COVID-19 cases reported on farms, including those with temporary foreign workers. The information gathered during this initiative was used to begin working to solve this issue with ministry partners. These included:

- Employment and Skills Development Canada
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
- Public health units

By March 31, 2021, ministry inspectors:

- conducted 787 field visits to 707 workplaces
- issued 254 orders

### **Meat processing facilities initiative**

This initiative was developed to help meat processing facilities control COVID-19. The goal was twofold:

1. Raise awareness of the risks of COVID-19 transmission for workers in these facilities.
2. Ensure employers had the information necessary to implement COVID-19 health and safety measures.

From May 26, 2020 to March 31, 2021 ministry inspectors:

- conducted 327 field visits at 285 meat processing facilities
- issued 290 orders

Ministry inspectors also shared resources with workplaces such as Food manufacturing and processing health and safety during COVID-19 (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/food-manufacturing-and-processing-health-and-safety-during-covid-19>) .

### **Warehousing / distribution initiative**

This initiative was conducted in Peel Region after a high number of COVID-19 outbreaks in local warehousing and distribution centres. It ran from February 10 to February 24, 2021, as part of a Stay Safe All Day campaign. The ministry worked closely with the local public health unit throughout the campaign.

Ministry inspectors found that employers were generally aware of the COVID-19 safety measures. The inspectors provided education and compliance support to businesses that continued to struggle with adopting the regulations.

From February 10, 2021 to February 24, 2021 ministry inspectors:

- conducted 47 OHS field visits
- issued 85 OHS orders including 1 stop work order

### **Return to School Consultation and Yardstick initiative**

The ministry conducted and completed a Return to School Consultation Initiative from August 7 to August 28, 2020. This was to prepare schools as they began to reopen from COVID-19 lockdowns. Ministry inspectors engaged with safety staff and Joint Health and Safety Committee co-chairs at all 76 schoolboards in Ontario. These visits focused on three main areas:

1. Providing OHS compliance assistance regarding the boards' plans for return to school.
2. Sharing information and resources.
3. Encouraging labour-management cooperation through the Joint Health and Safety Committee.

All consultation field visits were completed within school boards prior to school resuming in September 2020. Public Services Health & Safety Association (PSHSA) published guidance documents for schools to help staff

and teachers remain healthy and safe in the workplace. PSHSA also worked with the Ministry of Education to build a training module to support the reopening of schools.

From October 15, 2020 to March 31, 2021, the ministry introduced the YARDSTICK initiative. The goal was to provide ministry inspectors with a risk framework to guide proactive inspections in school settings. These inspections focused on COVID-19 measures put into place by school boards at specific locations. These inspections were an important part of the province's response to complaints and reports of occupational illness.

## **Mining initiatives**

### **Inspector outreach for COVID-19 in the mining sector**

The ministry has made and continues to make visits to mines and mining plants a key priority throughout the pandemic. Our goal is to help employers and workers understand and manage the risk of COVID-19 transmission and protect all workers. Ministry inspectors conducted focused inspections to address safe working conditions, proper hygiene practices and cleaning of equipment.

From March 23, 2020 to June 30, 2020, ministry inspectors:

- conducted 232 field visits (173 proactive, 59 reactive)
- issued 5 orders (all during proactive visits)

### **Electric battery vehicles and mobile diesel equipment maintenance in mines**

The ministry led this health and safety initiative from December 14, 2020 to March 31, 2021. The goal was to help enforce employer compliance with the requirements for battery electric vehicles and mobile diesel equipment maintenance in mines under Ontario regulations. Occupational Health and Safety Act (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90o01>) (OHS) and its regulations, including Regulation 854: Mines and Mining Plants (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/900854>)

The ministry began by focusing on education, outreach and awareness for employers. We partnered with Workplace Safety North (WSN) to deliver this support. Then, beginning February 3, 2020, the ministry conducted a focused inspection blitz at mines to check that employers had complied.

Between December 14, 2020 to March 31, 2021, ministry inspectors:

- conducted 39 field visits with one support role activityActivities in which professional services staff (e.g., a hygienist, ergonomist, engineer, etc.) or another inspector accompanies an inspector on a field visit to provide professional support and/or expertise.
- visited 35 mining workplaces
- issued 69 orders and requirements, including 4 stop work orders

Read more (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/mining-sector-compliance-plan-2020-2021#section-4>) .

## **Programs supporting OHS excellence**

Research indicates that healthy and safe workplaces, where people feel safe and secure every day, offer numerous benefits to employers and employees alike. They reduce absenteeism and employee turnover and

increase engagement.

## Health and Safety Excellence program

The Health and Safety Excellence program (<https://www.wsib.ca/en/healthandsafety>) launched in November 2019.

From November 2019 to March 31, 2021, the Workplace Safety Insurance Board (WSIB) had 2,193 businesses enrolled in the program. These businesses represent over 700,000 employees covered by WSIB. The construction sector represents the highest number of participants at 25%. Manufacturing follows at 17%.

