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NEWS



WORKPLACE INJURY RATE DOWN BY 20 PER CENT *McGuinty Government Introduces New Plan To Build On Success*

June 11, 2008

NEWS

Ontario has achieved a 20 per cent reduction in the annual rate of workplace injuries.

To build on this success, Ontario is launching a new four year plan--*Safe At Work Ontario*. The new strategic plan will emphasize both the safety of Ontario workers and the increased productivity that safe workplaces bring to Ontario's economy.

The *Safe At Work Ontario* plan allows ministry inspectors to be flexible and strategic in determining which businesses require their attention based on a number of factors including:

- Injury rates and associated costs
- A company's compliance history
- The presence of young workers.

The goal of the plan is to enforce the Occupational Health and Safety Act while educating workers about the importance of workplace safety and lessening the burden on the health care system. To achieve this, inspectors will work with employers to develop a stronger health and safety culture.

QUOTES

"The McGuinty government and its workplace partners are committed to eliminating all workplace injuries," said Labour Minister [Brad Duguid](#). "Workers have a right to come home each day to their families, safe and sound."

QUICK FACTS

- A compliance program that ran from April 1, 2004 to March 31, 2008 reduced the workplace injury rate by 20 per cent, or more than 50,000 incidents.
- Because of this drop in the annual rate of lost time injuries, employers have avoided about \$5 billion in direct and indirect costs during the four years ending March 31, 2008. Reduced injuries also result in less strain on the health care system, and fewer workers off the job means increased productivity for Ontario's

economy.

- Ontario employs 430 full-time health and safety inspectors.

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Safe At Work Ontario

Issued: June 2008

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The Government of Ontario and its workplace partners are committed to eliminating all workplace injuries. Workers have a right to come home each day to their families, safe and sound.

At Workplaces Across the Province

Safe At Work Ontario is the Ministry of Labour's (MOL's) new compliance strategy, designed to:

- improve the health and safety culture of workplaces
- reduce workplace injuries and illness
- lessen the burden on the health care system
- avoid costs for employers and the [Workplace Safety and Insurance Board \(WSIB\)](#), and
- provide a level playing field for compliant companies.

This strategy builds on the ministry's 2004-5/2007-8 targeted compliance strategy, which focused mainly on workplaces with higher than average lost-time injury (LTI) rates and claim costs. Under this new direction, the ministry identifies and engages workplaces according to a variety of factors.

The new identification criteria for workplaces to be inspected are (but are not limited to):

- injury rates and associated costs
- compliance history

- hazards inherent to the work
- new businesses
- size of businesses
- specific events or incidents (e.g., critical or fatal injuries, or violence)
- new and/or vulnerable workers.

Injury rates and associated costs are determined through the use of Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) data. WSIB data are run through an assessment that considers:

- the growth of the firm's workforce, to address issues related to new and vulnerable workers
- claims costs, as an indication of severity of injuries
- the health and safety trend of the firm over the previous three years, and
- the previous year's lost-time injury (LTI) and non lost time (NLTI) injury rates.

Companies can access their confidential profile by contacting [WSIB](#). The health and safety information of a company is only one of the many factors that will identify a firm for a MOL inspection.

A fundamental component of this new direction is the development of annual sector-specific plans that provide the flexibility to focus on sector specific hazards and characteristics. The ministry has developed strategies for industrial, health care, construction and mining sectors which specify how the new selection criteria will be used. As a result of the selection criteria, the ministry will be visiting many workplaces that have not had an injury.

The new direction seeks to improve the health and safety of Ontario's workplaces. MOL inspections will focus on the Internal Responsibility System (IRS). The results of the inspection will determine the level of engagement and frequency of subsequent inspections for that workplace.

The ministry will also continue to work with our system's education and prevention partners, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) and the Health and Safety Associations (HSAs), to identify and engage employers with high rates of injury.