The WSIB issued over \$1.5 million in rebates to participants in the first year of the program. By March 31, 2021, Program members were working on almost 9,000 health and safety topics in workplaces across Ontario. Each topic focuses on eliminating or controlling a hazard. It includes the detail, standards, equipment and procedures required to improve this area of health and safety. Learn more here (<https://www.wsib.ca/en/health-and-safety-excellence-program-learn-about-our-program>).

Workplace Safety North (WSN) has been an approved provider of this program since its launch. WSN has developed a webpage (<https://www.workplacesafetynorth.ca/consulting/health-and-safety-excellence-program>) which provides:

- program background
- WSIB member guidelines
- templates and template guidelines

WSN has also provided nine regular webinar sessions and delivered a total of 56 participant training hours to provide Health and Safety Excellence program staff and client support.

The Infrastructure Health and Safety Association (IHSA) has also continued to support members enrolled in the program. IHSA offers one-on-one virtual consultations to help clients adapt topics to address COVID-19 in their workplaces.

In December of 2020, IHSA had 326 active members enrolled in the Health and Safety Excellence program. Five had completed their chosen topics for the year and shared a total of \$466,869 in rebates. Members spanned across the following sectors:

- construction (205 employers)
- transportation (75 employers)
- electrical/utilities (12 employers)
- other sectors (34 employers)

## Supporting Ontario's Safe Employers (SOSE)

Supporting Ontario's Safe Employers (SOSE) (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/supporting-ontarios-safe-employers-program>) is a ministry program established by the CPO in November 2019. The voluntary program is intended to help reduce injuries and illness in the workplace by promoting the implementation of accredited Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems (OHSMS).

Following the first wave of COVID-19, the ministry launched a new Accreditation and Employer Recognition application portal. We received the first request to be assessed for CPO Employer Recognition in fall 2020.

Third-party lead auditors are essential to the CPO employer recognition process. They verify whether an employer has fully implemented a CPO-accredited OHSMS. In December 2020 and January 2021, the CPO made it easier for employers to complete audits. We released the Governing Body of Auditors (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/requirements-be-acknowledged-governing-body-auditors#section-2>) requirements and accepted more certification bodies accredited to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 17021 standard.

On March 31, 2021, three employers received CPO Employer Recognition (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/chief-prevention-officer-employer-recognition-criteria>) for having fully implemented ISO 45001:2018 Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems and meeting other recognition criteria. In total, these employers also received \$115,000 in financial incentives from the WSIB's Ontario Safe Employers Rebate Program (<https://www.wsib.ca/en/ontario-safe-employers-rebate-program>). These organizations must continue to maintain their OHSMS each year to maintain CPO Recognition. If these organizations comply with the WSIB's requirements, they may be eligible for financial incentives under the Ontario Safe Employers Rebate Program over the next two years.

## Making occupational health and safety easier for small business

Small businesses represent 95% of Ontario's employers. They are a key driver of Ontario's economy. Over the past year, the OHS system has focused on keeping workers of small business safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are providing educational tools, resources and supports to help improve health and safety.

### Developing affordable and tailored resources

#### Keeping Ontario safe and open

The ministry delivered more than 90 webinars to small business from March 31, 2020 to April 1, 2021. The goal was to raise awareness of the province's latest COVID-19 rules. For example, the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA) or the Reopening Ontario Act, 2020 (>ROA).

These sessions were at the invitation of small business associations, Ontario Chambers of Commerce and other local associations. More than 4,600 small business employers and vulnerable workers attended. Participants were asked to complete a follow-up survey which showed that:

- 90% of participants would attend future webinars
- 81% agreed that the webinar has increased their understanding of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*
- 83% agreed that the OHS information was useful

#### Health and Safety Representative (HSR) training

The goals of this free training program are twofold:

- help small businesses improve health and safety in workplaces that require an HSR

- prevent injury/illness by having a competent and knowledgeable HSR

As part of the 2021 Ontario Budget announcement on March 24, 2021, the ministry committed to provide this free training in up to 60,000 small businesses with 6-19 workers. This equals an investment of up to \$3.5 million a year over the next three years.

### Health and Safety Excellence program for small business

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) created a “Guide to Joining for Small Businesses (<https://www.cdda.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/HSEpGuideSMBusinessesEN202101.pdf>)” in January 2021. The guide is to help small businesses understand the importance of investing in health and safety. It is also to encourage small businesses to join the Health and Safety Excellence program.

In January 2021, the WSIB partnered with the ministry and Health and Safety Associations to design the Health and Safety Excellence program Small Business Study. Over the course of the three-year study, the WSIB will focus on how to best support and encourage small businesses to engage in health and safety activities to prevent injury and illness.

### Leveraging digital channels

Small businesses now have more choices on how they access health and safety information. Over the past year, the Workplace Safety and Prevention Service’s (WSIB) small business program has extended the use of digital channels. For 2020-2021, WSPS engaged with over 4,000 small businesses in a range of products and services. For example, WSIB:

- delivered the Health & Safety Representative (<https://shop.wsps.ca/products/health-and-safety-representative-hsr-basic-training>) training course online
- promoted the Health & Safety Excellence program (<https://www.wsib.ca/en/healthandsafety>)
- launched a new podcast (<https://www.wsps.ca/resource-hub/articles/small-biz-safety-podcast>) in November 2020, with topics geared towards helping small businesses. As of March 31, 2021, five episodes were published. They received 465 unique downloads and 460 listens on streaming services.

### Safe Workplace Ontario and Small Company Health and Safety Program

Workplace Safety North (WSN) Health and Safety Specialists oversee the:

- Safe Workplace Ontario Program (SWO) (<https://www.workplacesafetynorth.ca/consulting/safe-workplace-ontario>)
- Small Company Health and Safety Program (SCHSP) (<https://www.workplacesafetynorth.ca/consulting/small-company-health-and-safety-program>)

These programs are offered in partnership with Forestry Licensees and contractors that provide services to the forest industry. These programs provide the essentials for setting up and implementing an effective OHS program. Companies can then voluntarily undertake an audit or self-evaluation process to continuously monitor and improve their OHS programs and procedures.

270 Forestry Firms actively engaged in the SWO and SCHSP. As of March 31, 2021, 164 companies delivered 742 hours of training and held 342 consulting meetings.

## Recognizing small business leaders

### Workplace Safety and Insurance Board 2020 Small Business Health and Safety Leadership Awards

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) Small Business Health and Safety Leadership Awards (<https://www.wsib.ca/en/small-business-health-and-safety-leadership-awards>) serve two purposes:

- They recognize the excellent efforts of small businesses in health and safety.
- They encourage more small businesses to engage in health and safety.

Business owners faced many challenges in 2020 as they adapted to keep up with COVID-19. The WSIB shifted the submission deadline for the 2020 awards from late spring to early fall 2020 to give small businesses more time to prepare their submissions. The awards ceremony took place in November 2020. The award winners included:

- Gold level – Brick & Co. Restoration Ltd, Kitchener \$5,000
- Silver level – Albany Retirement Village, Petrolia, \$3,000
- Bronze level – Ron H. Williams Drainage Inc., Listowel, \$2,000

In addition to monetary prizes, WSIB also mentioned the award winners on social media channels.

## Areas of systems focus

### Occupational illness

#### Occupational Disease Action Plan (ODAP)

The ODAP Implementation Team includes the ministry, OHS system partners and Public Health Ontario.

In the fall of 2021, they developed an evidence-informed logic model framework to guide OHS system and partner occupational illness prevention activities. This work was aligned with recommendations from key reports, including the 2019 Auditor-General report and the Occupational Cancer Review (see Research and Data). The framework includes five core areas of activity:

- Build strategic partnerships.
- Conduct research and data analysis.
- Provide training and education.
- Develop and share workplace tools.
- Update regulations and enforce legislation.

A new Occupational Illness Prevention Steering Committee will continue this work in 2022, replacing the ODAP Implementation Team. The Committee will work to develop the occupational illness prevention plan as part of the roll-out of Prevention Works.

## Strategic partnerships

In 2020-21, the ministry established a new working group to help create the framework for the new occupational illness prevention plan. This working group is led by the ministry's Prevention Division and the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW). Its work is supported by the ministry's Program Evaluation Unit. Other participants include the ministry's occupational physician and representatives from:

- Workplace Safety and Insurance Board
- Workplace Safety North
- Workplace Safety & Prevention Services
- Occupational Cancer Research Centre
- Centre for Research Excellence in Occupational Disease

## Research and data

In July 2020, the ministry released the Occupational Cancer Review (<https://www.occupationalcancer.ca/2020/scientific-evidence-work-relatedness-cancer-report/>) (Demers Report). This report addressed four themes:

1. Update presumptive lists and cancer-relevant policies.
2. Enhance scientific capacity.
3. Improve access to exposure data for compensation and prevention.
4. Improve recognition through medical education.

The recommendations in the report will help to inform future activities of the ministry, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board and the new Occupational Illness Steering Committee.

## Education, training and workplace tools: Moving from research to workplace practices

During 2020-21, the ministry and its partners rolled out several new educational resources, presentations and workplace tools. The goal was to educate and support workplace parties so they could better:

- recognize and assess risks
- improve control of workplace exposures

A summary of these initiatives follows.

**The Occupational Cancer Research Centre** created the Occdiseasestats (<https://www.occdiseasestats.ca/>) site to show workers at greatest risk for occupational diseases in different sectors. The site uses the data from the Occupational Disease Surveillance System.

**The Centre for Research Expertise in Occupational Disease (CREOD)** created a Skin Health at Work toolbox (<https://creod.on.ca/occupational-skin-disease/skin-health-toolbox/>). This resource provides accessible, plain language evidence and resources for workplace parties to support occupational skin health.

**The Occupational Disease Labour-Management Committee, supported by the Infrastructure Health and Safety Association (IHSA)**, held a seminar on Regulation 833: Control of Exposure to Biological or Chemical Agents. The session featured Paul Demers, who shared the results from a study on strategies to reduce the

future burden of cancer in the Ontario construction industry

(<https://www.occupationalcancer.ca/burden/future-burden/>) . The event was attended by 70 stakeholders. The IHSA has been working with industry stakeholders on the development of a strategy for preventing exposures to the occupational health hazards in construction. The goal is to help the construction sector to prevent overexposure to chemical agents.