Engaging Workplaces

The Ministry of Labour has a primary responsibility to ensure that workplaces comply with Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and related legislation. This means ensuring that a strong Internal Responsibility System (IRS) is in place. A strong IRS implies, in part, a well-functioning Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC), where required, that fosters a strong, sustainable culture of workplace health and safety.

A strong health and safety workplace culture consists of:

- **Competence** (appropriate knowledge and training, systems for responding to events, properly functioning JHSC and other IRS components)
- **Commitment** (demonstration by the employer of leadership on safety,

appropriate policies and procedures to protect workers, low tolerance for poor health and safety practices, insistence upon full compliance), and

- **Capacity** (adequate resources for preventing injuries, good system for obtaining assistance from HSAs and the WSIB)

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

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

Key Improvements

MOL is building upon the success of the enforcement ("targeted intervention") strategies that it has employed since April 2004. Enhancements include:

1. **A better, more integrated approach for compliance assurance that improves connections with our system partners**--Ministry of Labour inspectors can refer workplaces to Health and Safety Associations (HSAs) for additional assistance and training. Additionally, firms may be referred to the ministry for inspection when they do not demonstrate an acceptable response to HSA engagement.
2. **Improved program flexibility/effectiveness in determining the most appropriate workplaces for intervention**--the ministry is not limiting its inspections to workplaces with injuries. It is also focusing on workplaces with higher risks of injuries using indicators such as inherent hazards and poor compliance records. By expanding its criteria for identifying these workplaces, the ministry will improve its ability to use a broader range of information in planning inspections and will be able to inspect more workplaces before an injury occurs.
3. **Fostering a culture of safety in Ontario workplaces**--the ministry continues to foster a safety culture by ensuring compliance with the OHSA and by considering prosecution whenever this is warranted. By continuing to deter non-compliance, the ministry encourages safer workplaces, an important first step in developing a true culture of workplace health and safety.

The ministry will concentrate on ensuring that an effective Internal Responsibility System (IRS) is in place, supported, where required, by a well-functioning Joint Health and Safety Committee. This is central to supporting the development of sustainable compliance through sustainable workplace health and safety culture.

4. The ministry's goals are to:
 - Reduce critical injuries and fatalities;
 - Reduce lost-time injuries (LTIs); and
 - Improve health and safety culture within the workplace.

This strategy will foster development of a sustainable reduction in the rate of injuries

and improvement in workplace health and safety conditions and culture.

Safe At Work Ontario Basics

Enforcement

Accidents and fatalities in the workplace are unacceptable. The Ontario Ministry of Labour has the responsibility and mandate to enforce the OHSA. The ministry takes this responsibility very seriously. Under the *Safe At Work Ontario* strategy the ministry will be focusing its enforcement resources in areas where needed to enforce requirements under the OHSA through inspections, and as required, orders and charges under the act may be used to enforce the law.

Compliance

MOL seeks full compliance with the law by all workplaces subject to the OHSA. MOL seeks to achieve this through enforcement, cooperation, sharing of responsibility and education of workplace parties to create a culture of prevention.

Partnership

Overall, MOL believes that enhanced partnerships will lead to fewer injuries. The key to workplace health and safety in Ontario is the Internal Responsibility System (IRS). Employers, supervisors, workers, their health and safety associations and the government all have key roles to play in taking responsibility for health and safety in the workplace, leading to the elimination of workplace injuries and deaths.

1. What is the *Safe At Work Ontario* strategy?

The *Safe At Work Ontario* strategy is a new approach to workplace health and safety that builds on the ministry's 2004-5/2007-8 "targeted intervention" strategy.

It broadens the MOL scope to include focus on hazards, and partnerships directed to promoting and improving a health and safety culture and strengthening an organization's IRS. It focuses on three pillars: Enforcement, Compliance and Partnership. The enforcement portion looks at strategies which provide for the flexibility to address sector specific hazards and characteristics.

It builds on the previous approach by using a number of triggers or criteria to identify workplaces for MOL proactive inspections. It focuses not only on identifying workplaces with high injury rates and costs, but also on hazards inherent to particular types of business activity and/or workplaces with a history of compliance problems.