**The Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW)** held their 6th Annual Occ-tober Symposium (<https://www.ohcow.on.ca/posts/occ-tober-2020/>) as a webinar series over the month of October. The focus was on new tools that workplaces can use to assess risks and better control workplace exposures. These include:

- COVID Regional Risk Tool (<https://www.ohcow.on.ca/covid-19/regional-risk-tool-tips/>)
- Ventilation Checklist ([https://www.ohcow.on.ca/edit/files/occ-covid/ventilation\\_checklist\\_generic\\_final\\_fillable.pdf](https://www.ohcow.on.ca/edit/files/occ-covid/ventilation_checklist_generic_final_fillable.pdf))
- Diesel Calculator (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HxbriQ5sOnk&t=5s>)
- Occupational Exposure Limit Adjust Tool (<https://www.ohcow.on.ca/oel-adjust-tool/>) . This tool allows workplace parties to calculate the adjusted workplace exposure limit for unusual or extended work shifts in accordance with Ontario regulations. See Regulation 833 and O. Reg. 490/09. (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/900833>)

OHCOW held an extensive Occ-COVID webinar series (<https://www.ohcow.on.ca/resources/events-and-webinars/occ-covid-webinar-series/#1633726084317-a46cc63b-0c0a>) to share the latest science and strategies for prevention. It also held an Occupational Disease Winter Webinar Series (<https://www.ohcow.on.ca/posts/occ-disease-prevention-webinars/>) to share:

- best practices for adjudication of cancer claims and policy-development
- results of the OCRC study on McIntyre Powder and Neurological Disorders
- support for workers who think that their illness may be work-related
- the work that OHCOW has been doing on occupational cluster investigations (<https://www.ohcow.on.ca/occupational-illness/occupational-disease-cluster-investigations/>)

All of the OHCOW sessions were recorded. This will allow workers, Health and Safety Representatives and workplace parties to conveniently access the information and share it at Joint Health and Safety Committee or other meetings.

## Work-related mental health and workplace violence and harassment

Over the 2020-21 fiscal year, the OHS system contributed to the evidence base on mental health in the workplace. It also supported workplaces in creating psychologically safe and healthy workplaces through educational resources and programs.

### Data and research

#### Pandemic Experience Surveys and Impact

The Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW) released a survey on April 7, 2020. The goal was to measure the experiences of healthcare workers (HCWs) during the pandemic. Several academic and labour

partners also participated, including the Institute for Work & Health (IWH). The study  
 (https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0706743720961729) findings include:

- those who reported that none of their personal protective equipment (PPE) needs were met were the most anxious
- anxiety levels increased as workers reported inadequate COVID-19 policies and practices, but less steeply

The study provides insight for future stress and harm prevention: “If PPE protection and infection control policies and practices are adequate, then this mental health burden can be reduced.” Institute for Work & Health, Anxiety levels among health-care workers during COVID-19 linked to inadequate PPE  
 (https://www.iwh.on.ca/newsletters/at-work/100/anxiety-levels-among-health-care-workers-during-covid-19-linked-to-inadequate-ppe)

Following the HCW survey, a second survey for non-HCW was released on April 26, 2020. The study  
 (https://academic.oup.com/annweh/article/65/3/266/6032759) found that “the adequate design and implementation of employer-based infection control programs have implications for the mental health of site-based workers.” Results from these studies and others were widely shared through conferences, webinars and meetings.

### Occupational Stress Injury Resiliency (OSIR) Index

Another project that contributed to the evidence base in this area was a joint project between the Conference Board of Canada and Public Services Health & Safety Association (PSHSA). The goal was to create an occupational stress injury risk assessment tool for first responders.

This work stemmed from ongoing efforts by PSHSA to help prevent mental injury. One area of particular interest is assessment of risk to support proactive steps to protect the health and safety of first responders. Preliminary results show that the Occupational Stress Injury Resiliency (OSIR) Index  
 (https://www.pshsa.ca/news/new-research-findings-on-risks-of-occupational-stress-injury-among-canadian-first-responders-and-frontline-healthcare-workers) can help employers to:

- better understand how their employees are faring
- identify areas of focus in prevention programming.

### Mental Harm Prevention Roadmap

The Mental Harm Prevention Roadmap is one of four project streams of the CPO-directed program, Laying the Foundations for Workplace Mental Harm Prevention. For the Mental Harm Prevention Roadmap, Workplace Safety and Prevention Services (WSPS) has partnered with the Conference Board of Canada (CBoC) and Howatt HR (HHR). They are working together and conducting research to develop a suite of evidence-based resources to help employers in identifying and implementing psychological health and safety programs.

The Roadmap is one of the resources. It consists of eight building blocks that serve as a simple, practical framework. Organizations can use this as a guide to advance psychological health and safety in the workplace.

This initiative is part of a three-year research project:

- Part one was to explore current programs, tools and policies as well as evidence of their effectiveness. The CBoC released a primer document on December 8, 2020. See Moving to Action: Implementing Workplace

Safety & Prevention Services' Mental Harm Prevention Roadmap  
([http://thinkmentalhealth.ca/documents/Primer\\_Moving-to-Action.pdf](http://thinkmentalhealth.ca/documents/Primer_Moving-to-Action.pdf)) .

- Part two will test the Roadmap in an applied setting to learn whether it can help employers make decisions and take actions that will support psychological health and safety in the workplace.

## Knowledge mobilization & supporting workplaces

### Health and Safety Excellence program – Mental Health

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board's Health and Safety Excellence program (<https://www.wsib.ca/en/health-and-safety-excellence-program-frequently-asked-questions>) helps employers address key hazards in their workplace. These include mental health hazards. Research shows people are more likely to rate the risk of mental stress higher than any other form of risk at their workplace. The ministry completed a benchmark public opinion survey of over 5,300 Ontarians to understand people's attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and behaviours relating to occupational health and safety.

Employers who join the Health and Safety Excellence program can engage and empower employees to create a safe and healthy workplace through the roll-out of various program topics. Examples include:

- workplace health promotion
- corporate social responsibility
- control of hazards, with a focus on psychological hazards.

### Educational resources

The OHS system also made efforts to mobilize existing data to help workplaces address work-related mental health. Supports included new webpages, educational events, consulting and training. In February 2021, the ministry updated its Mental Health in the Workplace webpage to (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/mental-health-workplace>) :

1. Ensure that stakeholders have the information that they need to understand how Ontario regulates psychological injuries in the workplace.
2. Provide links to resources offered by OHS system partners.

Other highlights in fiscal 2020-21 include:

**Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS)** worked with Howatt HR and Mental Health Commission of Canada to launch the Psychological Safety Blog (<http://www.ceohsnetwork.ca/psychological-safety-blog/>) . This blog was in response to self-isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic and its anticipated impact on employee mental health. The blog is posted on the CEO Network website. It is directed at leaders, with the initial goal of assisting them in leading their people during the era of COVID-19. It has now evolved from a strictly pandemic-related resource to one that offers more generalized mental health-related insight. It is a trusted source for information, tools and resources to help leaders protect the health, safety and wellness of their people. Since its launch in March 2020, the Psychological Safety Blog has received over 38,000 pageviews.

Workplace Safety North (WSN) worked to address the needs of their clients by leveraging their community engagement strategy. To help clients target their areas of greatest need, WSN began to plan and implement a two-pronged approach:

1. WSN took a one-too-many approach by offering large-scale educational events, such as webinars, to many clients at once to help them understand this emerging OHS issue.
2. WSN focused on helping clients with specific requests such as on-site awareness sessions for all staff around mental health.

In 2020-21, WSN delivered educational events on mental injury prevention with a total of 892 attendees.

**The Workers Health and Safety Centre (WHSC)** also introduced a training program designed to promote worker mental health. The program focused on the work-related causes of worker mental health or psychosocial hazards in the workplace. To date, 796 participants have taken this newly developed course. They have logged a total of 2,388 training hours.

**Public Services Health & Safety Association (PSHSA)** in conjunction with Dr. Michael Ungar from the Resilience Research Centre at Dalhousie University, developed the R2 for Leaders Training Program (<https://www.pshsa.ca/courses/r2-for-leaders-building-resilient-organizations-distance-learning-program#home-pshsa-logo>). The new training program was offered as a pilot in 2020-21. From April 2, 2020 to March 31, 2021, 253 participants registered for the program. Eleven pilot courses were completed. The program draws on the expertise of resilience researchers, psychologists, exercise, and nutrition specialists, as well as broader scientific evidence, to create a holistic approach to building resilience.

As part of Prevention Works over the next five years, the OHS system will continue to focus on:

- providing work-related mental health information and resources through the Health and Safety Associations
- preventing workplace violence and harassment (especially in education and healthcare sectors)

## Looking forward: The future of health and safety in Ontario

The OHS system has clear direction moving forward. Released in July 2021, the Prevention Works strategy provides a framework to help ensure that Ontario remains one of the safest and healthiest jurisdictions to work in Canada. Initiatives delivered under Prevention Works will be evidence-informed and risk-based. We will focus on measuring outcomes and making changes to help ensure continuous improvement.

As part of Ontario's evolving workplace climate, the OHS system will also consider other factors as they relate to OHS. Activities under Prevention Works will continue to be responsive to key Minister priorities including:

- Strengthening system oversight
- Promoting secure workplaces and labour mobility
- Supporting small businesses and customer service excellence.

Collaboration between OHS system partners and integration of the system's work will continue to remain front and centre in the implementation and measurement of Prevention Works. At the same time, improving system oversight will help ensure investments made are effective in keeping Ontario workers healthy and safe. We will also work beyond the OHS system, creating new partnerships and tackling problems in new and innovative ways. This will remain especially important as we continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stakeholder engagement and consultation will continue to be a priority for the OHS system, so we can build solutions that are customer-focused and responsive to the changing needs of businesses. For example, as the ministry continues to explore the recognition of working at heights training in other jurisdictions if a worker has successfully completed a comprehensive training program in their province of origin.