As with the previous strategy, this one continues to focus on improving workplace health and safety practices through education, training, and enforcement of provincial legislation and regulations through partnership with the system's education and prevention partners such as WSIB and Ontario's Health and Safety Associations. MOL's main concern is enforcement of the OHSA; WSIB focuses on prevention, and the Health and Safety Associations concentrate on training and education.

2. How, specifically, are workplaces identified for inspection?

Criteria considered when identifying a workplace for a proactive inspection include:

- the number and severity of past lost-time and no-lost-time workplace injuries, including the associated costs
- compliance history
- hazards inherent to the work
- new businesses
- size of businesses
- specific events or incidents (e.g., critical or fatal injuries, or violence)
- new and/or vulnerable workers.

Companies with high rates of lost-time and no-lost-time injuries and/or injuries with high costs will be identified through WSIB injury data. Companies that have a history of non-compliance and/or have workplaces with inherent hazards will be identified by means of ministry experience or enforcement data.

3. How does the MOL evaluate companies' injury-prevention performance?

The ministry analyzes data on workplace injuries as reported each year by employers to the WSIB. The analysis identifies companies with the highest injury rates and injury costs relative to other companies within their WSIB rate group. Companies can obtain a profile of their data from [WSIB](#).

One of the identifiers for a proactive inspection will be a firm's WSIB injury record. The variables used by WSIB to assess a firm's injury performance include its:

- 2006 lost time injury (LTI) rate relative to the 2006 LTI rate of the rate group
- average change in LTI rate from 2003 to 2006 relative to that of the rate group
- ratio of claim costs to the firm's insurable earnings from 2002 to 2006, relative to that of the rate group
- 2006 no-lost-time injury (NLTI) rate of firm relative to the 2006 NLTI rate of the rate group
- average change in NLTI rate from 2003 to 2006 relative to that of the rate group
- growth in insurable earnings from 2005 to 2006.

4. Why are certain firms inspected proactively?

Under *Safe At Work Ontario*, firms may be identified for proactive inspection for various reasons, including:

- poor injury rate performance history, as assessed by WSIB data according to specific assessment variables
- poor compliance history, where previous violations existed or enforcement action was required
- sector-specific hazards inherent to the activities of the business
- the occurrence of specific past events, including critical and fatal injuries, injuries to young workers, or injuries associated with violence

- other characteristics of the firm, including new or small businesses, firms with new, young, or otherwise vulnerable workers.

5. How often will a firm be inspected?

Regardless of the reason a firm was selected for a proactive inspection, the level of MOL engagement will depend on many factors, including:

- the nature and extent of past non-compliance identified, and the corrective actions required by the firm to achieve compliance
- the presence of a well defined, appropriate and sustainable IRS, consisting of a well functioning Joint Health and Safety Committee structure (where required) and suitable training and certification of members
- a firm's commitment to a strong culture of health and safety, including an appropriate level of health and safety awareness throughout the organization and an environment which fosters a commitment by workers, supervisors and the employer to prevent occupational injuries and illnesses.

6. What does an inspector look for?

Among the many factors that inspectors will examine are:

- compliance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations
 - health-and-safety programs and policies
 - Internal Responsibility System--self reliance
 - training requirements/deficiencies
 - record of injuries, including musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs)
 - occurrence and record of workplace violence
 - young worker health and safety
- workplace-specific sector hazards.

7. How does the MOL compliance strategy differ from the WSIB Workwell Program?

The focus of WSIB's Workwell Health and Safety Program is prevention and education. Workwell provides audits and offers educational support to firms to improve their occupational health and safety practices.

8. Why is *Safe At Work Ontario* so important?

Safe At Work Ontario is important because:

- more than 250,000 people are injured in Ontario workplaces each year
 - the direct cost (WSIB premiums) of a new lost-time injury (in 2007) was, on average, \$21,300
 - the indirect cost of each lost-time injury (in 2007), including re-hiring, re-training, lost productivity, etc., is \$85,200
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