Workplace health and safety plays a key role in supporting a strong, resilient and productive workforce that drives our economy. Through Prevention Works and the integration of key minister priorities, the system will continue working towards a future where workers and workplaces are free from occupational injuries, illnesses and fatalities.

## Appendix

### Appendix

#### Legislative and regulatory amendments

##### Occupational Exposure Limit (OEL) Updates

Effective July 1, 2020, *Regulation 833 (Control of Exposure to Biological or Chemical Agents)* is amended by O. Reg. 449/19 (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r19449>) to reflect the adoption of new or revised occupational exposure limits (OELs) or listings for 36 chemical substances based on recommendations by the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH). An overview of these changes is given below:

- addition of listings for seven substances in regulation: boron trichloride, calcium silicate (naturally occurring as wollastonite), hard metals (containing cobalt and tungsten carbide), simazine, acetamide, cadusafos, and folpet
- revisions to exposure limits or listings for 19 substances currently regulated: boron tribromide, boron trifluoride, n-butyl acetate, sec-butyl acetate, tert-butyl acetate, isobutyl acetate, cyanogen, propoxur, triorthocresyl phosphate, warfarin, captafol,  $\beta$ -chloroprene, ethylene glycol, furfural, furfuryl alcohol, hexylene glycol, phthalic anhydride, stearates, and tungsten
- removal of listing and OEL for one substance: calcium silicate (synthetic nonfibrous)
- addition or removal of notations for nine substances: acetylene, butane (all isomers), 2,4-D, ethane, hydrogen, liquefied petroleum gas, methyl acetylene, methyl acetylene-propadiene mixture, and propane

##### Amendment to the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*

Bill 197, *COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, 2020* received Royal Assent on July 21, 2020 and amended the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to provide that regulation making authority to adopt codes, standards, criteria and guides includes the power to adopt them as they may be amended from time to time (subsection 70(3)).

##### Amendments to *Ontario Regulation 297/13 (Occupational Health and Safety Awareness and Training)*

In Ontario, workers who may use certain fall protection equipment on construction projects are required to complete Working at Heights (WAH) training approved by the Chief Prevention Officer. Effective January 1, 2021, *O. Reg. 297/13 (Occupational Health and Safety Awareness and Training)* was amended to recognize fall protection training from Newfoundland and Labrador, in addition to Ontario's Working at Heights training.

There is an existing exemption from Working at Heights training requirements for automobile manufacturers and assemblers that directly employ workers at construction projects located at an automobile manufacturing or assembly plant operated by that employer. As of January 1, 2021, the exemption was expanded to include a few additional workplaces that are directly owned and operated by an automobile manufacturer or assembler.

For more information, read the amending regulation *Ontario Regulation 751/20*

(<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r20751>) or the amended Occupational Health and Safety Awareness and Training regulation (Ontario Regulation 297/13) (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/130297>) .

## Revocation of Regulation 852

- Effective October 2, 2020, Ontario Regulation 852 under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) was revoked.
- In December 2019, section 34 of the OHSA was repealed under Bill 132, *the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2019*. Section 34 required notification to the Ministry for manufacturers, distributors, and suppliers who introduce new biological or chemical agents for commercial or industrial use in Ontario workplaces.
- *Ontario Regulation 852 (Inventory of Agents or Combinations of Agents for the Purpose of Section 34 of the Act)* referred to an inventory of existing biological and chemical agents compiled or adopted by the Minister for the purposes of determining whether an agent was considered to be new and required notification under section 34 of the OHSA.
- The revocation of *Ontario Regulation 852* is consequential to the 2019 repeal of section 34 of the OHSA, as the regulation referenced the inventory discussed in section 34 and so was obsolete. This change is reflected in e-Laws at the following link: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/900852> (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/900852>) .

## Amending regulations

- O. Reg. 429/21: Farming Operations (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r21429>)
- O. Reg. 426/21: Construction Projects (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r21426>)
- O. Reg. 427/21: Health Care and Residential Facilities (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r21427>)
- O. Reg. 428/21: Diving Operations (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r21428>)
- O. Reg. 421/21: Industrial Establishments (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r21421>)
- O. Reg. 422/21: Mines and Mining Plants (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r21422>)
- O. Reg. 423/21: Oil and Gas - Offshore (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r21423>)
- O. Reg. 425/21: X-Ray Safety (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r21425>)
- O. Reg. 424/21: Window Cleaning (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r21424>)

## Statistics

### Ontario's workforce

As of March 2021, there were about 7.4 million workers in Ontario — 6.4 million of these workers were employed in workplaces under provincial jurisdiction (<https://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/faqs/ohsa.php#who>).

|                                                     | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Total number of workers in Ontario<br>(in millions) | 7.0  | 7.1  | 7.2  | 7.4  | 7.4  |
| Number under provincial<br>Jurisdiction             | 6.4  | 6.6  | 6.7  | 6.7  | 6.4  |

## Fatalities

In 2020, there were 259 occupational disease fatalities by entitlement year, compared with 65 deaths from traumatic injuries, according to the Workplace Safety Insurance Board.

The sectors with the most traumatic fatalities were construction (31%), transportation and warehousing (15%) and manufacturing (11%). Although there were less traumatic fatalities in 2020 than 2019, the distribution based on sector remains similar.

For occupational disease, the sectors with the highest numbers are Legacy (82%) In 2020, WSIB started using the new Rate Framework Model which is similar to other WCB Firms around Canada. With this new implementation, this changed the whole structure on how firms are distributed as well as claims. WSIB no longer have the same 16 Industries as they did in the past as well as Rate Groups and Classification Units. They now have NAICS, NAICS Class/Subclass and have calculated a new Industry Sector", manufacturing (4%) and Non-Hospital Healthcare and Social Assistance (4%).

## Injuries

### Compensated Injuries

Since 2009, Ontario has had the lowest frequency of lost-time injury claims (<https://awcbc.org/en/statistics/ksm-annual-report/>) in Canada.

In 2020, workplaces under Schedule 1 (<https://www.wsib.ca/en/bythenumbers/schedule-1-2020-highlights>) (employers that must contribute to the WSIB insurance fund), had 48,429 allowed lost-time injury claims (1.07 per 100 workers) and 83,449 allowed no lost-time injury claims (1.84 per 100 workers). The sectors with the most allowed lost-time claims are non-hospital healthcare and social assistance (22%), manufacturing (17%) and retail (11%).

In 2020, for workplaces under Schedule 2 (self-insured businesses) (<https://www.wsib.ca/en/businesses/premiums-and-payment/schedule-2>), there were 11,819 allowed lost-time injury claims (1.56 per 100 workers).

### Critical Injuries

Critical injuries (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/900834>) at the workplace must be reported directly to the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

In 2020, 2,029 critical injuries were reported to the ministry — 1,636 of those were in industrial, 360 were in construction and 33 were in mining sector workplaces. Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. Operational Data as of April 28, 2021

## Training

As of March 31, 2021, CPO-approved training providers have trained over 1,020,000 workers on working at heights for the construction sector. In the 2020–2021 fiscal year, over 117,000 workers completed working at heights training or refresher training.

As of March 31, 2021, over 65,000 individuals have been fully certified as Joint Health and Safety Committee members, meaning they have successfully completed their Part 1 and 2 training. During the 2020–2021 fiscal year, over 12,000 people completed their Part 1 training, more than 9,800 completed Part 2 to become fully certified and over 4,200 completed refresher training. Numbers for 2020–2021 were lower than the previous fiscal year due to COVID-19.

From April 2020 through March 2021, the Health and Safety Associations provided over 767,641 participant hours of training on a variety of workplace health and safety topics.

The Prevention Division digitized CPO-approved training records and made them securely available through the Certification Management System (CMS). Between April 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021, over 158,000 new learner accounts were created, over 110,000 new training course completion records were created and the CMS received over 800 requests for new employer accounts.

## System finances

### Investments — By category

In 2020-21, the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development and system partners continued to invest approximately \$289 million to support the implementation of the integrated health and safety strategy.

### Occupational health and safety investments (\$ millions)

| Investmentcategory                                       | 2016  | 2017  | 2018  | 2019  | 2020  |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <b>Transfersto health and safety associations (HSAs)</b> | 91.92 | 93.61 | 90.86 | 80.67 | 94.32 |
| <b>HSASelf-generated revenue</b>                         | 28.37 | 28.29 | 28.37 | 27.6  | 18.21 |

| Investmentcategory                                         | 2016         | 2017         | 2018         | 2019         | 2020                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Enforcement</b>                                         | 96.2         | 103.1        | 103.4        | 97.9         | 101.2                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Legislation<br/>/regulation<br/>development</b>         | 2.5          | 2.9          | 4            | 4.0          | 3.6                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>WSIB's Health and<br/>Safety Excellence<br/>program</b> | N/A<br>***** | N/A<br>***** | N/A<br>***** | N/A<br>***** | 1.5                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>WSIB's legacy health<br/>and safety program</b>         | N/A<br>***** | N/A<br>***** | N/A<br>***** | N/A<br>***** | 322020 was a<br>transitional<br>year; final<br>rebates for<br>WSIB's<br>*****<br>legacy<br>health and<br>safety<br>program were<br>paid at the<br>beginning of<br>the year and<br>initial<br>rebates for<br>the Health<br>and Safety<br>Excellence<br>program were<br>paid at the<br>end of the<br>year. |
| <b>Total</b>                                               | 293.24       | 302.33       | 299.92       | 287.24       | 289.58                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

## Sources

**Transfers to Health and Safety Associations (HSAs):** Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development  
Transfer Payment Agreements (TPAs) with HSAs 2016-2017 to 2020-2021.

**HSA Self-Generated Revenue:** HSAs audited financial statements 2016-2017 to 2020-2021.

Enforcement, Legislation and Regulation Development, Agencies, Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills  
 Development Prevention Division: Government of Ontario IFIS Database 2016–2017 to 2020–2021.

**Prevention Grants:** TPAs between the ministry and the grant recipients 2016–2017 to 2020–2021.

**Research:** Figures are based on the TPAs between the ministry and the grant recipients 2016–2017 to 2020–2021.

**Health and Safety Excellence program:** WSIB Prevention Program Statistics for 2020–2021.

## Notes

Other than “Legislation and Regulation Development and Health” and “Safety Association Self-Generated Revenue”, all investments in OHS are funded by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board through a portion of employer premiums.

“Agencies” includes investments associated with the Office of the Worker Adviser, Office of the Employer Adviser and the associated administration.

“HSA Self-Generated Revenue” are those generated by the health and safety associations through the sale of OHS products and services, bank interest income and investments of future benefits funds. These revenues are reinvested into the health and safety system.

## HSA Expenditures

The chart below states total actual spending by Health and Safety Association. For each health and safety association, most expenditures are directed to training, consulting and clinical services.

### Health and Safety Association expenditures, 2020–2021 (\$ Millions)

| Association               | IHSA  | OHCOW | PSHSA | WHSC | WSN  | WSPS  | Tota  |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|-------|-------|
| <b>Training</b>           | 13.61 | N/A   | 2.87  | 8.39 | 1.28 | 12.80 | 38.95 |
| <b>Consulting</b>         | 6.23  | N/A   | 4.32  | N/A  | 2.13 | 12.53 | 25.21 |
| <b>Clinical</b>           | N/A   | 4.58  | N/A   | N/A  | N/A  | N/A   | 4.58  |
| <b>Products</b>           | 2.30  | N/A   | 1.52  | N/A  | 0.10 | 2.92  | 6.84  |
| <b>Minerescue program</b> | N/A   | N/A   | N/A   | N/A  | 5.24 | N/A   | 5.24  |

| Association                 | IHSA         | OHCOW        | PSHSA        | WHSC         | WSN          | WSPS         | Tota   |
|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------|
| <b>Occupational disease</b> | N/A<br>***** | 1.07         | N/A<br>***** | N/A<br>***** | N/A<br>***** | N/A<br>***** | 1.07   |
| <b>Priorityfocus</b>        | 1.89         | N/A<br>***** | 0.77         | N/A<br>***** | 0.60         | 1.61         | 4.87   |
| <b>COVID Related</b>        | N/A<br>***** | 2.53         | N/A<br>***** | 0.06         | 2.77         | 2.53         | 7.89   |
| <b>Corporate services</b>   | 5.74         | 0.65         | 0.87         | 2.13         | 1.07         | 5.01         | 15.47  |
| <b>Capital investments</b>  | N/A<br>***** | 0.06         | N/A<br>***** | N/A<br>***** | 0.44         | N/A<br>***** | 0.50   |
| <b>Total</b>                | 29.77        | 8.89         | 10.35        | 10.58        | 13.63        | 37.40        | 110.62 |

IHSA — Infrastructure Health & Safety Association  
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OHCOW — Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers  
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PSHSA — Public Services Health & Safety Association  
\*\*\*\*\*

WHSC — Workers Health & Safety Centre  
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WSN — Workplace Safety North  
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WSPS — Workplace Safety & Prevention Services  
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### Sources

Health and Safety Associations' 2020-2021 Financial Reports to Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

### Notes

Totals include expenditures from self-generated revenue.

Numbers provided for WHSC is based on unaudited financial reports.  
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“Mine Rescue Program” is established pursuant to the direction of the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development under Section 17 of Mines and Mining Plants, Revised Regulations of Ontario 1990 — Regulation 854

## Data limitations

The OHS data in this report is limited, as:

- ministry enforcement data may change as a result of ongoing enforcement activities and investigations
- additional records could be added to the source databases after extraction, which would not be included in this report. This report is accurate as of the date the data was extracted.

## System partner annual reports

More information on the work done by the system partners can be found in their annual reports through the links below.

- Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) (<https://www.wsib.ca/en/document/2019-annual-report-en>)
- Infrastructure Health and Safety Association (IHSA) ([http://www.ihsa.ca/pdfs/annual\\_report/2019/ihsa-ar2019.pdf](http://www.ihsa.ca/pdfs/annual_report/2019/ihsa-ar2019.pdf))
- Public Services Health & Safety Association (PSHSA) (<https://www.pshsa.ca/company/about-us/annual-reports>)
- Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS) (<https://www.wsps.ca/annual-reports>)
- Workplace Safety North (WSN) (<https://www.workplacesafetynorth.ca/about-us/annual-reports>)
- The Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW) (<https://www.ohcow.on.ca/annual-report-2.html>)
- Workers Health and Safety Centre (WHSC) (<https://www.whsc.on.ca/About-Us/Annual-Reports>)
- Institute for Work & Health (IWH) (<https://www.iwh.on.ca/corporate-reports>)
- Centre for Research in Occupational Safety and Health (CROSH) (<https://crosh.ca/about/annual-reports/>)
- Centre for Research Expertise in Occupational Disease (CREOD) (<http://creod.on.ca/aboutcreod/15-year-report/>)

## Contact information

Ontario provides a toll-free province-wide telephone number to report unsafe work practices and workplace health and safety incidents. Call the ministry's Health and Safety Contact Centre at 1-877-202-0008.

- Call any time to report critical injuries, fatalities or work refusals.
- For general inquiries about workplace health and safety, call between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday to Friday.

In an emergency, always call 911 immediately.